

Moving forward

By now almost all members will have noticed that the Nautical Research Guild launched a brand-new website in mid-July. The original site was about twenty years old and, despite valiant efforts, certainly showed its age. Its age and the many changes it had undergone made it much more difficult to incorporate upgraded features for members. The new site suffers from none of these limitations. The team that has worked so hard and so long to bring this to fruition deserves the utmost credit and our sincere thanks.

This new website is but the latest component of a process to integrate the Guild and its services more effectively into the digital era. For at least ten years the site has hosted additional book reviews. This enables us to increase in a limited way the space available within the pages of the printed *Nautical Research Journal* for more articles while also continuing to offer our members reviews of a broad range of maritime books. In 2018, the Guild launched the digital edition of the *Journal*. This offers members multiple advantages. It obviously takes up no space on members' probably crowded bookshelves; it almost always is accessible much more quickly than the printed edition that has to be sent through sometimes unreliable or tardy mail services; it always is in full color throughout, unlike the printed edition, whose color content is restricted to limit the appreciable additional expenses of color printing and avoid increasing membership costs to compensate for these; and a digital-only membership is cheaper than the regular membership receiving the printed edition. For those who have yet to take advantage of the digital edition, a preview feature is accessible on the new website, which I encourage you to investigate.

An advantage of the new website is that it allows for innovation in the Guild's approach to distributing materials to its members. An upcoming issue of the *Journal*, for example, will include an important research article on a significant early Revolutionary War vessel. The full article is closer to a monograph in length and would either fill an entire issue of the *Journal*, or its publication would have to be spread over more than a year to allow inclusion of other content, neither of which is a viable proposition. Instead, this article will appear in two forms. An extended abstract will appear in the regular issue of the *Journal*. This will present all the author's conclusions and essential data. The entire article, with full discussion and supporting materials, will be available only in digital form on the website. We believe this approach offers the best of both worlds, since it makes available the entirety of this important research project while also allowing for the usual range of material in the *Journal* itself.

This concept of digital publication by the Guild has many advantages. There are some rare but significant publications from the Guild's earlier years that it would be cost-prohibitive to reproduce in printed form but that can be made accessible digitally for very much more nominal prices. There may well be projects of similar size that members would like to see published, and the Guild may be able to work with them to make this happen. As we move forward, we can be certain that digital publication options will become a more important part of the Guild's future.

— Paul E. Fontenoy