The official website of the Aggie Network is now more interactive, with an improved user experience and better privacy controls.

The Association of Former Students is proud to introduce a fresh look for the official website of the Aggie Network, including improved functionality and navigation as well as important additions and enhancements.

Visit AggieNetwork.com and you will now find:
• A transformed online directory that allows you to create your own Aggie Profile.
• A new Ring Order system that allows you to build and view your Aggie Ring online.
• Interactive news about your Class and Clubs.
• Real-time Silver Taps postings.
• Hosted @AggieNetwork.com e-mail accounts that eliminate the need for forwarding.

We invite all Aggies to explore the site and reconnect with the Aggie Network! To get started, just log in and update your Aggie Profile to connect to Class and Club news and more.

AggieNetwork.com e-mail addresses, select the AggieNetwork.com e-mail tab in “Your Aggie Profile” and follow the instructions to ensure that you are able to continue receiving and sending e-mail through that address.

Why Change It?
The notion of redesigning and rebuilding our most visited communication channel, AggieNetwork.com, began to take shape around June of 2008. Managing the existing site represented more challenges with every passing day. Small tasks were onerous and the user experience, even for insiders, was frustrating. Meantime, user expectations of sites had universally changed, becoming more and more sophisticated, customizable (Amazon, Google, ad infinitum) and actually, with the rocket-fueled growth of Facebook, everything was changing—so were the reasons that Aggies were using AggieNetwork.com.

The Quintessential Networking Tool
The Association’s long-term data showed that the most accessed function on the site was the “Find An Aggie” directory tool. Considering an enhanced “Find An Aggie” function had ramifications, in a broad sense, with our other efforts and presence on such social networking sites as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and YouTube. We wanted to be relevant, fun, engaging, AND get Aggies together, quickly and efficiently, as well as be where Aggies already were.

“One of our most challenging tasks was consolidating all of the raw data (record updates) from different sources into a single, secure database that the website could pull information from,” said Josh Rizzo ’07, web developer for The Association. “Our database is often considered one of our most important assets, so we go to extensive lengths to ensure our data integrity.”

Mike Smith, The Association’s
webmaster, said the new “Find an Aggie” is a directory not only of names and addresses, but of Aggie Profiles. “Aggie pride shines through as people can highlight their Aggie family, their student activities, add a personal photo and write-up, as well as share residential and business information,” Smith said. “Users have more control on their privacy settings than before.”

The Techie Part
The enhanced site uses a programming tool called AJAX. It makes the site seem more like a dynamic web application, rendering multiple types of information from different sources on one page, rather than a series of static documents.

Many of the pages on AggieNetwork.com, such as the “Find An Aggie” tool, involve unusually complex user interaction for a website, which made our AJAX development especially challenging, particularly when information security is a priority. We also have several different kinds of users, each with their own set of permissions and goals, such as Association employees, Class Agents and Club representatives. We now accommodate all of them on a single AJAX webpage to make a more consistent user experience. In the end, our intent was that these AJAX techniques make AggieNetwork.com a more functional, modern and enjoyable experience for all users.

An Interactive ‘Aggie Ring’ Experience
After Find An Aggie, the second most popular reason Aggies were visiting AggieNetwork.com was for information about the Aggie Ring. Each semester, more than 10,000 students visit the site to view ordering instructions, look at Ring design options, check the dates for ordering and delivery, and see a countdown to their Aggie Ring Day celebration. Our vision was to make the online experience much more visceral, exciting and inspiring. On the new AggieNetwork.com, Aggie Ring ordering has become an experience in and of itself.

By linking several different sources together in a single data-driven application, the new Ring order system enables students to check their qualification status, consider various Ring designs and choices, save their custom-designed Aggie Ring, and (coming soon) purchase it.

New Functionality For Classes, Clubs
Our former student groups, such as Classes, A&M Clubs and Constituent Networks, now have new functionality to help their members connect with Texas A&M and each other. Each group has a newly redesigned page on AggieNetwork.com, featuring news feeds and real-time comments and posting, metrics, and the group’s contact information. We have included spontaneous news feeds from former students and organization leaders, as well as relevant Silver Taps listings, The Association’s published news, and upcoming events for both The Association and Texas A&M.

All of this information is also portable via RSS—an efficient format for inter-website communication. Users can elect to have information fed in real time to their own website, browser, phone, blog or e-mail.

Improved User Post System
It previously was difficult to upload news to AggieNetwork.com, and it could only be uploaded to a Class page. The new user post system is much more user-friendly and will recognize affiliations. For example, when a former student posts a birth announcement, the system recognizes his or her Class and any Club affiliations and adds that post to all the relevant pages. The system also automatically resizes uploaded images (so the user doesn’t have to). And users can now comment on each other’s posts, and even give them a “Good Bull” rating.

More To Come
The launch of the new AggieNetwork.com on June 26—The Association’s 131st anniversary—was just the first phase of many more improvements, additions and enhancements yet to come. Watch AggieNetwork.com for more integration with social networking sites, a mobile version of the site, enhancements to Class Reunion registrations, and more information in the calendar and Events pages.

Need Help?
As always, if you have any questions about navigating the new AggieNetwork.com, please call our Web team at 979-845-7514 or e-mail web@aggienetwork.com.

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Josh Rizzo ’07, Web Developer