

# Opening the doors to non-members: the Royal Society of Chemistry offers new subscription model powered by Webvision and ADvance

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“Webvision and ADvance were delivered at the precise time on the agreed morning, exactly to budget and in accordance with timescales which were set eight months previously. It is a daily joy to use Webvision to create multi-platform content, and with ADvance we now have more data at our fingertips than we ever had before.”

**ADAM BROWSELL, PUBLISHER, CHEMISTRY WORLD**

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For Chemistry World the combination of Webvision CMS and ADvance delivers:

- The technology platform to open up their high quality professional membership magazine to a wider, international audience
- To build a new source of revenue to support the sustainability and longevity of services for the Royal Society of Chemistry’s membership
- To quickly and easily ‘create once, publish everywhere’ content for delivery to web, print, phones and tablets
- To provide users with a seamless journey, the progress of which is tracked for future proactive marketing initiatives

## Building a sustainable future

Chemistry World is the long-established monthly membership magazine for the Royal Society of Chemistry. Although over 50,000 members receive the magazine, the Society's website was attracting an audience in excess of two million visitors each year. This was despite the fact that these 'anonymous' visitors were only able to access a fraction of the website's content – typically news items – but providing clear evidence that the subject matter was engaging for an audience far beyond their membership.



Adam Brownsell joined as the new Publisher of Chemistry World in 2014 with some ten years' experience in the publishing sector. Some ten years prior to this, a rebranding exercise had been undertaken including a change of name from Chemistry in Britain to Chemistry World in recognition of its potential international appeal. The website had been redesigned with content management provided initially by Tridion and then Drupal. For non-members, access beyond news items was halted at a 'members' paywall'. The site was not mobile-friendly having been designed for desktop access only.

Adam Brownsell: "Membership of the Society, together with all the benefits it confers, is the right decision for someone studying chemistry or wishing to pursue a career in chemistry. For those who simply wish to expand their knowledge of the subject from an expert source, becoming a subscriber might be all they need."

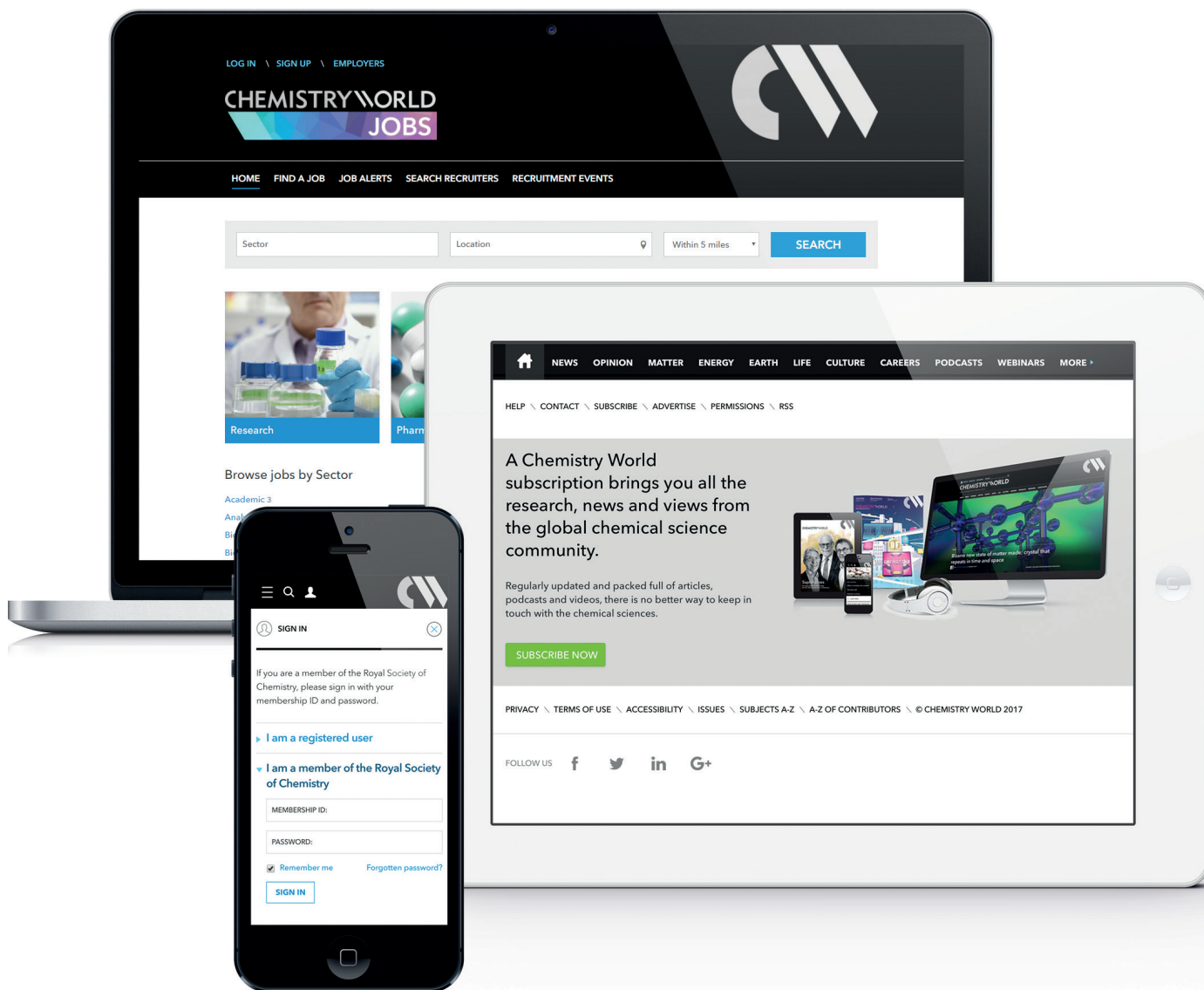
Given the high level of non-member traffic to the website, and underpinned by the desire to create a new business model for Chemistry World with additional revenue streams to support the long-term sustainability of core charitable activities, the decision was taken to offer a subscription-only service to the magazine and website, without the need to apply for membership.

## Choosing a supplier

Invitations were sent to six companies inviting them to tender for the infrastructure to enable this new strategic direction. This would involve providing a technology platform for the creation and delivery of content across multiple platforms, a new web site highly optimised for mobile, the ability to capture user data, gain better customer insight and proactively market to this audience.

Abacus was included in the list of invitees and won the contract not only because of the suitability of their technology platforms, but also because of their successful track record in working with other membership bodies such as the **Royal Pharmaceutical Society** and the **Law Society**, as well as a number of publishers with sophisticated subscription models.

Adam Brownsell: "From an editor's standpoint, creating content and knowing exactly how it will look regardless of how people view it, was extremely important to me. Webvision clearly allowed us to create user-friendly content once, for use everywhere, without the need for specialist technical staff. It would enable us to be creative and organise our content both effectively and intuitively."



## Delivering the solution

The timescale for the delivery of Webvision and ADvance, together with the new website, app and integration with numerous existing systems in use at the Royal Society of Chemistry, was set in stone. Everything had to be ready for a leading international chemistry conference, held in the USA, on 23rd August 2016.

Rebranding for the new website, the printed magazine and social media, had been undertaken by a design agency. The challenge for Abacus was to deploy this branding. "Abacus made this part of the project really enjoyable. Rather than just taking the agreed branding and implementing it, they really brought it to life and created an innovative, interactive and responsive site – a living, breathing experience for users."

Abacus was also required to integrate with external systems including those for member authentication, data suites, a jobs board, email and Worldpay for the e-commerce element of the new site. "Several of these systems were specific to our business and were therefore unfamiliar to Abacus – but everything was made to work, on time and on budget."

Over 14,000 articles had to be migrated from the old system. Although hampered by 'very inconsistent data', this was achieved successfully, despite some challenges en route.

## The working day

Webvision and ADvance are now used on a daily basis by about a dozen staff at Chemistry World. Three levels of subscription are offered – for members and non-members alike: digital and app, print and online, and an all-encompassing option with everything – annually, recurring monthly or via a thirty-day pass.

The new e-commerce system, currently used to sell subscriptions, could be used in the future to sell additional services.

Tracking and reports are produced by different tools including ADvance, Google Analytics and others. Since the launch of the new site, mobile access has risen from 30% to 50%, time spent on the site has increased by an average of 40%, bounce rate decreased by an average of 8% and page depth has increased by nearly 60%.



Interestingly, by setting a price for a subscription-only model, it can help demonstrate the value of membership – “by making it completely transparent to members how little extra they are paying on top of the subscription included in their membership for the huge range of additional specialised and very personal services – such as a personalised career service, special interest groups, meetings, networking and events – provided to members of the Royal Society of Chemistry.”

## Measuring progress

When the new website launched at 8 a.m. on 18th August 2016, there were zero non-member registrations. There are now over 16,000, who have registered with Chemistry World providing details such as professional sector, job type and country of residence. To date organic growth has accounted for the recruitment of non-member subscriptions. Although these have been encouraging, a more proactive marketing approach has recently been implemented with the intention of significantly accelerating the take up these subscriptions.

“With a new business model, new technology platform and new website, we opted for a ‘soft launch’ to ensure that we had everything working smoothly before adopting a more aggressive marketing stance. However, there is clearly a great deal of value in the number of registered users we have already acquired. Previously anonymous, we can now start to target these users to encourage them through the user lifecycle towards subscription or membership.”

The new online registration and subscription process is powered by ADvance. Limited (metered) access is provided for entry-level users in exchange for user data; once the monthly limit is reached, users need to subscribe in order to have unlimited access.

Chemistry World has a ‘big footprint’ in social media with over 440,000 Twitter users, over 950,000 on Facebook and nearly 20,000 LinkedIn followers. This level of visibility and brand awareness is an important element in reaching new subscribers. “However, as would be the case for many membership organisations, our new subscriber model takes us into B2C territory: traditionally professional societies’ expertise lies in promoting their services and benefits to academic institutions and corporations. We needed to adopt an entirely new marketing strategy to appeal to individuals on a product basis, rather than a membership recruitment basis – through there is much to learn from membership recruitment techniques.”


In the future, and to support Chemistry World’s push into Asia, payment options on the site will be extended with e-wallets such as Apple Pay and PayPal being introduced to support such transactions.


# CHEMISTRY WORLD



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## The opportunity for membership organisations

Many membership organisations have, according to Adam Brownsell, “stellar content, which could well provide them with an opportunity to go beyond their membership audience. Although it can be daunting changing the business model for a, professional body, a high quality magazine and engaging website can be the ideal route to widen appeal – and thus realise potential new sources of revenue.

“For Chemistry World, offering non-member subscriptions increases awareness of our role in the industry, further enhances our international standing, delivers a new source of revenue – and provides the opportunity to recruit new members. Frankly, we have found the experience liberating.

“I have worked with lots of different systems in my publishing career. Webvision and ADvance are the best I have ever used in a demanding multi-channel publishing environment. It is a daily joy to be able to create good content, so easily, for multiple platforms.”

### Working with