

2023 VNCS AGM Newsletter/Communications Report

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In 2023, VNCS continued to publish a bi-monthly newsletter. In 2023, we published 6 regular newsletters and 20 e-blasts in between. To date, we have 438 subscribers. This is 82 subscribers more than last year. The increase in subscribers between 2021 and 2022 was 44, so we have almost doubled the readership. I have also noticed that many people subscribe to the newsletter from the VNCS website as well as from Facebook.

Our open rate for the January/February newsletter was 52%. The industry (nonprofit) average is about 25%, so it is quite high and quite consistent with the VNCS newsletter. People are reading our newsletters.

This year, VNCS participated in the pilot program with NAJC's Capacity Building Initiative, and we purchased the license for the paid version of Mailchimp, the email distribution software. Our monthly expense is approximately \$34, including the 15% nonprofit discount. NAJC has agreed to cover the first year's fees.

Using the paid version of Mailchimp allows us to use some features not available in the free version, such as sending emails only to VNCS paid members. This feature is used when we need to send email to the paid VNCS members only, such as when we have the special discount code for an event.

We continue to offer bilingual content in our newsletters in both Japanese and English. I'm happy to report that we've added 3 new translators - Nobuo Kawaguchi, Miwa Sugino and Yumiko Mizuno - to our hard-working team of translators - Mieko Fedrau, Kana Mercer, Rieko Hatakeyama, Satoko Clayton and Masako Hegge. We are always in need of more translators. If you have time, even just one article every two months, that would be very helpful.

I would also like to thank my editorial partner Maureen Bird for her continued support and insight. Yumiko has also helped with the editing of the newsletters, and I really appreciate it.

In addition to our regular features, such as the president's message and club and committee reports, we welcome contributions from our readers.

Our deadline for submissions is the 5th of the month of publication.

This year I am stepping down from the VNCS board, but will continue to work on the bi-monthly newsletter. But as the size and importance of the newsletter grows, I feel the need to nurture the next generation of editors. Maureen and Yumiko are a great help, but I feel that in order to make the newsletter publication sustainable, at least 2 Japanese speaking editors and 2 English speaking editors would be ideal. As in many areas of VNCS operations, succession planning is key.

The VNCS Newsletter takes a lot of time and effort to produce and publish. Thank you for reading our newsletter and we look forward to another busy year. If you have any feedback, please do not hesitate to send it my way.