



A. S. Hornby Educational Trust

REPORT ON HORNBY-FUNDED TEACHER ASSOCIATION PROJECT

Title: AINET-Connect: Stronger Networking for Stronger Association

Country: India

Dates: July 2019–July 2020

1. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

TAs are typically managed by practicing teachers who may not have adequate management, organisation and governance skills. This is also true of TA media management. Most TAs, including AINET, are often not found to work with a vision, strategic planning and systematic processes to derive maximum impact and benefit from various media. In other words, while TAs like AINET have accounts on social media, they are not always backed by a planned and purposeful approach to exploit their fullest potential. Against this backdrop, the AINET-Connect project was proposed with an aim to consolidate its reach and impact by building stronger and more sustainably managed channels of communication, especially on social media platforms. AINET was lagging behind in productive use of these channels before the start of the project. AINET was also interested in developing a media policy, media coordinators from amongst teacher-members, a range of activities and ways of delivering them.

2. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the AINET-Connect project were to:

1. identify, train and orientate a team of member-volunteers as media and communications coordinators;
2. set up a Facebook account, attract at least 2,000 followers and organise at least six professional development activities;
3. set up a Twitter account, attract at least 1,000 followers and organise at least six professional activities;
4. create an AINET YouTube channel, attract at least 500 subscribers, upload content and promote dissemination and communication through the channel;
5. launch up to 10 WhatsApp groups for effective communication with members;
6. revamp the AINET website, increase interactivity through e-newsletters and blogs etc., create events and resources archives, add member-generated content, and interlink with other social media channels;
7. develop a draft media and communications policy for AINET;
8. derive key insights, learning and issues in handling media and communications for TAs.

3. PROJECT MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES

The project was conceptualised by the Executive Committee of AINET which felt the pressing need to manage AINET's social media presence more effectively and productively. A three-member project team with Vivek Joshi as the project lead and Milind Mane and Nadeem Khan as team members was formed to plan and implement the project.

The first task was to recruit member-volunteers to work as 'AINET-Connect Associates'. An open call for expression of interest was circulated, which generated a good response, and 14 teachers were selected from a shortlist of 20 via telephone interviews.

The first orientation workshop of these 14 teachers was held at Nagpur on 16–17 November 2019, during which the Associates were oriented on the basics of social media management, the project plans and AINET's expectations from its media accounts. Following this, the group divided itself into small sub-teams, each taking responsibility for one social media account.



AINET-Connect Associates and social media platforms they manage

Over the next few months these Associates organised a variety of online professional development activities aligned to their respective social media platforms. They played a particularly vital role during the 5th AINET International Conference in Hyderabad (January 2020) in various ways, such as livestreaming several sessions of the conference; telecasting interviews of the guest speakers, presenters and delegates; promoting



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discussions on social media and creating ways of interaction for those who could not attend the event. Last but not the least, the Associates and the project team worked together to create very useful documents like a Privacy Policy, AINET Media Policy, and guidelines for the management of different social media platforms. ([Click here to read these documents.](#))

4. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITY

The table below gives the detailed status of each of the stages envisaged in the project plan, and outlines in what ways and to what extent the project work progressed in relation to the original plan.

| Duration | Activities |
|----------------------------|---|
| July–September 2019 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. recruitment of Associates and sharing of responsibilities2. two-day orientation workshop3. activating social media accounts on FB, Twitter and YouTube, and creation of WhatsApp groups4. a blog space created under the title 'AINET ADDA' |
| September 2019–June 2020 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. a wide range of activities organised on various social media platforms2. planned promotional activities conducted to increase the visibility and reach of the social media accounts3. creation of background database of followers/viewers/subscribers initiated4. content development started5. preliminary work on the website revamp started |
| December 2019–January 2020 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. a mid-term, meeting-cum-workshop of the project team, the Associates and AINET leadership conducted in Hyderabad2. course correction done and next activities planned3. AINET channels launched on Instagram, Pinterest and Telegram |
| January/February 2020 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Project Team and Associates organised a series of activities and initiatives on social media accounts during the 5th AINET International Conference, 2020.2. The Team also used the opportunity to collect interim feedback and suggestions from the conference attendees.3. An interim report on the project could not be presented to the delegates at the conference as originally proposed, but the Associates and Project Team were presented before the conference and were highly appreciated. |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <p>March– September 2020</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Original plans severely disrupted by the Covid pandemic. All proposed F2F activities and meetings deferred and some held online. 2. A series of new activities like webinars, web-workshops, online resource sharing, training in ICT skills and web tools, etc. were organised. 3. The Connect Team actively participated in the AINET Foundation Day (05 September) celebrations with a variety of activities on different social media accounts. 4. The Connect Team supported scores of schools, teacher communities and informal groups in organising online activities through the difficult pandemic times. |
| <p>October– December 2020</p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. collation of experience of the entire process done using Zoom meetings 2. An online final presentation of the entire team was conducted to share insights, learnings and concerns. 3. interim project report prepared and shared with AINET-Connect Associates 4. draft of Media and Communication Policy prepared collaboratively by AINET Connect Associates and AINET Executive Committee Members |



Home page screenshots of website and different social media handles of AINET



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Overview of platform-specific activities conducted under AINET-Connect

- Key activities carried out on Facebook to date:
 1. 5th AINET International Conference streamed live on 10–11 January 2020
 2. AINET FB Live sessions on 09 April, 10 May and 06 June 2020
 3. Polls on different days and multiple topics
 4. ELLE Master Quiz on AINET Foundation Day on 05 September 2020
[\(Click here to Like/Follow AINET Facebook Page.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on Twitter to date:
 1. Tweet Chats on 16 Nov 2019 and 06 May 2020
 2. Poll on 03 June 2020
 3. Slow Burn Tweet Chat from 01 Dec to 08 Dec 2019
 4. ELLE Master Quiz on AINET Foundation Day on 05 September 2020
[\(Click here to Follow AINET Twitter Handle.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on Instagram to date:
 1. Posts with different hashtags on weekdays, e.g. #MotivationalMonday, #funnyfriday
 2. Daily posts, e.g. Idiom Of The day (#IOTD)
 3. Tongue Twister every Tuesday with hashtag #twistedthursday
 4. ELLE Master Quiz on AINET Foundation Day on 05 September 2020
[\(Click here to Follow AINET on Instagram.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on YouTube to date:
 1. Live streaming of 5th AINET International Conference on 10-11 January 2020
 2. Premiere of two FB Live sessions 09 April and 10 May 2020
[\(Click here to Subscribe AINET YouTube Channel.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on Telegram to date:
 1. Formed a channel @AINET, open to subscription for all
 2. ELLE Master Quiz on AINET Foundation Day on 05 September 2020
[\(Click here to join AINET Telegram Channel.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on WhatsApp to date:
 1. Formed groups of AINET Members and Presenters at the 5th AINET International Conference for disseminating information
 2. Continuous support to the members and addressing their grievances on WhatsApp
[\(Click here to chat with AINET WhatsApp contact.\)](#)

- Key activities carried out on AINET Website to date:
 1. Created AINET ADDA, a blog space managed by the Blog Team of AINET Connect
 2. Conducted Blogging Competition announced at the 5th AINET International Conference at Hyderabad in January 2020
[\(Click here to visit AINET website.\)](#)

Activities 2019-20

- 5th AINET, Hyderabad
- M-NET, Mumbai
- POET, Kolkata
- AU, Delhi
- Gauhati University, Assam
- Virtual: Zoom webinars, fb Live, YT Livestream



Technical support from AINET-Connect to AINET and other teacher groups

5. EVALUATION

The progress with regards to the project objectives is listed below.

Objective 1. *Identify, train and orientate a team of member-volunteers as media and communications coordinators.*

A team of 14 AINET member-volunteers, all teachers of English, was built, trained and entrusted with various social media accounts. They have been very effectively managing these accounts for nearly 18 months now.

Objective 2: *Set up a Facebook account, attract at least 2,000 followers and organise at least six professional development activities.*

The FB account was set up and has so far attracted **4594** followers and organised **7** PD activities with an impressive reach of around 30,000 people.

Objective 3: *Set up a Twitter account, attract at least 1,000 followers and organise at least six professional activities.*

The Twitter account has been set up and is quite active. However, we were unable to get the targeted 1,000 followers. So far it has attracted **426** followers and organised **3** PD activities. But it is averaging 40+ tweets a month with 12,000+ Tweet impressions per month. Our hashtag **#ainetconnect** has a reach of at least 9.7K people on Twitter.

Objective 4: *Create an AINET YouTube channel, attract at least 500 subscribers, upload content and promote dissemination and communication through the channel.*

The YouTube channel started activities quite late but we were able to achieve our objective of getting **500** subscribers and 5 webinars/online events have been live streamed so far.

Objective 5: *Launch up to 10 WhatsApp groups for effective communication with members.*

We were able to form 6 groups within the project timeline but reached a total of 10 subject-specific groups very recently.



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Objective 6: *Revamp the AINET website, increase interactivity through e-newsletters and blogs etc., create events and resources archives, add member-generated content, and interlink with other social media channels.*

The website revamp is underway with all social media accounts already interlinked, some resources and content added, and blogs activated. However, due to the challenges associated with migrating to a different platform (since the current platform is proving inadequate) the restructuring is taking much longer than anticipated. Launch of an E-newsletter has been put on hold as the work of integrating the membership database with the website and the distribution mechanism is underway.

Objective 7: *Develop a draft media and communications policy for AINET.*

Preliminary draft of the policy is ready and is being discussed among media teams and the Executive Committee members. In addition, SOPs for various media platforms have also been drafted and are awaiting approval of the Executive Committee.

Objective 8: *Derive key insights, learning and issues in handling media and communications for TAs.*

This is an ongoing process, as analyses, debriefing and discussions continue to happen. Some key insights and lessons were included in a conference presentation on the project at an international conference and an article published thereafter. A separate detailed note is being prepared on this matter.

Platform-wise achievements can be given in numbers as:

| PLATFORM | Before AINET-Connect | Aim | After AINET-Connect |
|-----------|----------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| FACEBOOK | 500 Followers | 2000 Followers | 4594 Followers |
| TWITTER | 27 Followers | 2000 Followers | 426 Followers |
| YOUTUBE | 0 Subscribers | 500 Subscribers | 476 Subscribers |
| INSTAGRAM | 0 Followers | Not specified | 220 Followers |
| WHATSAPP | 2 Group | 10 Groups | 10 Groups |

Project Achievements in Numbers



Project achievements in numbers

Interpretation of analytical data from the Facebook Page:

Total Page Followers

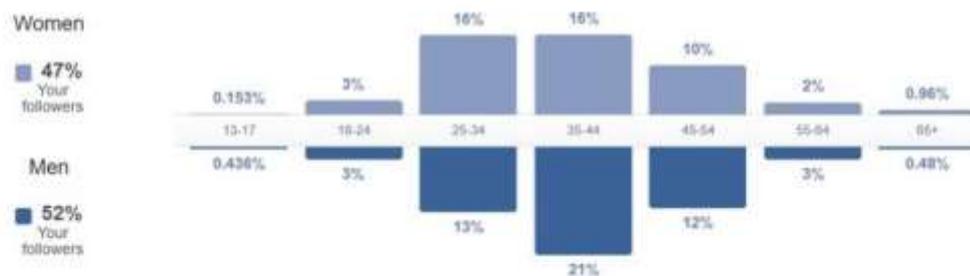
| Date | Followers | Followers added | Annual Growth rate |
|------------|-----------|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1 May 2019 | 1331 | | |
| 1 May 2020 | 1971 | + 640 | + 48% |
| 1 May 2021 | 4611 | + 2640 | + 134% |



In 2 months of 2020 from June 1st (2336) to July 31st (4165), a record 1829 followers were added. On June 1st 2020, we got highest number of single day followers- 113. This rocketing growth is the best since 2015.

Page Followers: Demography

The people who follow your Page. This number is an estimate.



*66% followers are in the age group of 25-44 years.
47% of the followers are women.
16% women in the age group of 35-44 is the second largest follower group.*

Followers added to Facebook page and demography of followers on Facebook

The impact on and gains for our association can be detailed as:

- establishment of a media coordinators' team from amongst members;
- allocation of dedicated teams to look after various social media accounts;
- massive increase in presence and reach on multiple social media platforms;
- substantial capacity development of the Association in terms of human resources, relevant skills and knowledge, and setting up policies, processes and mechanisms;
- multiple interactive communication channels with members and non-members;
- considerable increase in the visibility, access and brand image of the Association;
- successful tapping of the expertise and talent available within the Association membership;



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- creation of middle-level leadership roles and a potential avenue to groom second line of leadership;
- making AINET work more diverse and inclusive in terms of geography, socio-economic context and gender (as the Associates brought this diversity).

The impact on and gains for the wider community were:

- a variety of professional development and capacity building activities for teachers;
- support to teacher communities and groups to organise their own activities especially in the challenging pandemic times;
- networking opportunities across the country and also globally;
- development of resources and tools, and pooling of trained people, for a collective effort to cope with the challenging shift to online work due to the pandemic;
- collaborations with other TAs and groups for mutual benefit and for the benefit of the ELT community (for example, MNET, Mumbai and POET, West Bengal, conducted about 70 webinars over six months with AINET Connect support;
[Click here to view the recordings of AINET Connect supported MNET webinars.](#)
- space for teachers to hone their skills as media coordinators, content creators, webinar presenters, tech support and event managers.

6. EXPENDITURE

| Activities | Proposed expenditure | Actual Expenditure | Comments |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Orientation workshop | GBP 540 | GBP 580 | |
| Mid-term meeting-cum-workshop | GBP 540 | GBP 520 | |
| Final meeting-cum-workshop | GBP 540 | GBP 75 | Deferred due to prolonged pandemic situation; only a small meeting held for data analysis and reporting |
| Website restructuring | GBP 380 | GBP 410 | |
| TOTAL | GBP 2000 | GBP 1585 | Balance GBP 415* |

[*We propose using the balance towards holding the deferred closure meeting when circumstances permit, organizing a symposium with other TAs and preparation of a media management handbook for TAs. If this is not permissible, AINET is prepared to return the balance funds.]

7. DISSEMINATION TO A WIDER AUDIENCE

- We have shared this information with the AINET-Connect Associates team and AINET executive team. We conducted debriefing sessions after every activity where every member reflected on the concluded event.
- The Connect project was presented at the 5th AINET International Conference in Hyderabad. The appreciation they received boosted the morale of the team members and underlined the value of their work.



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- A brief report on the AINET-Connect project was presented the Annual General Meeting of AINET in March 2021.
- A brief report was also shared with the other Hornby TA project awardees at a virtual meeting organised by the Hornby Trust in May 2021.
- Dr Vivek Joshi and Nadeem Khan made a joint presentation: 'AINET-Connect: Stronger Networking for Stronger Association' at the virtual 'ELT Summit' on 11 July 2021 and it was highly appreciated by the delegates and the organisers.
- AINET proposes to prepare a detailed project report, which will be submitted to the Hornby Trust and made freely available on the AINET website. ([Click here to visit AINET website.](#))
- AINET also proposes to organise a symposium with other TAs to share the project experience and learnings.

8. OVERALL REFLECTIONS

It was a great learning experience not just for the AINET-Connect Associates but for the Project Team and the AINET Executive Committee as well. The participating teachers had high expectations from this project. ([Click here to watch videos of some AINET Connect Associates and their expectations from the project.](#))

The key learning points were:

- There can be unprecedented upsets and disruptions in the plan and therefore it is important to have contingency plans from the very beginning. The pandemic norms forced us to change a lot of our original plans and abandon some others. This was an important lesson in project planning.
- There can be possibilities during pandemics too, so to keep exploring opportunities in the challenges.
- We learned that working as a team is the key to success and individual commitment matters a lot in any group work.
- We recognise the importance of different stages in the planning and execution of an event.
- We learnt about the significance of having a Plan B when dealing with technology, ensuring proper communication and timely dissemination of information, post-activity debriefing and keeping notes and records.
- We realised the value of promoting diversity and inclusion, for example, a balance between men and women or Indian and overseas speakers in social media events.
- We realised that each social media platform had a different character. Different kinds of activities were needed and effective on different platforms. Therefore, it was important to plan separately for each platform. But it was also important to keep cross-connections between different platforms. We found the impact greatly increased when activities on one platform were supported by others through publicity, comments-sharing and post-event reporting.
- Another interesting realisation was that even the nature of engagement was different for each platform. In other words, different people engaged on different platforms to different extents, and someone active on one platform wasn't necessarily so on others. This is something we propose to explore more deeply now.



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- Sustaining the vibrancy of any platform at a constant high level is a challenge. The media teams of AINET-Connect constantly struggled to come up with new activities and offerings to keep the accounts vibrantly active. Even then there were occasional slack periods of low activity. We now realise that this is normal and not necessarily a problem of management or planning.
- As platforms continuously evolve, it is important to keep up with technological updates. Therefore, periodic training and upskilling of the media coordinators is important. This has to be included in the media management plans of the association as a regular feature.

Among the key strengths of the TA and the working context, we would like to count the wealth of skills and talent, as well as energy and enthusiasm, among teachers and AINET members. Popularity of various social media, huge spread of smartphones and a generally positive attitude to the use of social media are other strengths of the working context. However, a key challenge is to use these productively and purposefully to everyone's benefit. Another challenge is a large number of teachers (including AINET members) are absent from social media for various reasons. How to bring more of these people onto social media and engage them in professional development activities is an important question we would like to address in the future.

9. GOING FORWARD / LOOKING AHEAD

We propose to go further with the next version of this project – AINET-CONNECT 2.0, wherein we would like to:

- create and share with a wider audience a pool of resources and guidelines for managing social media platforms, including an awareness of related legal and ethical issues;
- expand our media teams by adding more platforms and more teacher-volunteers;
- explore and build pathways of further growth and other roles within the AINET organizational structure for the current Associates;
- collaborate with other TAs for capacity building and networking activities;
- ensure a wider participatory management of AINET activities and building on the expertise available within AINET.