



Learning and Development - The Role of Solomon

Introduction: The learning and development initiative had its origin in the results of a survey carried out in *Freemasonry Today* in 2015. In that survey, a large number of respondents reported their frustration at the lack of education and understanding behind the ritual. The sentiment was that most Lodges were engaged in doing Ceremonies but there was little time given to explaining the underlying symbolism and lessons to be obtained from the Ceremonies that the candidate had experienced. Many indicated that they had joined Freemasonry in order to become 'better men' and that without the support and understanding needed to appreciate the lessons which the ritual is designed to transmit, then their progress towards becoming better men was being frustrated.

The Improvement Delivery Group of Grand Lodge, chaired by Sir David Wootton, the Assistant Grand Master, set as a strategic priority the need for a continuous programme of education within Lodges in order to promote better understanding of the ritual. Although there is a good range of written material, it has not been widely available, and though some Provinces have libraries and education programmes, others do not. As a result, it was decided that there was a need for a central repository of short 'nuggets', papers, presentations and demonstrations in order to provide a single point of access online, to enable members to pursue their own development. This was further extended in order to provide materials and advice for Provincial Grand Lodges and Districts, so that they would be able to set up a learning development programme should they not have something already in train.

The key message is that Solomon is a virtual learning environment designed to support a broader programme of learning and development within Lodges and Chapters.

The Design of Solomon: Solomon is intended to address three audiences;

- Individual Masons
- Lodges and those within Lodges with an interest in sharing and broadening the understanding of their fellow members
- Provincial Grand Lodges and Districts in order to help them share experience and deliver an effective programme of education at a Lodge level

As a result, Solomon has been designed not just simply as a library or repository of material but rather as an engaging and interactive tool which responds to the very differing needs of individuals for the way they like to learn and obtain their information.

Many look for a fairly structured programme working through the three Degrees and on into the Royal Arch as a steady progression of learning and understanding. Others enjoy the opportunity to pursue specific interests which may often be much more exploratory, and perhaps depend on serendipity to kindle and foster their curiosity and subsequent understanding of the Ritual. Hence Solomon has a tag system within it that enables individual Masons to follow their own individual pathways whether that be to work through the three Degrees and the Royal Arch, or to explore the history and traditions of Freemasonry, or to explore the symbolism behind the ritual and maybe draw out the moral precepts, or perhaps for some to pursue a more esoteric or spiritual journey. We have also been very conscious of the different learning styles the people have and these have also influenced the design.

Whatever our differences in how we like to learn, what is most important is that we share our enjoyment of discovery and learning with others in and beyond our own Lodges and Chapters. Curiosity is a light to be lit, fostering curiosity in others and sharing our own enjoyment is what is most important. And Solomon is the resource to feed that journey of discovery and understanding.

*With respect to the design in the way it needed to respond to individual Masons the central message was, and is, to **foster curiosity and develop understanding**.*

Dr. John Roscoe - a member of the Solomon Team.