Our members' survey - the winners

28 May 2010 by Jancis Robinson

We are so grateful for the hundreds of Purple pagers past and present who took the trouble to complete our recent online members' survey designed to help us improve JancisRobinson.com. Thank you very much indeed for all the comments, both positive and negative. As usual among Purple pagers, everyone was much more polite than they need have been, and there was a plethora of really useful, practical and often practicable suggestions.

There were many instances in which we had almost identical numbers of people asking for more of something as asked for less of it, but there do seem to be some clear directives emerging and, once we have sifted through them all properly, we will issue a full report.

Today we simply announce which five Purple pagers have won one of our few remaining DVDs of the award-winning BBC TV series about characters in the wine trade *Vintners' Tales* as well as a donation of £100 to Room to Read in their name. Please also see the text in *italics* below for information about changes and features on the site that may be of interest to you.

Thanks to the insistent tone of one respondent, **David Stewart of London**, we have already implemented one change that was requested some time ago: to reduce the width of the text in the forum. Last time we asked our developers to look into it we were told it was a problem too difficult to solve, but David suggested exactly how to do it, and the consequence is that *the width of the forum text box should now adjust dynamically to the size of the window, not just the screen*. To take advantage of these changes, you will need to make sure that you do a 'hard' refresh of a forum page by pressing Ctrl + F5. If you just hit the Refresh symbol, the changes may not take effect as the file containing these changes may have been cached. I'm afraid the overall width of the window is still fixed by the top menu, (you will see now that when you shrink the window, the menu behaves a bit oddly), but at least the text does now wrap. David is one of our winners.

Raf Maes of Hoboken, Belgium, is another winner thanks to the practical nature of his suggestions. He was not the only respondent to suggest that the Our views section is far from perfect and at times overlaps with the Travel forum, but here's how he answered the question about suggested improvements to the site: 'Although the bottle shows a hint of rustique, the content it offers can only be described as 'top quality, ranking among the finest of the first growths'. From a domain which excels in consistency throughout the different vintages. Do not look for Power and Performance as certain wine critics do, but expect Matière, Freshness and Finesse in a well-balanced offer. Further suggestions: 1) Improve integration with other sites: Consider using 'OpenID' for the member accounts. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Openid) 2) In the Forums: Still (as in your previous surveys) a request to re-style the text area (make it smaller [done - to the best of our ability! JR]). Use the reclaimed space to add context-sensitive links on the right-hand site of the forum articles. (eg tag words relating to the article's text and pointing to other articles/info on the tagged topics) 3) Make it possible for members to customize some items of the site (eg option to view/post 'members only' or 'all'). Option to remember my 'last view'. Option to track certain threads and/or authors.' Thank you, Raef. We will certainly look into all these suggestions. The tagging of forum posts was mentioned by several respondents. It is actually easy to add up to 25(!) tags to a thread, in the box below the text box, so long as the person who starts the thread does it. (If you click on Search in the forum, you can choose Tag search, which then shows you the most common ones so far. And if a thread is tagged, it shows as a luggage tag to the right of the thread title in the list of threads and then again at the end of the thread once you have opened it.) *We encourage you to tag your threads* and will try to find someone with the time to add tags to what is already there.

Mike Convey of Hong Kong was one of several Purple pagers to suggest that the RSS feed could be improved, to include more of the text of the new articles it brings to visitors' attention. (At least one respondent complained that there was no RSS feed; *you can sign up for an RSS feed at the bottom right of any page*.) He also suggested, like many of you, that we should email you more frequently to let you know what was new on the site. We will certainly try to do this as I know many members, especially Americans, hardly bother to look at the site unless they receive an email encouraging them to do so. But please remember: *there are usually three new articles on the site every weekday and two every Saturday!* At the moment, our emailing system is a little cumbersome, but we are working on making it less so, in which case you may come to curse all those who suggested we email you more frequently. Most members seemed to want a weekly email.

A particularly useful set of responses came from peripatetic **Andrew McKinna.** His answer to what he liked last about the

site was 'The personal message system [in the forum] seems almost irrelevant - you would be better off adjusting the software to forward automatically any such messages to the registered email address (without disclosing that address to the sender...).' He is quite right, and I think with a start that he may well have tried to send me the odd message this way and that *I hardly ever check my awaiting messages on the forum; the best way to contact me is via Contact/General enquiries at the bottom of any page. For the moment, however, remember that you can send messages directly to other members who post on the forum via the forum.* Andrew also submitted the following interesting suggestions for improvement: 'It's obviously very time-consuming but it must remain fun for Jancis, otherwise that will inevitably show through in her writing, so I would be wary of further expansion, other than perhaps by expanding the subscriber base. I like Linda Murphy's periodic interventions and suspect you need someone in Hong Kong or Singapore. Whatever happened to that chap who posted so energetically for a year or two early on in the website's history?' I think this was Simon Tam of HK who has since immersed himself in his wine school there, and I believe now has a young family to keep him busy too. But this is an excellent suggestion. See Cher Lim's first report, although of course we should expand our Asian coverage. Very practical and timely, Andrew. Thank you.

And finally **Greg Randle of Austin, Texas**, of www.goodtastereport.com whose participation in JancisRobinson.com has also suffered for the admirable reason that the lure of the nursery is stronger. The thing he likes least about the site is the cost, although he adds tactfully, 'it is COMPLETELY WORTH the cost and more, ... I just can't afford it.... His suggestion for improvement is also 'Possibly get more local correspondents around the world to "give insight" as to what is happening locally. All the while keeping strong control on JR.com...'

We were concerned that some of the many wine students who responded seemed unaware that *there is a student discount rate for membership of Purple pages* that reduces the annual cost from £69 to £49, or equivalent in dollars, euros or Australian dollars. Just get the discount code from your educational body or write to subscriptions@jancisrobinson.com with an explanation of your student status. Or encourage your institution to take out a group membership.

Next week we aim to name the five winning respondents to our survey of non-members, in whose names we will also be donating £100 apiece to Room to Read.

Meanwhile, two early tidbits from the results of the members' survey:

The most popular wine type, by a small margin ahead of Bordeaux, is Burgundy.

And then, the contentious topic of Twitter. The proportion of members who actively dislike the fact that my latest tweets appear at the bottom of the home page is 14.5%. More than 17.4% actively like them, while 68.1% don't mind either way. So I'm afraid *the majority seem quite happy with Twitter on the home page* and they will stay there for the moment. (I dare say that in five years' time we'll be saying to each other, 'do you remember the age of Twitter?') Nathan Lee of Hong Kong made this interesting suggestion, however, in answer to what he liked least about the site: 'The Twitter section at the end of the page, which I do not read (because often there are replies to other Twitters that I do not have the slightest interest in). However, this also means I also find myself missing "bits" of news that do not justify an article on their own. I would still like to know about these tidbits - perhaps they should be posted in the forum instead?' Would anyone else back this suggestion? (Though it would involve a bit of extra work.)

Talking of which, back to analysing the surveys. We will report on their findings in much more detail.