

**MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS
NOVEMBER 18, 2014
SKYPE CONFERENCE CALL**

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

With president Dana Neuts presiding, the meeting of the board of directors of the Society of Professional Journalists was called to order at 11a.m. ET on Tuesday, November 18, 2014 via Skype conference call.

In addition to Neuts, the following were present: President-Elect Paul Fletcher; Secretary-Treasurer Lynn Walsh; Vice President for Campus Chapter Affairs Sue Kopen Katcef; Directors at-Large Bill McCloskey and Alex Tarquinio; Campus Advisers at-Large Mike Reilley and Becky Tallent; Student Representatives Brett Hall and Jordan Gass-Poore; Regional Directors Andy Schotz, Michael Koretzky, Patti Gallagher Newberry, Joe Radske, Rob McLean, and Tom Johnson.

Staff members present for the meeting were Executive Director Joe Skeel, Chapter Coordinator Tara Puckey, Webmaster Billy O’Keefe and Associate Executive Director Chris Vachon.

TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE

The purpose of the meeting was to consider staff’s proposal (Appendix A) for upgrading the Society’s membership database and website.

McLean asked if the project would require downtime of SPJ.org. O’Keefe said he didn’t anticipate any downtime because the current site would remain active while he builds the new site in the background.

Puckey also explained that the new site will be rolled out slowly over time. New features will become available in a systematic manner to ensure everything works properly.

Gallagher Newberry asked if there would be any changes to regional blogs. O’Keefe explained there wouldn’t be changes initially.

Gass-Poore asked if student chapter leaders would have control of their sites, similar to regional directors, board members and pro chapter leaders.

O’Keefe said they would. Puckey explained that this would likely be a function rolled out later, once SPJ determines how many “micro-sites” it wishes to have.

Upon proper motion by Bill McCloskey and second by Kopen Katcef, the board voted to approve the recommended budget and move forward with the proposed technology upgrade as outlined in the documents.

ADJOURNMENT

Upon proper motion by McCloskey and second by Kopen Katcef, the board adjourned at 11:13 a.m. ET on Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014.

APPENDIX A

MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 22, 2014
FROM: Tara Puckey & Billy O'Keefe
SUBJ: SPJ Technology
FOR: SPJ Executive Committee

OUR CURRENT SET UP

Think of SPJ's integrated technology as having three main pieces:

- iMIS – our database that is used in-house (accessible reliably only through desktop versions on workstations). This software manages memberships, contact information, registration and accounting information, etc.
- INET – our hosting provider. This company hosts our website. Additionally, information collected on our website passes through their content portal – meaning we retrieve convention registrations, Annual Reports, etc., here
- Our website.

SPJ has been using iMIS since the late 1990s. We launched our website around the same time. Back then, nothing was integrated. The two operated separately from each other, and manpower bridged the gap. Furthermore, the database was rudimentary – and not user friendly. As we have learned over the years, SPJ didn't do a very good job of setting up the database the way it was meant to be used. It's akin to hammering a nail with a screwdriver. Nonetheless, we only knew how to use the database the incorrect way we were trained.

Over time, in our efforts to integrate our website with our database, the problems have been exacerbated. Because our database wasn't set up correctly in the first place, upgrades and web integration proved more difficult. Over the years, those upgrades and integrations have led to a tangled web that complicate day to day operations.

For example, when members join SPJ, they do so on our website, which talks through our host provider INET, which then talks to our iMIS database. Information is relayed through the channels and then back again, creating several places where errors can occur. Tracking down the location of those errors can sometimes be long processes that take significant staff and outside provider time to fix.

Not only are we battling challenges with all the pieces working together, we're also not using the technology to our advantage. For example, our conference registrations aren't integrated with the database, so they are entered manually, taking up valuable staff time and creating higher possibilities for error.

Changes to information we wish to collect require coding, often tasked out (and paid for) to our iMIS service provider and INET.

Bottom line – we’re working harder, not smarter.

Over the past six months, Tara and Billy have rolled up their sleeves and learned the ins and outs of our situation. They have attended database training courses and met with our providers. What follows is their recommendation, with the support of the executive director, for moving forward.

PROPOSED OVERHAUL TO DATABASE AND WEBSITE

Last year, iMIS created a different type of system with their latest upgrade. It’s called EMS (Engagement Management System) and it is the basis for iMIS 20. In a nutshell, the system works to bring together all the different solutions we’ve had in the past into one cohesive platform for almost everything we do.

On the website side:

- Members will have an easier-to-manage, more robust member profile section that allows them to quickly and easily update their information at any time.
- Our database and website would be tied directly together so members and non-members can register for conferences or events. The data moves seamlessly into our database and corresponding event registration sections (huge timesaver for convention registrations!).
- Board members can work within their own section of the website and see up-to-date information that is most important to them, as can chapter leaders (which will create a new place to share ideas and converse).
- We have the ability to create community workspaces and pages for each different community.
- Data from iMIS will be directly integrated with the website, so no more three step processes for usernames and passwords.
- Social sign in (allows members to sign in to their SPJ account with Twitter or Facebook).
- Cart view with multiple items (members can register for conferences, training programs, join SPJ, donate, etc. all in one step).
- SPJ retains total control on the look and feel of the site.

On the database side:

- We’ll be able to easily collect more member data, such as pictures, beats, categories, etc., and do so without having to custom code things on the back end.
- Staff can access the database anywhere via the web instead of being tied down to their HQ desktops, which will come in handy for convention and when working remotely.
- Our reporting will be more accurate and we can create our own reports using IQA (Intelligent Query Architect) to look at any piece of data in our system, where before we were tied to previously created reports or having them custom coded by our outside provider (which costs time and money).
- Each staff member will have targeted tools they need to succeed – for example, Linda will be able to quickly view up to the minute stats, access records easier and find the people she needs depending on different criteria; Chris will have access to live donation stats and be able to review donor data in a way that makes sense.

Things this upgrade will address:

- Integrating the AutoDues directly into our website for easier member experience.
- Accurate, deeper data – this is incredibly important since it will allow us to know our members better and figure out ways to engage with them about things that are of interest.
- Removing ancient processes from our database (i.e., software that is tied in currently that is no longer in use, cannot be upgraded, etc.).
- Allowing better communication with our members, creating a log of contact for historical records.
- Providing members with an easy overview of what is included in their membership (i.e., member of chapter, committee, community, etc.).
- Moving our website to a current code structure that allows us to “play nice” with other programs and software. This may be one of the most important aspects of this plan.

Overall, the technology allows us to collect better data and analyze it in a more accurate way, create a more user friendly experience on the website and save valuable time by automating some current manual processes.

THE COST

Our total cost for the upgrade is \$32,000 (estimated, obviously). This includes our licensing for the iMIS20 bundle (\$12,000) and the manpower to do the upgrade. We would pay for this out of our budget surplus from the prior fiscal year.

This cost could fluctuate, as Billy will be doing most of the website work that our service provider does during an upgrade and, once we’re in there, we may find that we need an additional module to meet our needs.

After the initial upgrade is complete, we’ll be eliminating our host provider, INET, which will save us roughly \$3,000 per year. As the Communications Module in iMIS gets better, we may also be able to eliminate our Constant Contact subscription, which would also result in a savings of nearly \$2,000 per year.

Bottom line, as we start using our database to its full potential, we may find cost savings from eliminating other software we won’t need. The extent of that is really unpredictable since we’ve not explored these options within iMIS before.

THE TIMELINE

One of the greatest things about this upgrade and the movement to a RiSE website is our ability to build our site in the background a little bit at a time. Once we have the “go ahead” to move forward, we will begin working in phases.

Phase I (Four to Six Weeks)

Upgrading the iMIS software

Fix all data issues discovered in data audit

Phase II (Six to Nine Weeks)

Begin work on Staff Site

Phase III

Though we'll begin work on our Member Site immediately, this is expected to take the longest and won't be able to swing into high gear until the first two phases are complete

Overall

We're looking at better data in three to four months, staff sites for better workflow and more opportunities within six months and a new Member Site rollout sometime in late 2015. Of course, we'd like to finish everything much sooner than that, but we're well versed in technology hiccups and want to make sure we're working through every single aspect of this upgrade correctly. Furthermore, big SPJ projects (such as our awards deadline and convention registration) make the timing trickier. i.e., we don't want to transition something two days before the awards deadline. We have to wait for gaps to do some things.

MOVING FORWARD

Upgrading our technology, both physical technology and software, should be a top priority. iMIS will continue to release new versions and while we don't need to purchase every