Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Chicago, Illinois

Staff Report: Technology
(Prepared by Matt Black)

Main Website Redesign

The redesign of SAA's website is our top priority and is making good progress. We've set up a development server to allow the entire staff to collaborate on content updates, and staff has begun that work this month. Launch procedures have been outlined with the help of CommonPlaces, the firm that built and hosts the current site. Once content updates are completed, we can proceed with user testing. Next steps also include finalizing mobile-friendly design elements.

Listservs

The recent focus on the A&A List has led us to investigate alternate technologies that might offer better support for this active community. While there are possibilities for a solution focused solely on the A&A List, the most ideal solutions would take into account our entire approach to listservs.

All current SAA listservs, including the A&A List, are run by Lyris ListManager. There are several areas where Lyris underperforms:
1. Digest emails are ugly and hard to read.
2. Web interface (forums) is ugly, off-brand, and hard to use/search.
3. Synching listserv membership with MemberMax occasionally breaks and staff (Matt) needs to correct settings for users.
4. Delivery slows with heavy volume (often caused by A&A List, but not always).
5. No self-moderation tools (desired particularly for A&A List), such as the ability to up/down vote posts, mark as "best answer," report/flag posts, etc.
6. Name of sender in emails sometimes renders improperly, and this looks sloppy and reduces usability of the system, because users can't tell who sent the note or how to respond off-list.

One holistic solution, HigherLogic, rises to the top of the list because it is the only solution that currently integrates with MemberMax and offers a feature set that could adequately replace Lyris.

HigherLogic is an integrated suite of products, of which their discussion/listserv module is only one component. It is much more than a listserv platform, and it is priced accordingly. Making this change would not merely upgrade the lists, but add other features. It would be an investment of time and money to provide several new services to members. But the cost would also benefit a broader range of SAA's activities: management of Member Affinity Groups, the new Dictionary, Member Directory, and microsites.

Some highlighted features:
- Discussion Lists
  - Replace Lyris. Fully integrated with email, so old-school users wouldn't necessarily lose anything or need to use other features. Advanced search of archives. Addresses all issues with Lyris listed above.
- Resource Library
  - Basic document sharing.
- Directories
  - Replace the MM member directory. Better search features. Could add new fields such as "Area of Expertise" or "Industry" and search on those, too.
- Wiki Glossary
  - Possibly a viable solution for Dictionary Working Group. Might not have all the features they want, but it could work.
- Widget Builder
  - This will let us integrate with existing Drupal microsites, so a user can see latest discussions on the group list from the microsite. Could possibly replace Drupal microsites entirely (needs further investigation).
- Automation Rules
  - Good for management of the online communities. For example:
    - "If user signed up one week ago but didn't post anything, send a follow-up welcome email with How To"
    - "If user has posted 100 responses, display a gold star on their profile"

Staff will continue to explore this solution and consider the appropriate timing of implementation.