

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 10, 12, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

**Staff Report: Technology
(Prepared by Web and IT Systems Administrator Matt Black and
Director of Administration and Finance Peter Carlson)**

Most of the activities of the Technology and Operations team falls under Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan: “Meeting Members’ Needs.” Our aim is to support the technologies and tools that empower our members and equip staff to deliver excellent service.

New Software for Annual Meeting

We are acquiring a new system for abstract and speaker management (to manage our program proposal submissions, review of proposals by the Program Committee, and speaker management and communications). The system we have used for several years, EventRebels, was recently acquired by Cadmium, who is discontinuing the ER Speaker product. We conducted a search of viable alternatives, and have selected a product called “Attendee Interactive” by Community Brands, the same parent company of our Association Management System (AMS), NimbleAMS. Part of the appeal of this product is its integration with NimbleAMS, which we expect to save staff time and improve the accuracy of presenter data. We are currently implementing the new software and plan to launch the proposal form in November.

New IT Management Partner

Over the past year, we have noticed a significant decline in the quality of our third-party IT service. Our frustrations came to a head this summer, with unacceptable failures in support and service that disrupted staff operations and cost us considerable time and effort. We have just concluded our search process and negotiations to replace our current vendor, and have contracted with Chicago Transom Partners (CTP) to be our new IT management firm.

We will be handling the transition with extreme care to minimize disruption, with the initial transition commencing in mid-November. We expect costs with CTP to be at or below our current levels, and we expect the quality of service to improve dramatically.

SAA’s Main Website - Drupal

Background:

Drupal is the Content Management System (CMS) that hosts our main homepage and website. We are currently on the same version of the software upon which we built the site, Drupal 6. Drupal 6 has not been officially supported since 2016. For years now our roadmap has included

an upgrade to Drupal 9, the current version. This upgrade has been perpetually delayed for good reasons—prioritizing our new AMS, the pandemic—all related to making the most of our limited resources. We have done our best to keep the old software running in the meantime (occasionally a heroic effort!), but we are now quickly running out of time. This spring, our web host was forced to isolate our site on a designated server because the old technology of Drupal 6 cannot keep pace with modern web traffic. This incurs an additional cost that would be better spent toward upgrading to Drupal 9.

We have received a proposal to upgrade our website to Drupal 9 from our current partner, CommonPlaces, Inc. The proposal includes work to implement accessibility best practices on the Drupal platform. We are reviewing the proposal and expect the costs to be included in the FY 2022 budget.