

Open Letter to the ArchivesSpace Project Team, April 17, 2013

Dear ArchivesSpace Team:

With the recently released announcement regarding ArchivesSpace membership fees and structure, the Archivists' Toolkit/Archon Roundtable (ATART) would like to take the opportunity to help improve understanding between the AT/Archon community and the ArchivesSpace project team. We realize the project is in a transitional stage and many issues are still under development, but would like to request further information and clarification on a variety of topics. Information presented below is drawn from comments on the ATART listserv, an anonymous web survey to gather questions from ATART members, and direct emails received by the steering committee.

To help foster an open dialog we've organized the community's questions into the following groups:

- Governance
- Membership Services
- Membership Structure and Fees: Membership Models
- Membership Structure and Fees: Consortia
- Membership Structure and Fees: Decision Making, Involvement, & Other
- The ArchivesSpace Community
- Migration

We would like to propose that the ArchivesSpace Team address these questions at the Archivists' Toolkit/Archon Roundtable meeting at SAA in August, but in the meantime, we hope that by sharing these questions we will encourage further open discussion of issues important to our user community. We encourage the continued use of the ATART listserv and other venues to provide information and clarification to a wide audience before the annual meeting as well.

Accountability and transparency are vital to this effort, both in terms of the open source nature of ArchivesSpace as well as building and retaining a user community. ATART supports and advocates for the need to create a sustainable open source product available to as many potential users as possible. ATART believes that lower barriers to entry, transparency for decision making, seeking input from the community on decisions regarding governance and membership structure (in addition to the actual software), and improving communication will increase the likelihood of success and sustainability of ArchivesSpace.

We look forward to a continuing, collaborative working relationship between ArchivesSpace, LYRASIS, Archivists' Toolkit users, Archon users, and all potential ArchivesSpace users as this endeavor moves forward.

Best,

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with input from members of the Society of American Archivists' Archivists' Toolkit/Archon Roundtable community

Questions and Issues:

Governance

- What are the specific duties and role for the Board of Trustees/Governance Board/Initial Board (multiple names have been used to describe this body)?
- Will any of the governance groups help inform membership categories, structure, prices, and services?
- How will surplus membership fees be used (i.e., a reserve fund, special projects)? Does a governing body have input into that decision? Could it lower membership fees for following years?
- Members in good standing are eligible according to the brochure. Is there a definition for “good standing”?
- Are the project partners (NYU, UCSD, UIUC) considered charter members? Will they have a different role than other members in governance?
- How will ArchivesSpace ensure that the diversity of all users are represented in matters of governance, improvements, and sustainability? Will there be “at-large” seats to represent users groups who are not members? Will there be any reserved seats to ensure equitable representation by large institutions, small institutions, academic institutions, corporate repositories, etc.?
- How can consortia participate in governance?
- Can you clarify what the technical advisory council will be charged with? How will that be different than the work of the hired (and paid) software developer on staff? Will this committee utilize skills and people who are users but non-members?

Membership Services

- Can there be explicit clarification of the services and benefits of membership? Specifically, a side-by-side chart comparing the services offered to a non-member, regular member, and Charter member, would be helpful.
- What documentation will be available for non-members? What documentation will be available for members only?
- How much support do members receive? Is it a certain number of hours or included support? Is it the ability to join a queue for support time?
- Does being a member gain guaranteed additional customization? Or is this an “extra” that members and non-members alike pay for?
- Can there be clarification on migration services? It has been stated since the announcement that AS will have migration tools available for all, so what’s the added value of migration services for members?
- What is the added value of the merged product for the first release? Can information be presented to explain the added functionality in the second release? It would be beneficial for this information to be provided in a way that both technical and nontechnical adopters could understand.

Membership Structure and Fees: Membership Models

- Will membership models, structure, and pricing be reviewed and reevaluated on a regular basis?
- Who is determining the fee structure and costs, the AS team, Lyris, or both?

- Can there be clarification on the price structures presented for academic institutions so it is clear by looking at the chart what category your institution is in? What qualifies for each category?
 - For example, how do you define “medium”?
 - Community colleges are listed in two different categories? How do they determine which one is applicable?
- Can the membership fee structure be modified to better reflect the budgets in relationship to the size of a repository, rather than the size of the institution?
- Will institutions be able to “challenge” the category they are assigned, similar to what libraries can do with regular LYRASIS membership?
- What will the pricing and services/benefits look like in regards to institutions needing hosting for ArchivesSpace? What will the model and structure look like? Will pricing be based on the size of the institution, the number of records in the database, the size of the database, or other criteria? Will there be ranges or different levels of hosting with different service levels?
- Will those who contribute to the project be given some membership benefits in exchange?
- Does membership require signing a “member agreement”? If so, what does that include?
- It has been stated that ArchivesSpace members do not need to be LYRASIS members. Are there discounts for LYRASIS members or are they completely separate memberships for all parties?

Membership Structure and Fees: Consortia

- Will information (pricing and services/benefits) regarding consortia memberships be made publicly available?
- Will consortia size play a role in their membership fees?
- Are consortia members being treated differently (in terms of governance) than regular, institutional members?
- Why will there be an additional fee for a consortia if all of their members are not also ArchivesSpace members? Won't this make sustainability even harder?
 - Scenario 1: Only half a consortium's members are ArchivesSpace members, based on the additional fee the consortia can no longer afford membership so withdraws. Some of their members will have ArchivesSpace benefits and some of them won't. Everyone (consortia, consortia members, general ArchivesSpace community) loses out on additional support, staffing, and possible hosting services that consortia might be able to provide.
 - Scenario 2: Consortium joins ArchivesSpace, but institution within does not join ArchivesSpace. Institution gets ArchivesSpace support, but costs goes up b/c of ArchivesSpace fee for consortia. Potential loss of consortium members.
 - Scenario 3: Consortium does not join ArchivesSpace, but institution within does join. Institution's costs go up, potentially significantly. Would a consortium cut services and lower fees to keep institutions that move to ArchivesSpace? Or, the institution might drop their consortium membership.
 - Scenario 4: Neither consortium or institution join ArchivesSpace. Institutions continue using tools no longer support or do something else. Consortium

and/or institution run ArchivesSpace on own without support, but this doesn't contribute to the sustainability effort. Costs may remain the same or may go up if more staff time is needed at consortia level.

Membership Structure and Fees: Decision Making, Involvement, & Other

- What other membership models and fee structures were considered by the ArchivesSpace team to cover necessary expenses?
- Why was the published model chosen over other models?
- What is the target monetary goal to run ArchivesSpace? Is there a projected budget already developed? Will this be shared with the community to promote transparency and an understanding of how membership fees support ArchivesSpace (like stakeholders in a company)?
 - For example, we know that there are plans to hire 2.0 FTE positions. What percentage of membership fees will directly support their salary and benefits?
 - Are membership fees contributing to other expenditures such as administrative costs, technology/services, marketing/publicity, trainings, travel and professional development, etc...?
 - Are there opportunities to have software development done without a full time person (realizing this could, but not necessarily, lead to slower development/other issues)? Examples could include internships for graduate students or short term assignments/project work. Were these options discussed?
- Given above, what was the thinking/practicality of significantly lower membership rates? How does that affect sustainability as it might mean a significantly larger user base, which could end up equaling the same amount of membership income? Were the numbers run to show what benchmarks were necessary?
- LYRISIS determines membership categories based on library operating budget. Was that considered as a model? Or determining categories based on department(s) operating budgets? What about archives staff FTE or # of deployments of ArchivesSpace?
- Why are the monetary membership levels so much higher for ArchivesSpace than they are for regular LYRISIS membership, which range from \$450-\$1,125 over four categories? (Realizing that there are different user needs and services for these different members and programs, but this is a huge difference. Relates to question above)
- Could there be different levels of membership? For example, if in year 1 of membership, an institution uses the documentation and migration tools heavily, but in year 2 they only use the members-only listserv, is there a price difference?
- Could some benefits like the migration tools/services be sold à la carte as packages/modules?
- Is there any opportunity for negotiation of fees and services between the user community and project staff?

ArchivesSpace Community

- Can ArchivesSpace provide potential users with advocacy talking points to help them pitch a membership to the software to their budget managers, administration, and institution?

- For example, if an organization has had Archon for years that hasn't cost them anything, can AS provide some language to help convince upper administration and budget controllers to begin funding a membership-based software?
- Could a Community Board (open to everybody, including non-members) be added as part of the Governance structure?
- Can there be a Community Listserv that is open to everybody (either in addition to or as a replacement of the Members-Only Listserv)? This could help support sustainability and community as opposed to only having one, member-only listserv.
- Are non-members able to provide suggestions for improvements to the software? (user interface, new features, etc....)
- How can the ArchivesSpace project team work with the established community base of ATART? How can ATART help facilitate communication, work, etc. between ArchivesSpace and the ATART community?

Migration

- Will it be possible to migrate data to ArchivesSpace without using tools provided to members? What will this look like?
- Are migration tools provided for users to implement on their own or is migration a service performed by ArchivesSpace staff? Or are both options available?