

IT Report, August 2020 to July 2021

The past year has seen some significant projects completed that have been “pending” in the queue for quite some time, as well as completion of annual tasks that are required every year.

Major Projects

CiviCRM for the Society of Economic Botany

The BSA made a commitment to the SEB many years ago to provide membership management solutions for them. Software wise, this started with a custom desktop application I wrote for the BSA, and deployed to the SEB as well, including a companion web site for membership services. As the BSA moved to CiviCRM instead back in 2014, the software I wrote was “orphaned” and needed to be replaced for SEB. This actually happened in the Fall of 2020, with CiviCRM going live for the SEB in November. This was done as part of their ongoing contract with the BSA.

CiviCRM for the American Fern Society

Similar to the SEB, the AFS had been using my custom desktop software since around 2007, and that orphaned software needed to be replaced for them as well. Since they didn’t have a contract with the BSA similar to the SEB, it was up to them to decide which direction to go. After much deliberation they decided on CiviCRM as well. We kept the implementation of their system as simple as possible, and their site went live in January of 2021. This was done as a separate contract based on a fixed cost of labor per hour so they were incented to do as much work as possible on their own and require the BSA to do as little as possible. They are happy with the results, and have a list of other items they would like us to do, also based on an hourly rate.

Server Upgrades

The BSA maintains several servers on Amazon Web Services (“the cloud”), and those servers need upgrades from time to time. We use Ubuntu Server LTS (Long Term Support), which maintains support for each version for 5 years, with published “sunset” dates in April, 5 years after release. Our servers all run the same versions, for uniformity, predictability and simplicity. Version 16.04 (released April 2016) was sunsetting, so all of our servers needed updating to version 20.04 (the most recent LTS) in order to maintain security. I started with the simplest servers and progressed to the most complex. The SEB server was updated in early February, the ASPT server in late February, the SSE server in mid-March, and the BSA server in

late April. There were some periodic rough spots during some of the upgrades but they have all been operating smoothly.

Awards System for Society of Systematic Biologists

Through a common member, the SSB learned of our awards system and we contracted with them to provide them with a site. It was a straightforward implementation, with the only customization being a login method to their membership software. It went live in September 2020.

Data Privacy

BSA and SSE had need to gather DEI data from members and awards applicants, and I assisted with coming up with a method to gather the data yet keep it private from those who had no business seeing it.

Ongoing/Annual Projects

1. Membership Renewal Season for BSA, SSE, SEB, ASPT and AFS
2. Support for Awards Management (including a new feature for automatic, random assignments of evaluators to applications) for BSA, SSE, ASPT, and SSB.
3. Botany 2021