

Individual Members & Chapters

In the Individual member and Chapter area we want to highlight the contributions of our chapters to us in the WSIS process, especially the support from them exhibited in the WSIS Ambassador Program. We had input into WSIS from chapters and members generally but we also drew upon this volunteer group of ambassadors who attended and gave us the benefit of their insights. This was a very valuable input to ISOC as we developed our WSIS positions. In turn, we believe that chapters and members also found this initiative to be helpful to them in their support of ISOC's mission and goals.

In addition, we have funded seven chapter/member projects in the Fall Round of Project Funding. That brings the yearly total of projects given funding to fourteen. See more information on this in the separate report.

In addition, since October 12th we have had the membership system rolled out to all chapters and Individual Members. But you will have seen the recent criticisms of the system.

In view of the concerns recently expressed regarding the membership system, we are embarking on a close review of the system and our options.

As has been mentioned, prior to purchasing the membership system ISOC conducted extensive surveys and outreach among members and chapter delegates. The resulting 'draft' RFP took that feedback into consideration and the consequent final RFP was again reviewed by chapters and we received and considered their input in proceeding thereafter.

When we looked at web-based systems at the time (late 2003), not one of them offered all of what we were seeking and not one of them was international in scope (even though we received bids from a number of different countries) – only GO appeared interested and capable of becoming international. It was as a result of these circumstances that we adopted the original goal of a phased implementation of a membership system.

The initial release was planned to be the common foundation for a system and it would, in future, be built upon to become more responsive and to be made more international. We were aware that the system lacked functionality in some critical areas – this was a natural outgrowth of the fact that no solution offered all of what we were seeking. And we were thorough in looking - it should be recalled that we asked chapters to float the RFP by their members and by possible vendors and we also posted the RFP on our website. From this outreach we received a good number of proposals to consider – indeed some of the bids came from the chapters efforts to disseminate to potential vendors. Despite this no web based system fully measured up to the requirements in the RFP. Their shortcomings were largely centered on:

- The system not being international enough:
 - a. No international character sets
 - b. No currencies other than dollars
 - c. Only available in English

That process of a phased approach appeared to be working – chapters and members have been making use of the GO system and were quite helpful in the testing phase. But now that we are past testing and into production, these criticisms have been raised again with the addition that evidently quite a number of chapter administrators feel the system is too cumbersome, and so the system will be reviewed as noted below.

It bears repeating - the system does work and it is delivering value to chapters and members. Fifteen chapters have been using it. Keeping in mind that there are many chapters who do not need or want such a system, and measured against past experience, fifteen is an acceptable number at this point in time. Moreover, 1155 new global members have joined ISOC using the web based membership system since it was unveiled on October 12th of 2005. In that time 34 new sustaining members have also signed up and 52 people have used the system to make individual donations totaling \$12,050.

So, yes, the system is working albeit not perfectly - the goal has been to improve it to meet our requirements as such capabilities become available. This is not news and chapters and members have been made aware of our plans on many occasions.

However, it is clear the system has been poorly received by a number of chapter delegates and administrators. The complaints vary in the description but generally fall into the following:

1. The system is too cumbersome/complex:
 - a. Lack of simplified registration capability
2. The system is not international:
 - a. Cannot use international character sets
 - b. Cannot accept currencies other than dollars
 - c. Is only available in English
3. The system poses security and data privacy issues
4. Lack of interface with local chapter systems

At this point we believe the best way forward is:

First, we will, as a prelude to kicking off Phase Two of the system, examine all possible ways of improving the current system, especially as relates to #'s 1 through 4 above. We have developed considerable experience with the GO system (yes, we too found it a bit complex but we believe it is a very good platform on which to create an enduring and flexible membership system to serve our community well into the future). We can, we believe, build on that experience and investment to provide a valuable system to our chapters and members. But, mindful that these criticisms are quite strong, we will take another step as follows.

Second, and in parallel, we will examine the feasibility of executing our original Phase Two against the option of doing a 'new build' of a system.

Finally, to assure EU privacy rights, we have an informal relationship with a Canadian company, Dispute Resolution Services LP, which affords us the ability to have a neutral third party resolve any issue regarding complaints about the handling of such privacy issues. This company is an online dispute resolution firm recognized by EU regulators as a 'safe harbor' for such complaints.

As we begin these two parallel efforts we will of course first discuss with chapters ways they can be involved. Just as chapters were involved before, they will be again and the first order of business will be to determine how best and most effectively to achieve that.

This important issue will be addressed by management. The plans that will be developed will be done with and reviewed by chapters, with an update presented to the Board at the next Board meeting on April 10th.