



## Internet Society survey: ISOC Membership System

### Summary

By Peter Godwin, ISOC IT Director - July 17th, 2006

As part of ISOC's continuing efforts to provide Chapters with an efficient and effective membership management system, a survey of Chapter delegates' experiences and requirements was carried out during the month of June.

The survey questions were designed to enable us to get a better understanding of how ISOC Chapters work with membership management as well as to gather suggestions for improving ISOC's current system. The survey was also an opportunity to learn more about Chapters' own membership systems.

The survey results, presented here, will help ISOC direct the focus of future activities in this area.

Responses were received from 34 Chapters around the world (including one Chapter in formation - see Appendix 1). Participating Chapters represent nearly 6,000 members - from a large Chapter with 600 members on down to the smaller Chapters as well.

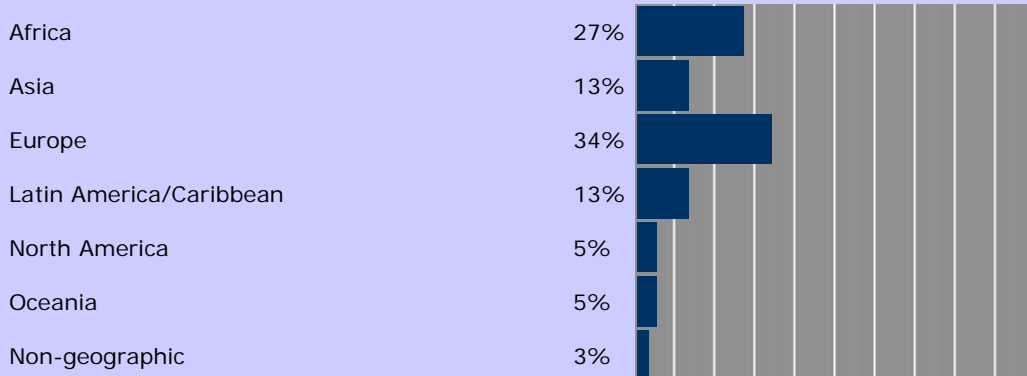
Almost all survey participants agreed that they have a need for a membership system. There was general consensus that simplicity is a key requirement for such a system with many of those that have implemented the ISOC GO system feeling that the current application is too complex.

The vast majority of participants is open to implementing a new ISOC membership system. Local language support, and features such as improved reporting and mailing list support are considered more important than the possibility to accept online payments or integrate with other systems. The latter features appear to be of interest primarily to the larger Chapters.

A significant number of participants indicated that their Chapters are ready to provide competence and/or resources to support any future collaborative development effort.

An analysis of survey responses follows.

### Survey participants by region



### Does your Chapter have a fee-paying membership level?



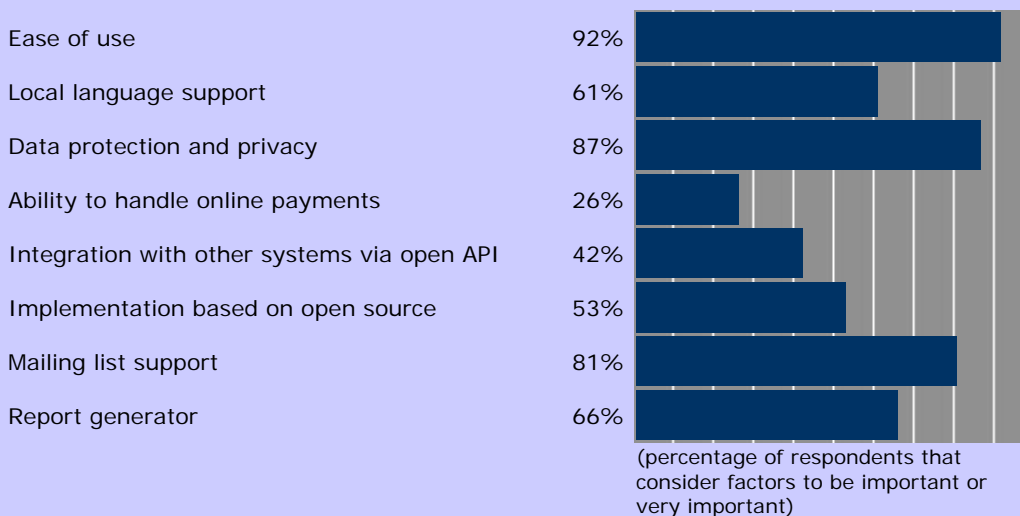
Some Chapters have multiple membership fee levels - e.g. individual member, student member or organization member. In some cases, there are even multiple levels of organization membership fees depending on the size of the member organization. Those Chapters that participated in this survey and who collect their own membership fees represent a total of 1,325 fee-paying members.

### Does your Chapter need a membership system?



Almost all survey participants agreed that they have a need for a membership system.

### Which membership system features do you consider to be important?



Ease of use was clearly the most sought-after feature with over 90% of participants rating it as important or very important. This was followed closely by data protection and privacy. The ability to support mailing lists was also a highly-ranked requirement as was local language support and report generation. There appears to be little general interest in having the ability to handle online payments - although this, along with integration with other systems, does appear to be important for some of the larger Chapters.

Many participants proposed other features that they considered important - clearly many of these inputs were based on experience of using the current ISOC GO system. Several participants suggested improved handling of membership renewals (e.g. automatic renewal of non-paying members, email alerts when renewals are due). Another common theme was implementation of smooth, realtime operations - without the need for multiple approval processes for new members.

There were also some ideas for 'nice to have' features - these focussed primarily on member services, including such things as single sign on to a members-only area, online voting, inter-Chapter communication etc.

### Which languages and character sets are commonly used in your area?

Responses to this question illustrate well the linguistic diversity of ISOC Chapters. Languages commonly used include: English, French, Spanish, Galician, Dutch, German, Finish, Swedish, Hungarian, Polish, Japanese, Bangla, Urdu and Turkish. Concerning character sets, only a few participants mentioned their use of UTF-8 - while many use ISO-8859-1.

**Would you consider implementing a new common ISOC membership system?**



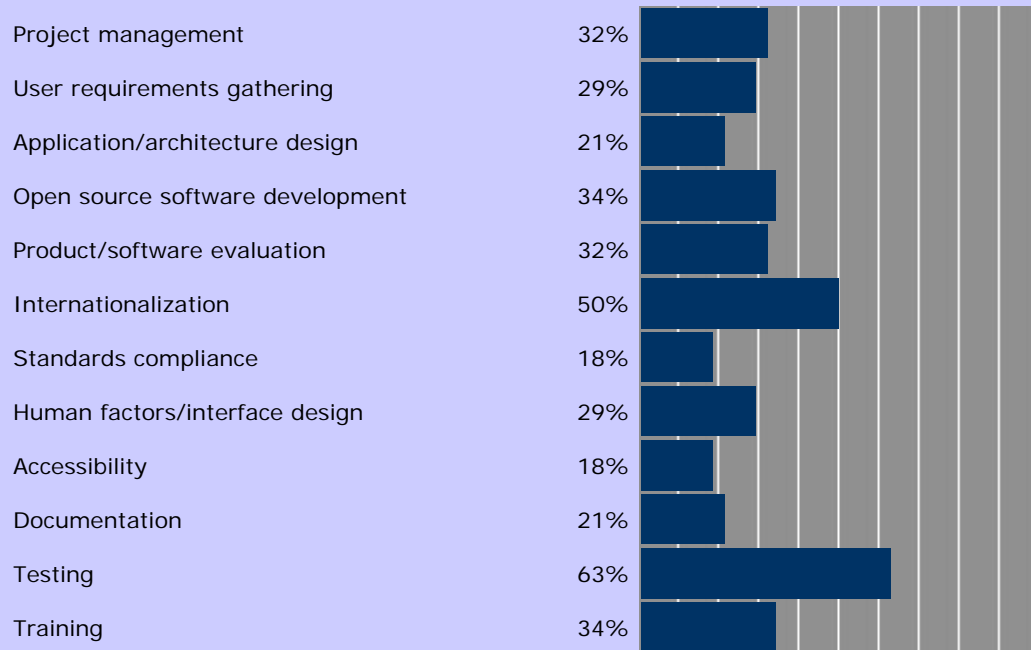
The vast majority of participants is open to implementing a new ISOC membership system.

**Could your Chapter provide resources or competence to support a collaborative development project?**



A significant number of participants indicated that their Chapters are ready and able to support a project to develop the ISOC membership system.

**In which of these areas could you provide resources or competence?**



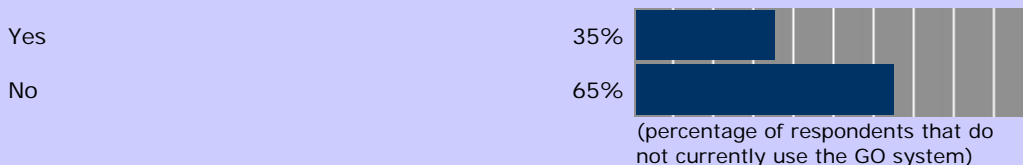
Many participants are interested in participating in testing. But only around one third of participants said they could support system development activities, with even fewer proposing help in the critical areas of requirements gathering and application design. Chapters that noted local language support as a priority also proposed to support internationalization efforts.

**Does your Chapter currently use the ISOC GO membership system?**



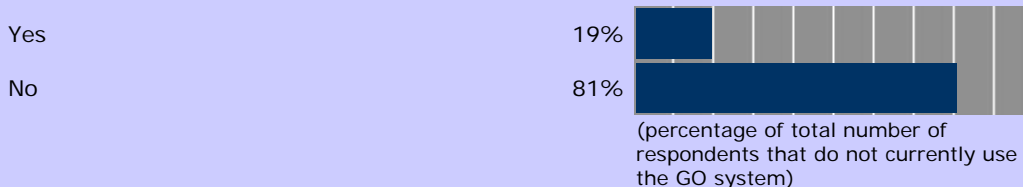
About two thirds of participants do not currently use the ISOC GO system. The system's complexity was most often cited as the main reason for not working with it.

**If you do not use the GO system, did your Chapter try implementing it at any stage?**



Only one third of participants that do not use the ISOC GO system have actually tried implementing it.

**If you do not use the GO system, have you considered using other membership systems?**



Very few Chapters have considered other systems. Those that did, looked at open source solutions.

**If you do use the GO system, which aspects of the system work well, and which need improvement?**

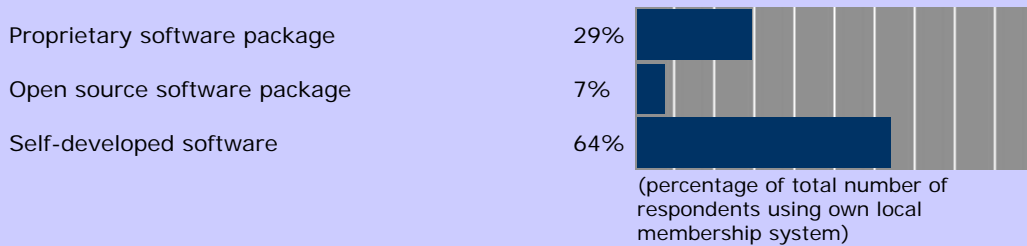
No comments were received on specific aspects that work well although some participants did express general satisfaction with the system. However, many participants pointed out that the complexity of the signup process needs to be reduced (i.e. reduce the number of screens), and that the renewal process needs to be simplified. It was also suggested that the back-office approval process for new members could be streamlined and accelerated. There were also calls for improved functionality, such as integration with mailing list management.

### Does your Chapter currently use its own local membership system?



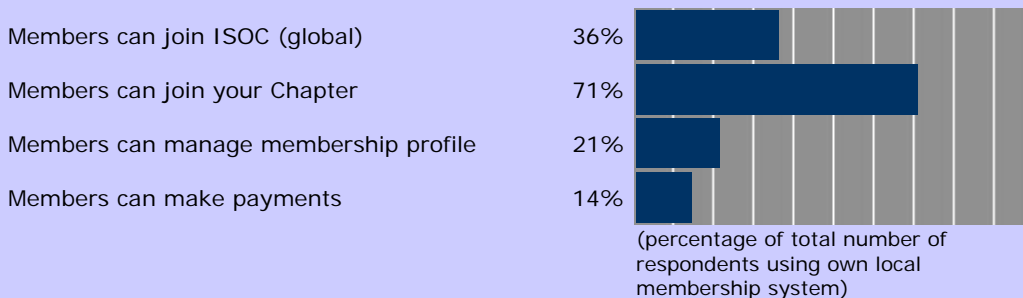
Around one third of participants run their own local Chapter membership system. Participant comments showed general satisfaction with their systems in terms of simplicity and reliability - they also indicated that more could be done to integrate these systems with other applications. The following questions provide more information about Chapter membership systems.

### Which kind of software are you using?



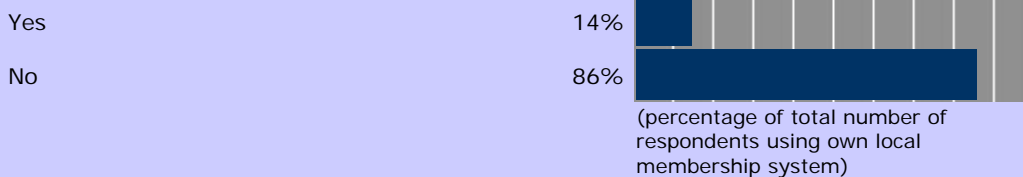
Note that many participants that indicated use of proprietary software packages are in fact using Microsoft Excel, rather than a membership management application. Those that have developed their own solutions have often done so using open source (e.g. PHP and MySQL).

**Which of these functions does your membership system support?**



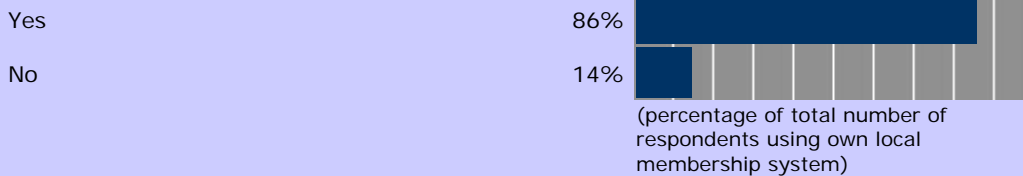
Those Chapters accepting online payments do so using PayPal.

**Does your system have documented APIs for integration with other systems?**



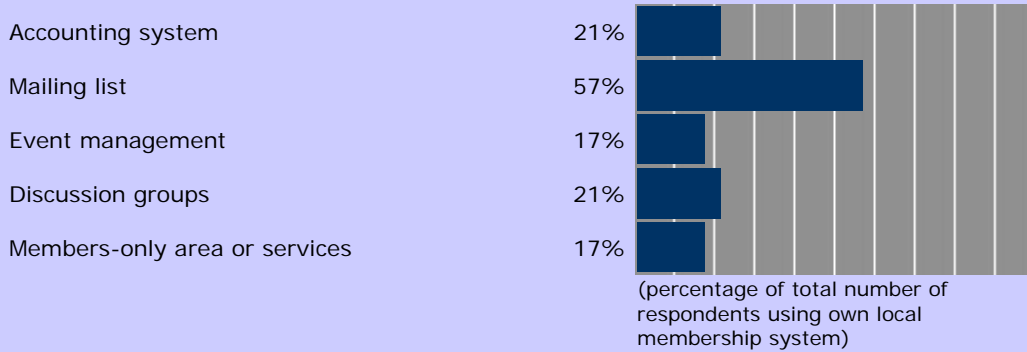
Note that although very few systems currently appear to have APIs, 42% of participants indicated that availability of an open API is an important or very important feature.

**Would you find it useful to receive member data from the ISOC GO system in XML format?**

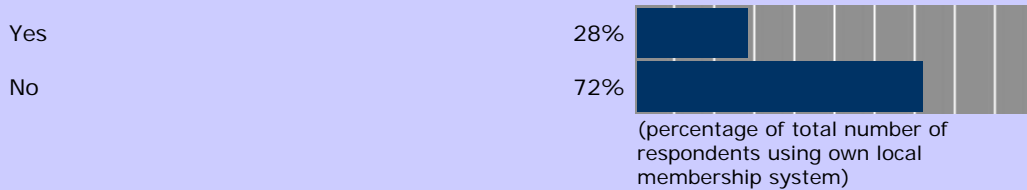


A large number of participants expressed interest in an XML data feed despite the fact that most have systems that do not currently provide integration APIs.

**Does your system provide interfaces to other systems?**



**Does your Chapter publish a privacy policy online?**



Despite the fact that many participants indicated that data protection and privacy is an important feature of a membership system, very few actually publish a privacy policy.

**What kind of reports can your system produce? What kind of reports would you like to have in future?**

Most systems appear to generate simple listing reports - in future there is a desire for more flexibility in report generation.

### General comments

The need for simplicity was again mentioned as was improved flexibility for integration with other applications. However, one participant believes that some chapters may have unrealistic expectations regarding the system and suggested that a feature by feature price list presented to delegates prior to implementation would probably help them to evaluate and choose exactly which ones they wish to have implemented. Many participants reiterated their willingness to help with any future system development activities.

### Appendix 1: List of participants

Sincere thanks to all those that participated in this survey:

ISOC Bangladesh Chapter  
ISOC Belgium Chapter  
ISOC Belgium - Wallonia Chapter  
ISOC Benin Chapter  
ISOC Bulgaria Chapter  
ISOC Colombia Chapter  
ISOC Costa Rica Chapter  
ISOC Disabilities and Special Needs Chapter  
ISOC Finland Chapter  
ISOC Galicia Chapter  
ISOC Germany Chapter  
ISOC Ghana Chapter  
ISOC Hungary Chapter  
ISOC Japan Chapter  
ISOC Kenya Chapter (in formation)  
ISOC Los Angeles Chapter  
ISOC Luxembourg Chapter  
ISOC Mauritius Chapter  
ISOC Madrid Chapter  
ISOC Mali Chapter  
ISOC Nigeria Chapter  
ISOC Pacific Islands Chapter  
ISOC Pakistan Chapter  
ISOC Palestine Chapter  
ISOC Peru Chapter  
ISOC Poland Chapter  
ISOC Puerto Rico Chapter  
ISOC Québec Chapter  
ISOC Scotland Chapter  
ISOC Senegal Chapter  
ISOC South Africa Chapter  
ISOC Spain Chapter  
ISOC Turkey Chapter  
ISOC Uganda Chapter