

**Minutes of the
Information Technology and Electronic Communication Committee meeting
Boston, MA
March 25-26, 2005**

Present: Anna Belle Leiserson (Chair), Ed Wilde, Linda Berez, Tina Harris, Gini Courter, Margaret Sanders, Kay Montgomery (staff liaison), and Mark Steinwinter, Deb Weiner (IT department staff)

March 25

The meeting began at 9:00 AM with a check-in and sharing of hopes for the meeting. Housekeeping items were reviewed, including discussion of openness guideline implementation and review of processes for posting information.

The group reviewed the Board's charge to ITEC. Participants agreed that they would like to develop a group vision statement, mission statement and a covenant.

A long discussion was held to try and define a vision for where the committee might be in five years, with agreement that the vision was for the committee, and not for technical services of the Association.

To tweak this vision, a 'word soup' exercise was facilitated by Gini and Tina which provided a map of key elements which might shape the vision and mission of the group. One of the key phrases which came out of the discussion and exercise was "provisioning the paradigm shift," which the group returned to periodically as a guiding thought.

Meeting with Bill Sinkford

Bill joined the committee to reflect on how we can "provision the paradigm shift" and discuss key elements of his vision as President of the Association.

Bill discussed his wish to call us into common purpose and into an environment where congregations are in relationship to one another. Such a model, he suggested, "moves us away from a hub-and-spoke mentality where there is a field of relationships."

Sinkford explained that the second shift in our function has to do with our UU voice in the world...our advocacy, our willingness to be part of the interfaith dialogue and to reclaim with what he describes as "the rightful place of the preeminent liberal religious voice in society."

Sinkford and the committee acknowledged that there has been a huge change from the time when volunteers did the IT work of the Association to now, where we have a top flight staff leadership presence in IT. "And that is a radical shift in terms of the resources we bring to support the paradigm shift. What is the role of this group now that we have a more robust form of leadership at the top?"

Where should we be positioned on the crest of the wave? At the crest where the foam is breaking, on the back side near the top and following closely, further down, or being a bottom feeder?

Sinkford and the committee observed that change doesn't happen in a linear way but rather more organically, where something new occurs, and excitement builds. Sinkford continued, "I think about the success of crating the presidency in a pastoral role. 9/11 happened and it was all done electronically. And the feedback, from ministers and from people in the pews was so positive that I felt like I discovered a goldmine that I loved to mine. And it has become part of the expectation for the presidency. And that is to the good.

"The promises we make to our visitors and our youth have to be fulfilled. We are in the process of re-imagining our ministry to our youth... And then there is GA. GA was set up to be the annual gathering of the congregations that make up the Association. One of the fantasies I have had is that the business of the Assembly, business and spiritual, could be shared directly and beamed into the fellowship halls of our congregations, and the votes that we take might even be taken from a distance and recorded. It would be a way to embody what the Association is a very concrete, almost inescapable way."

The conversation with Sinkford concluded, with thanks of the committee. After a short break the committee had a process check in which people expressed enthusiasm with the discussion thus far, but also hopes that the conversation would begin to shape a draft vision and mission statement.

Entering into a vision shaping process, the committee asked:

What will enable and enhance a paradigm shift(s)?

The group began to shape a vision statement that would lift up these key elements:

- relationship management
- track interaction with congregations
- standards and best practices and references
- appropriate policies for sharing, privacy and security
- congregational information centralized and printable
- tech for GA: more equitable distribution of resources
- make info available to UUs who move

Vision statement draft:

We imagine that in X years, congregations, in whatever form they may exist – and paid and volunteer staff -- will routinely collaborate over easy-to-use channels that we build and maintain to:

- solve problems
- find resources
- answer questions
- share best practices

- participate in GA
- locate affinity groups
- share data

Discussion began on the idea of inviting congregational presidents into feedback groups in Gini's suite and using Harlan Limpert's voting technology to gather feedback. It was suggested that the AUUA is another good group from which to gather feedback. Merry Matera is going to GA to talk to AUUA about data gathering and Gini is giving their keynote. (They meet on Weds. June 22 with an Annual Meeting and Dinner on Weds. and meetings on Thursday the 23rd).

The group went on to attempt a mission statement draft:
 The mission of the Information Technology and Electronic Communications Committee is to use technology to facilitate relationships among congregations.

Values that inform our vision:

- *accountability
 - accessibility
 - transparency
 - inclusivity
 - justice
 - *integrity: consistency, constancy in our belief system
 - Promises made, promises kept
- PLUS right relationship...

The meeting recessed for the evening.

March 26, 2005

The meeting began at 9:30 AM after a review of the previous day's development of a vision statement, mission statement, and set of values to inform the vision. The group checked in around the process, with people encouraged with the progress made thus far.

Questions regarding Mission, Values, Vision

What is the vision's time horizon?

Big issues are not technology, but culture, politics, education, etc.

Gini: 7 years seems right if we plan to measure results.

Marg: This is for the Board. They are ultimately accountable.

We should articulate our relationship with Board and their role in culture change.

Mission statement amended to:

Mission (final version)

The mission of ITEC is to recommend and advocate to the Board use of technology to foster and enhance relationships among congregations.”

The values that inform the work of ITEC are:

- Accountability: We are accountable to the UUA Board of Trustees and through them, to our congregations.
- Accessibility:
- transparency
- inclusivity
- justice
- Integrity: the right promises made and kept; acting in alignment with our beliefs and values.
- promises made, promises kept
- right relationship: to UUA staff

The group discussed how to keep “Provisioning the Paradigm Shift”. Should it be a subtitle on our report? There was a suggestion to change the vision horizon to 6 years since current Board terms end in 6 years. Agreed.

(final version)

Vision:

In six years congregations and those who serve them will routinely collaborate over integrated easy-to-use channels that we build and maintain to grow healthy congregations that promote UU values in the world.

We imagine congregations using these channels to:

- solve problems
- find resources
- answer questions
- share best practices
- participate in GA
- participate in democratic processes
- share data
- enhance our liberal religious voice
- organize new congregations
- to find uses we can’t yet imagine

Report from Mark Steinwinter, Director of IT Services:

Mark’s report covered a number of different project areas. They included:

- website redesign, dovetailing with deployment of a content management system. There are three pieces to this work: A) create a more coherent identity for the Association that says it all comes from one place... with a new logo type and tag line

under construction and nearly finished. B) website redesign. As the web has grown in importance and visibility, the stakeholders around the Association have learned that it is turf well worth defending, and creates an opportunity for people to worry about power, control, visibility. The redesign was imagined as a way to bring us together and cross departmental lines. It has largely succeeded on strategic lines. There are three levels of oversight, with the leadership council, the core team representing movers and shakers from the staff working with the redesign firm (Matrix International), and another level from the staff for imaging content.

Questions were asked around usability, with Mark responding that the site will be designed so that people can find their way into the same channel, but will be organized according to interest. Another question, around PDA access, was asked and Mark responded that right now, we are not focused a lot on alternative delivery platforms ...however we are choosing tools and patterns that will give us some flexibility.

The redesign process is focusing in two directions: information architecture and the navigation of the site. Included are schematic diagrams for the home page. The next step will involve a detailed design of pages, down as many levels as we are demanding, with specs around fonts, rules, etc. What makes this fascinating is that as uua.org is being redesigned, we are launching a whole new website...uuworld.org. To what extent should the magazine look and feel differently from the main website, to what extent should decisions about the magazine be different from what goes on the website? These questions are driving the UUA to ask and answer tough questions about communication policy around look and feel.

(point C from above):We are also planning on deploying a CMS. It is an application service, provider-based system. The software lives on the vendors' computers in California and we use browsers to access this materials. The tech staff will not be cursed with trying to maintain this. And people who directly edit the pages can have that power from anywhere on earth. This is big and terrifying in many respects. The OEC, which now has almost sole responsibility for authoring and posting pages, will get the CMS and start using it along with the new design templates. Right now, UUA org runs on a server in the basement of 25. But we also have a server in a secure location near Dulles Airport installed, running Linux and our lists. We will deploy another box at the same data center – really two boxes, to build in redundancy. The point here is that technology grew up here a certain way because it was organic and got put in place in a certain way, but it has become critical to the mission of the UUA. When we are off the air congregations in crisis who can't exchange information are stuck. So we decided that the sleepy little Association needs to provide a high level of computing capacity...that is a new sense of mission.

This conversion is a good application of the 80/20 rule. The content management system has an up front costs, and then a monthly cost we have to pay, and it is sensitive to the amount of content under management. It would be nice to throw

everything in there, but the more we throw in, the more it costs. So we have to figure out how to segment that.

Questions/discussion:

Could the UU Historical Society or some other organization write a grant to take some of this historical material so that it goes to a separate url (e.g., uua-archives.org) instead of us holding it?

Mark's presentation continues: So OEC and the Magazine will get the CMS first. The big challenge is that we have Deb, Julie, Kasey, and over 10K pages to keep running, and pages to keep running. Someone has to move this into the new site. And all that can't be automated has to be checked. And we don't have a plan yet for this. We need to figure out which groups can be our power users to project the power of the CMS out...the trick is that the CMS offers work flow, not just ability to author pages, but responsibility for editing and approving out there.

Discussion:

IDEA!!! Find folks who might offer to come to Boston for a couple of weeks and do this work: have a uua.org summer camp in July: offer T-shirts, accommodation at P/E, fun outings, people by invitation. This would be a leadership boot camp and these 'campers' will be uua.org evangelists. There could be an opening worship, thanks from Kay and Bill, and we could demonstrate what UUism is about on the web

Ideas for possible participants were generated:

Curtis Michaelson
Paul Rickter
Kok Heong McNaughton
Young Kim
Lisa Presley
Linda Berez
Donald Griggs
Sam Trumbore
Jone Johnson
Rosemary Bray McNatt
Annette Marquis
Gini Courter
Bob Hurst
Allen Stern
Dan Harper

Margaret wants pictures taken: "under construction: we're building the new uua.org for you." Folks thought that the logo for the T-shirts should use the phrase, "provisioning the paradigm shift."
People were very excited, but they calmed down (!) as Mark returned to his report.

Mark's other items:

- Infrastructure Audit: Driven by the realization that we need to be a high availability organization, and right now this is not being done efficiently or well. Everyone in ITS is spending 85 to 90 percent of their time on production and problem solving...R & D and building new applications doesn't get much time. How can we shift focus so that the proportion of time spent on troubleshooting shrinks, resulting in more capacity for development.

Toward this end, we know that we have three buildings, hundreds of computers, wires, wireless links, and lots of single points of failure which we are addressing. We are putting out an RFP to a few consulting firms to do a high level review of everything at the UUA stopping at the desk top level. There will be a report saying 'here is what is, and based on your specifications about standards, here is where you can go and here is a road map for getting there.' This will take time and money.

Questions: Is user capability and training on your screen? People end up coaching users one on one because the human capability isn't what it should be.
Response: We are trying to work with HR to ensure that people being hired have at least a minimal level of computer capability and expertise. Scott Thomson said I really want to get into training people. So yes, this is on our radar screen.

- Repurpose Data Services: This team grew up to fulfill an important role and the role is changing. Data Services worries about making sure that lists of things are being maintained correctly. Much of it focuses on Raiser's Edge. But they have the potential to be a source of revenue. They sell access to mailing lists, they produce work product of value, and there must be a way to turn this into income. There is a lot of shakeup in this area on people and roles. I discovered after I started looking at it this issue that these plans were in place. What can we automate? How can we put the responsibility for updating records out to the people who know the most about it? How can we build access to the data stores to maintain integrity but get out of the key punching business?

This system was never built with the capability that we need, and we are engineering interfaces to Raiser's Edge...there is no easy way to create a Raiser's Edge-like record somewhere else...and there are a lot of details behind the scenes to make this happen. There aren't a ton of perfect packages...we have invested more time and money and value in making Raiser's Edge work for us...we also wanted to stop spending money on contractors and convert them to staff. This is Margy Levine Young's project, working three days a week for us. Margy and Charles are drinking in the idea that you can plan and design the program and get feedback and have a project plan with testing and user feedback and documentation.

Project Management: What I just described is an example of project management process. We need to use spread sheets, an order, project numbers, deadlines, who is going to be in charge of these things, how long will it take, and so on. This is

Project Management 101. People show up to meetings with spread sheets. Charles McNulty wanted to get a project management system for the GA office. We started with a spread sheet. We met with the customer and talked with the vendor. And any time the vendor is involved, the risk has gone up five-fold. But every single thing fell apart, and delayed us weeks, so that we were unable to meet any deadlines. But because we were doing this work with Jan Sneegas and Stacey Marszalek sitting at the table who heard us struggle and saw the plans, they are now our allies and enlisted in the solution with us.

- So far, in addition to the GA office planning, we have also working with folks at Beacon about another project; with stewardship and development; with the bookstore; all in partnership...we are more consultants now in addition to maintaining production.”
- ITS Business plan: The UUA Board challenged me to come up with a formal IT business plan and asked me to have it ready for the meeting in October. IT will begin to generate this at our all-staff tech meeting soon. We will look at vision, mission, values, objectives, strategies. We will use a structured approach that produces great results.

The vision, mission and objectives of IT have to be in alignment with the governing bodies, and that includes ITEC...this saves us a lot of thrashing.

- Create Staff Training Process: This is about doing a better job of managing and promoting staff training. This will help us to stop relying on consultants. This is not a hard one to do, I just have to pay attention to it. Some of the pieces to this are to see that the budget is set aside for training. There are classes, workshops, conferences, mentoring relationships. I have a spread sheet where I track each person's skills they might benefit from having training. I have conversations with people asking them what skills they would like to acquire. We are also talking about this during the evaluation process. My goal is that everyone has a training experience, ultimately twice a year, as a regular thing. And when someone engages in a training, they will report back at our staff meeting about whether it was valuable and would advocate for it for others.

Build Partnerships –This is focused on bartering...finding common interests with people outside the Association, finding volunteer labor, developing new ways to be thinking. And in doing this, we are establishing a role model for how we want to work. To enhance transparency, there has to be documentation to show the values we are talking about in non-technical terms. Orientation materials, ways to spread excitement about our mission are essential.

The Committee thanked Mark for his excellent report.

After a break, the committee worked on to discuss **additional committee business**.

Anna Belle announced that the committee will be getting a new member, Robert Hurst. His nomination will become official after the board's Committee on Committees affirms the appointment and the board votes on it at the next board meeting.

Ed will report the draft mission statement to the Board and ask the Board to validate the vision. The charge to the committee will also be included. (Materials will be sent in advance; Ed will let Deb know when he has mailed this information to the board).

GA funding: Linda and Margaret would appreciate receiving registration support. We would need to pay for Anna Belle and Tina to attend. Robert Hurst was going to try and drive down from Oklahoma – all of this would allow the committee to meet at GA. Anna Belle will email people to try and sort out a meeting time at GA.

Anna Belle will contact the AUUA and asking about doing a focus group on site Wednesday or Thursday. We agreed that there should also be a focus group of congregational presidents: Anna Belle will contact Nancy Lawrence and cc: Harlan Limpert and look for an open slot on Sunday or Monday. The idea floated is to ask DE's to send us XX number of congregational presidents who they think would be helpful to this process, and then send invitations based on this (through Harlan). Anna Belle will send this draft to Deb to review.

Covenant around communication with the committee: We have two rallying points around connection (GA summer camp and GA). But what are the agreements we want to make around responses to email? Gini: if we are focusing on tasks, that is good to do on email. We need something to keep us on task. Mark: calls can be a good way to keep on task. It doesn't have to be a long time...Tina: what will it take to keep the ball rolling? Gini: monthly half-hour call is better than quarterly two-hour calls. We may need to find a balance between what you do on line and what you do on the phone.

Action: we will set a monthly call of no more than an hour.

Additional communication vehicles:

- ITS will establish uua.org/extra and put a wiki on it.
- Deb will establish phone number and send it out to the list for conference calls.

OEC will take care of posting document to the website per the request of the Openness Committee and will post a note on the calendar that the committee is going to meet at GA. Deb will also post information on how to email the group.

Agreements around email communication: There should be notification if we're going away, otherwise response within 72 hours is expected, or your agreement is presumed. Gini says if you send her email and you don't get a response in a reasonable amount of time, pick up the phone and call her. Gini clarified that she

is not staying on the committee, but is wanting to stay connected to the work. She wants to stay on the email list. Kay is planning to stay on the email list, but handing off the role of liaison to the committee to Mark.

Privacy Issues:

Mark introduced the topic:

We are seeking advice around the intersection of our covenant with congregations and their understandings of legitimate use of information, and how it might be shared. What about security for making changes to UU World subscriptions? What about passwords? How do people feel about access to data, how secure it should be, and what the existing policies should look like?

Our biggest fear is that someone can get in and get all our information...and we have seen these horror stories. People would reasonably expect that we would protect access to large amounts of data. So if I am a church administrator updating the mailing list and I can see it by virtue of signing in, we need to lock down that access. If someone gets in and they can find everyone in the congregation, they can find the next congregation.

The discussion continued, focusing on systems currently in place for eliminating address duplication and also authenticating addresses to unique identities. Certification processes were also discussed. Gini suggested that when an individual logs in to certify, you should be asked questions you are likely to know: what is the first name of the person who filled this out last year, for instance. If we came up with ten questions and three of them are correctly answered, that might get someone into the system. Certification is big and important because it ties to GA certification and it feeds congregational data. So we don't want the wrong person filling it out. The idea of having a notice that the password information should be printed out and put in a church file might be appropriate, as well as the idea of providing a list to each district office of passwords and codes.

Mark also discussed the idea of issuing a passkey code that will be printed on congregational mailing packets. Additional conversation centered around the distinctions between privacy, security, anonymity.

Anti-spam was also discussed – the idea of being able to opt in or opt out of mailings. Gini expressed the opinion that “Gini Courter, individual, could opt in or out of things. But Gini Courter, congregational leader can't.

CanSpam legislation was also discussed. Mark said he would do some additional research on this issue.

The essential question, people agreed, really is around what the relationship is of individuals in congregations and about minor individuals in minors. We need to talk to Deb Bodeau (internet security and privacy maven) about this.

Kay noted that the Our Association working group of the UUA Board is reviewing the policy around independent affiliates and mailing lists.

Marg also noted that there has to be a policy on destruction of documents (Sarbanes law)...SOX. We will have to research this issue, although there was the sense that we may be exempt from this law as a religious 501©3 organization

The group had a check-out at the end of the meeting, which affirmed the sense that the meeting had been productive and had focused the work of the committee on vision and mission, allowing them to move on to development of a covenant and mission-centered goals as a next step.

People felt that the Board's Committee on Committees had done a fabulous job in making appointments to the committee...that every voice has been valuable. [Ed will also let Sue Stukekey know this sense of the meeting].

Terms of appointment were clarified, with Kay stating that the present terms are up as of January 1, 2006. There was some concern expressed about the possibility that there could be complete turnover in the committee at that point, but the possibility of re-appointment also exists.

Kay offered a series of closing readings, from Peter Brook's "A Rough Theater in the Empty Space," from Tom Piazza, and from "Post-script" by Amy Krauss Rosenthal. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM on Saturday.

--*Debbie Weiner, scribe*