Report of the Membership Committee

Eric F. Van de Velde
December, 2010

The new membership management system is up and running. New members are signing up regularly. With limited promotion through Google AdWords, we see more individual paid memberships ($25 per year), and we gained at least one unsolicited institutional membership. Since going live in July, we have the following numbers in the system:

- 14 Non-Members (Individuals not paying any dues)
- 8 Individual Members (Paying $25 per year)
- 12 Institutional Members

The main challenge has been to get existing members into the system, which is rather cumbersome when done manually. We now plan to use the next membership-renewal period as a way for existing members to self-register. This will introduce the new database to the membership and eliminate the administrative overhead of data entry.

There are a few other kinks to work out.

1. The 123Signup system has accounts, which members can manage themselves. However, rather than simply logging in and then deciding what you want to do (subject to permissions), the system forces you to decide what you want to do first and then log in to the appropriate module. The rationale for this approach is that one can more seamlessly integrate each module into one’s own web site. The problem is that we need to integrate each “entry point” somewhere on the NDLTD web site. For example, primary contacts for institutional members need to log in to one module to manage their own personal profile and into another to manage the institutional membership.

2. There is some confusion between the log in to the NDLTD web site (a log in to allow BOD members to edit their bios) and the membership database log in. (The web team may need to look into this.)

3. Contacting NDLTD: We need to sort out how to organize the contacting information. I get queries directly from (prospective) members, from Ed, from Scott, from Hussein, and any combination of all of those. As a result, a small inquiry or problem report involves forwarding and copying e-mails between 2, 3, or 4 parties. I suggest we combine all e-mails into one account that is monitored by one person who can deal with most messages and forward the rest to the appropriate party.
Of course, any feedback to improve the system is welcome. Please remember also the advantages once the system is in place:

1. All of the data in one place
2. Easy maintenance of profiles
3. Easy payment system
4. Simple survey system with reports stored in the system, where they can be tracked from year to year
5. Use for event registration with automatic discounts for members

I also would like to reopen a discussion we had at the last BOD, regarding membership registration. As currently set up, the system allows each registration to be valid from day of registration to one year later. From the member’s perspective this is easy to understand. We discussed this very briefly at the last BOD, and some were arguing for a return a fixed (March 1st – Feb 28th) membership year. We have been implementing this manually for the last few months. Current registrations run until Feb. 2012. To set the system to a fixed membership year, we need to agree on policies for partial year registrations, etc. To me, that is seems complicated, because we then need to communicate these policies in some way during the registration process. I would like to propose that we allow individual membership years.

We retain the following recommendations from the last BOD and retreat.

1. Continue to update and refine benefits of NDLTD membership. Post them prominently on the NDLTD web site.
2. NDLTD membership is not only about obtaining direct benefits, but also about making one’s efforts at one’s own institution pay off for the larger community.
3. NDLTD needs to investigate effective strategies to address the “free loader” issue: nonmembers who profit from the investment of time, effort, and money from members. We will talk some PBS executives to ask their experience.
4. Every board member is asked to contact at least five institutions and ask them to become NDLTD members.
5. Provide NDLTD members with an NDLTD logo to display on the main entry points to their ETD repositories.
6. Experiment with a paid Internet advertising campaign through Google AdWords (after the new NDLTD web site and membership registration are in place).
7. Include one year of NDLTD membership with annual conference registration for non-members. Give members a discount that more than offsets this.
8. NDLTD should keep raising the bar for existing ETD repositories, making clear that starting an ETD repository is only the beginning. Setting clear goals
for future development should motivate members to keep engaged. (See proposal for an NDLTD Quality Seal.)

9. NDLTD should explore broadening its membership beyond institutional members to individual members. In particular, NDLTD could become a support organization for the Ph.D. student. (See proposal for the creation of a social network.)

We did #6 and would like feedback on that from the BOD as to whether we want to do Google AdWords on an ongoing basis.

We would like feedback on #8 and #9.