



VP Electronic Presence Report

Bob Eberlein - 06-6-27 at 01:03 PM

VP Electronic Presence

Report to the 2006 Summer Meeting of the Policy Council
Submitted by Bob Eberlein, June 27, 2006

Web Submission System

The web submission system (<http://cgi.albany.edu/~sdsweb/sds2006.cgi>) is the biggest part of my activities, both in terms of the time I spend on it and its importance in managing the central office work flow. This is the exclusive mechanism for submitting and reviewing conference papers and is also used to create and publish the program schedule and the online proceedings. The maintenance on this remains fairly high, but it has received generally good reviews from users and does make a number of aspects of managing the conference easier for the central office. We intend to keep evolving this using the same basic architecture.

In a nutshell, the submission system allows the central office to maintain all its records in an Access database that is local to itself and not open to any outside networks. The portion of that information that we want available to the online system is periodically dumped to a program which converts it to the online database. Changes made to the online database are recorded in log files which are run against local records to update them with information that has been entered online. Though somewhat inelegant, this system allows the central office complete control over their data management and makes it easy for them to incorporate input from different places.

Online Conference and Membership Registration and CC Processing

The Web Submission System is also used as a mechanism to simplify conference registration and membership renewal (as well as member information updating). In addition credit card processing through PayPal is accessible through this system, though the processing itself is done by PayPal and the validation of it is done offline.

Electronic Meeting and Meeting Materials Support

As more and more things are happening with the Society, more and more material needs to be reported. For some years now we have asked that all reports be made available prior to the meeting. There is just no way, in the meeting time available, to give anything beyond a very short summary of these reports.

The old method of sending material to Jack or Roberta and having them post it was cumbersome and made it difficult to amend reports. To get around this we have implemented a discussion forum at <http://www.ventanasys.com/sdpol/> that allows for the posting of reports as well as for discussion. This forum is not restricted to policy council members as is consistent with our standard open meeting policy.

Voting, which is restricted to PC Members, has been implemented as part of the Web Submission system. Ideally, of course, the discussion and voting would be at the same location but the effort required to accomplish this is simply too large. Thus there are two locations that require separate logins which is inconvenient, but seems a reasonable tradeoff.

Online Proceedings

This may be covered elsewhere but we are now committed to keeping all conference proceedings available online as long as it is practical. The proceedings starting from 1997 are now all available online. Previous years have been in various formats, starting from 2005 the format will be both simpler and more standardized. This will also be the only format proceedings area available in, there will not longer be CDs created.

Web Hosting

Our web hosting (except the Policy Council Discussion Forum) is still provided without cost by the University at Albany. I have been looking into moving this to a different provider which would cost us money, but also increase our flexibility. At this point I am still recommending that we stay with the current setup, though I will continue to look into alternatives. The issue may be forced if, for example, the University decides we are using too much storage space.

Online Model Repository

This remains on my list of things to do. There was some progress on this a few years ago but the attempt seemed to stall out, as have other it seems. The idea is to have a place where people can upload models and others can review them. The models to be uploaded would not be restricted, but the review process would be used as a quality control mechanism. This would also be a permanent place for models published in the System Dynamics Review – again reviews on these would be welcome.

Web Site Updates

The amount of material on the System Dynamics Website continues to grow, and because of this many things are difficult to find. It may be that a restructuring of the web site would help this. I need to coordinate with Jack Pugh on this but if anyone has any enthusiasm for getting involved please let me know.

Jim Lyneis - 06-7-5 at 03:52 PM

Bob,

Great work, as always!

Do you expect the maintenance on the submittal system will go down over time, or will this always be a workload for someone?

Jim

Bob Eberlein - 06-7-6 at 10:59 AM

Hi Jim,

A good question. The effort spent getting things back on track when something goes wrong is actually very small. Every year, though, we make refinements to the way things work which require more to be done, hopefully saving time elsewhere.

Longer term things will always evolve so I can't see the need for work on the system disappearing. I just don't have any confidence of the form that it will take. We have always intended to use the budgeted student assistance time in this direction but have not yet done so.
