California Writers Club

Report
Document Storage and Distribution Committee – for July 26, 2015
Ray Malus
(July 4, 2015)

(Document Vault keyword references are of the form: [dv: *keyword list*])

At the January 25, 2015 Central Board Meeting, we presented a Power-point presentation outlining our approach to Document Storage and Distribution. [dv: retention].

In it we defined two separate topics:

1. Electronic Retention and Distribution.
2. Physical Retention and Distribution.

These two are totally independent. Either solution can change and have no effect on the other.

A strategy was presented for each these topics. (These are discussed, below.)

There was also a demonstration of one solution for Electronic Storage, 'Document Vault', which is a feature of MRMS.

At the end of the presentation, our responsibility was expanded to include supplying a [3.] **Document Retention Policy** (a document outlining what we will retain and for how long), as is required by the IRS.

This, again, is an independent topic as it does not, and should not, specify its own implementation. (The 'where' and 'how' are not germane, only the 'what' and 'how long' are.)

Progress and outcomes are described below, by topic.

1. Electronic Retention and Distribution.

Since many possible solutions to this exist, to avoid a 'popularity contest' and identify the most ideal solution, the general approach was to first identify a set of requirements (capabilities we'd like to have in the solution), and then compare proposed solutions to this list.

On August 20, 2014, a discussion topic was inaugurated on the Forum, with the aim of identifying requirements. To avoid prejudicing the dialog, the committee did not immediately post.

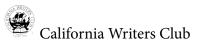As there was minimal activity, the committee posted a tentative set of requirements on September 12, 2014:

     1. Access should be possible from any internet-connected device.

     2. Any member of the EC should be able to store a document.

     3. Within the limits of the security policy (see #7, below), any CWC member should be able to retrieve a document.

     4. The facility should be able to store multiple file formats: PDF, Images, and zip archives.

     5. There should be some sort of 'search' capability.

     6. There should be minimal maintenance and administration -- in particular when Board and EC members change.

     7. Security. There should be multiple access levels, general and privileged, so that most documents are generally accessible, but others may be restricted.

These were reported as part of the January 25th presentation.

There was no further activity on this discussion.

On March 27, 2015, we submitted a motion to adopt these requirements, which was seconded.

On April 29, 2015, a vote was called on this motion. The requirements were adopted unanimously.

On May 14, 2015, a topic was opened on the Forum for the purpose of proposing and comparing solutions. A 'bidding' procedure was outlined and one 'bid' (for Document Vault) was submitted which meets, or exceeds all requirements and is already operational.

As of June 30, 2015, no further activity has occurred no other solutions have been suggested.

We consider that a suitable solution has been identified and recommend its adoption.

2. Physical Retention and Distribution.

A topic was opened on the Forum dealing with this on August 20, 2014. An excerpt is below. It specifies the following steps:

       1. Identifying and cataloging what we have.

       2. Culling and discarding what is not really important.

       3. Deciding what should be digitized and included in the other half of this project. (I would imagine this will be almost everything not culled.)

       4. Formulating and executing plans for digitizing. (There are scanning services — but things like bound volumes will be a problem.)

       5. Deciding what 'originals' need to be preserved.

       6. Formulating and executing a plan for preserving these.

       (Feel free to suggest revisions to this plan.)

       I am fine with serving as a 'collection point' for step 1.

       Almost all of the rest this will need to be done in Northern California, I suggest we eventually establish the position of State Historian to oversee it.

       In addition, I think a small number of trusted Senior members (not necessarily Reps) needs to be identified to make the decisions necessary in steps 2 and 5.

There has been very little activity on this topic.

The recent vote on a revised Document Retention Policy (see below) vastly complicates and expands this question.

We had assumed that future documents would primarily be digital, and there would be no significant increase in the requirement for hard-copy storage. This implied this was primarily a 'legacy' problem.

With the new requirement that all *electronic documents be printed and retained as hard-copy*, this is not the case. This requirement can now grow enormously.

We recommend a separate committee (preferably with a preponderance of NorCal members) be appointed to identify the scope of this, and facilities offering secure, climate controlled storage space, cataloging, and access. (It is doubtful the Bancroft will accept this material.)

We also recommend that this requirement be re-examined. In an era when, universally, documents are being digitized, the requirement seems archaic and wasteful, and impresses an on-going burden on the club.

3. Document Retention Policy

This topic was added at the January meeting. It was assigned to a committee member, but no progress was reported.

Because I felt an urgency, on February 26, 2015, I searched the Internet for a suitable sample policy. I found several and posted the one I felt was closest to our needs the following day.

Reaction was mixed (you can read the topic on the forum), with our Treasurer (who has had recent interactions with the IRS on our behalf, and is knowledgeable) endorsing the policy.

An overwhelming problem seemed to be confusion due to the Reps' not separating this from the other topics.

On March 27th, I posted a motion to adopt the policy document.

Several critiques were posted, which had, in part, to do with hard-copy retention methodology, with one branch referencing the Bancroft Library. Reps were informed there was a separate topic dealing with hard copy retention, and indeed, posted comments in that section on April 20th.

On April 20th I stated that the committee would consider suggested amendments to the attached policy document.

On April 29th East Sierra posted a motion to amend the *original motion in addition to the specified document*. This motion passed, but leaves the whole general subject of Documentation and Distribution in disarray. It impinges upon these other questions but does not solve them, and leaves many details not specified.

However, since the Central Board has adopted this topic as its own, we consider the work of the committee completed.

Respectfully submitted,
Ray Malus, Chair, CWC Committee on Document Storage and Distribution
July 4, 2015