

SAGE UPDATE

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By the time you read this, SAGE will have accomplished at least one more major milestone in its transformation into an independent organization: the election of the first SAGE Board of Directors.

After many years of discussions on the best way to structure SAGE, the USENIX Board decided in June 2004 to disband the SAGE Special Technical Group structure and encourage SAGE to reconstitute itself as an independent nonprofit organization. At the same time, USENIX committed to support the SAGE programs until the new organization is in place and to offer SAGE co-sponsorship of LISA for at least two years.

SAGE Executive Committee members Geoff Halprin, Trey Harris, and David Parter volunteered (with the support of the others) to form a transition committee. We recruited Lorette Cheswick, who brings her experience with other nonprofits, to join the committee. Over the months since then, the transition committee investigated different organizational structures and issues, and eventually incorporated the new SAGE as a New Jersey nonprofit. The transition committee became the Interim Board of Directors (and, technically, the only members of the new organization).

During the late summer and fall of 2004, the transition committee spent a lot of time considering SAGE's various strengths and weaknesses over the past few years. We presented some of our observations at a community meeting at the LISA conference in Atlanta, and have taken them into consideration in our work since then.

One of the major issues we addressed was how to staff the organization. The two alternatives are to hire staff and establish an office, or to hire an association management company (AMC). An AMC provides a client organization with an executive director, a headquarters office, and part-time staff in every area of expertise as needed, at an hourly rate. Either way, volunteers will have a lot of work to do—which means that supporting our volunteers is of critical importance.

In late April, we did on-site visits to four finalists for an AMC to manage SAGE. Again, by the time you read this, our management team should be finalized and actively involved in the transition of services from USENIX to the new SAGE.

The second major issue that the Interim Board worked on this spring was governance: finalizing the bylaws, establishing initial policies, and putting in place a structure for the new Board to work with. All of the governance documents should be available on the SAGE Web site.

The third major item was organizing the election of the first full Board of Directors. Greg Rose was recruited to be the chair of the Leadership Committee. The Leadership Committee's first task was to serve as the nominating committee for the first Board election. In the future, the Leadership Committee will have a broader mandate: to look to the leadership needs of the organization as a

whole—recruiting volunteers to lead various projects and teams, advising on leadership training, and working on other issues designed to ensure future SAGE leadership at every level.

Greg recruited the rest of the Leadership Committee: Esther Filderman, Adam Moskowitz, and Mario Obejas. The Leadership Committee held a BoF at the USENIX Annual Technical Conference in April. The BoF was well attended, with serious discussion about the role of the Board and other issues for both potential candidates and the organization. The committee nominated a slate of 14 candidates (for a nine-person Board). One candidate withdrew shortly before the election due to time commitments elsewhere.

Two SAGE members—Jesse Trucks and Matt Okeson-Harlow—volunteered to host the online election at their site, Cyberius Networks.

Has the work been worth it? I think so. The proof will be in the next months and years, as the newly independent SAGE builds on the foundation that has been prepared for it.

More information on current SAGE status should be available on the SAGE Web site, www.sage.org.