Minutes of the ACCU Committee Meeting. Bletchley Park, 7th of July 2012

Committee meeting

The meeting started at around 11:30.
Present: Alan Griffiths, Mark Radford, Andrew Marlow, Matthew Jones, Tom Sedge, Astrid Byro, Rob Pauer, Tom, Huges, Stewart Brodie, Dirk Haun (teleconference)

1. Apologies received by Paul Grenyer, Seb Rose, Mick Brooks, Roger Orr
2. The minutes of the previous meeting (12th of May 2012) were approved
3. We discussed the actions from previous meeting. Many were completed, while some were carried over or modified in the following way:
   a. Action 4 was carried over and become action 8 in these minutes
   b. Action 5 was carried over and become action 6 in these minutes
   c. Action 6 status was unknown and become action 7 in these minutes
   d. Action 7 was carried over and become part of action 12 in these minutes
   e. Action 12 was started and morphed into action 10 in these minutes
   f. Action 13 was dropped as members of the committee have some web conferencing kit that can be used during the meetings
   g. Action 14 is still work in progress (Rob Pauer liaising with Tim Pushman to spring clean the mailing lists)
4. Mark Radford has been coopted to be the new standards officer
5. Lois nominated for honorary membership by Alan Griffiths, seconded by Stewart Brodie. The nomination will be put forward to the membership at the next AGM
6. We talked about financing costs on meetup.com (or similar) for local groups that want to advertise their meetings online. Rob and Matthew will examine options for group setup and payments
7. We approved the commercial sponsorship of local meetings, but with some caveats similar to the ones for the conference. Talks must not be sales pitches and the sponsors

cannot use the ACCU brand to show any form of endorsement for their companies from the ACCU. Action for Matthew to produce some guidelines

8. Talked about US groups. They are all organized by ACCU members. Matthew asked if we could make US members aware of other members living nearby them without breaking any privacy rules. We talked about contacting them to ask if they want the ACCU to share their address information with other members living nearby. Action for Matthew to liaise with Mick Brooks and Barney (one of the US organizers) to achieve that, and to write something in CVu.

9. We talked about local groups in England. There are some ones that are dormant or not active (south coast, Cambridge), and some others that are quite active (London, Bristol and Bath). In some places, where there are other groups unrelated to ACCU, but with overlapping interests, it might be better to join one and make an ACCU pitch instead of creating a separate ACCU group

10. Website. Talked about the report written by Dirk (in the addendum below). Alan Griffiths asked Dirk what help he will need from us. Discussion about what we want to be built and then build it. Astrid mentioned the setup of security to make it easier to add content to it. She proposed to have a look at the current functionality of the site and then decide an approach. Action for Asti and Tom Sedge to look into it and report back regularly (schedule to be decided). Dirk asked if we wanted to make it public. Tom proposed to do something first and then make it public. We talked about the costs of having a professional working on the site.
We talked about Mick notes on the site (see addendum), and thought they have some good ideas, but we decided to put the framework in place first

11. Membership report. We talked about attracting more students. A reason for the low interest may be the website not being attractive enough for them. We need to clarify what the categories mean. We talked about the opportunity of multi-year subscriptions. Is it worth?

12. Constitutional changes. Trade offs with the current situation, and what we can practically do with the timelines. Examine what's available for electronic voting. Rob Pauer expressed concerns on the "presiding member" wording. We discussed the pros and cons of remote voting. We want to go fully electronic as it is more convenient. How do we want the consultation period to work.
Motion periods. Motions submitted before three months period OK, other ones will be at discretion of the committee. Amendments will be allowed, but they will be accepted at discretion of the committee. Action for Giovanni to implement consistent changes.

13. We talked about education of next generations of programmers. Astrid mentioned that a CDR is necessary to work with children. What and who will be offering

14. Astrid told that she will be doing the Everest challenge again

15. Rob found out reference number for the accountant. Apparently the ACCU was a dormant company

16. Rob mentioned that NatWest cannot do online banking in the way we need. He proposed to switch to Barclays or another one. There might be issues to solve with the switching. We talked about the cooperative bank and HSBC as possibilities. Rob will look at the cooperative bank

17. The meeting finished at around 13:30

Actions

1. **Rob Pauer** and **Matthew Jones** to examine options for groups setup and payments for meetup website to announce local group meetings
2. **Matthew Jones** to produce guidelines for commercial sponsors of local meetings
3. **Matthew Jones** to contact Mick Brooks and Barney (surname?) to see what they can do to put US ACCU members living nearby each other in contact. Also write an article in CVu to advertise that
4. **Astrid Byro** and **Tom Sedge** to look into the current functionality of the website and report back (schedule to be decided). Check what is needed and create a requirements document
5. **Giovanni Asproni** to work on proposal to allow for motions to be submitted to the AGM and the changes needed to make them consistent
6. **Giovanni Asproni** to advertise the complaints procedure to the membership
7. **Giovanni Asproni** to check with Roger the status of the cleanup of the committee list from old members
8. **Giovanni Asproni** to publicise meetings of committee in advance & suggest google hangouts for participation. Prepare the wording and let the committee review it first
9. **Giovanni Asproni** to prepare draft proposal for constitutional change to propose to the membership (after having it reviewed by the committee). Use Mick amendments as a starting point
10. **Tom Sedge** to publish the analysis of the survey about the association
11. **Rob Pauer** to liaise with Tim Pushman to spring clean the mailing lists (in progress)
12. **Matt Jones** to email ACCU members to let them know they will have to contact him if they want to start a local group and need help with that

Addendum

Website Report From Dirk

Stuart Golodetz has accepted to take over the role of website editor. He's currently trying to get an idea for what we actually want to have on the website. Following Alan's suggestion, he's currently talking to Tony Barrett Powell and Martin Moene regarding the ACCU journals, but also other content issues.

As for the CMS to use, I talked to Allan Kelly and Tim Pushman. We pretty much agreed that we will have to hire someone to set up the website for us. This also confirms the decision to go with a popular CMS, since that would make it easier to a) find someone familiar with it and b) ensure continued support for it for the foreseeable future. The latter is a problem with the current CMS (Xaraya), which hasn't seen a lot of activity recently.

Candidates for a CMS were Contao, Drupal, Joomla, and WordPress. None of them fit the requirements out of the box. We didn't do a formal shootout, but pooling our experiences (first and second hand), Drupal emerged as the most promising candidate.

I think the way forward would be to come up with a formal list of requirements, find someone who could do the work for us and is familiar with Drupal, and talk things through. If it turns out that it would require too many customisations to make Drupal work for us, we could still revise the decision. We have to start somewhere ...

As for the actual requirements, those are still in a state of flux and uncertainty. Roughly:

- provide what we have now, mainly about the conferences and the book reviews
- better exposure of the book reviews
- "do something" with the journals (Stuart et. al. are currently discussing this)
- allow people to submit articles, which then requires an approval process (both a technical one but also an editorial/decision workflow)
- have separate sections for local ACCU groups (with access for the group members, so they can post announcements, etc. themselves)
- the membership functions that we have now (profile, membership renewal, mailing lists, ...)

From a CMS point of view, this doesn't sound too complicated or exotic. It's mostly about defining sections (topics) and access rights. In other words, it doesn't seem like we would need a lot of customisations.

As for finding a person or agency, I'd like to leave this to someone based in the UK as I think it's better to be able to arrange face-to-face meetings if necessary. Allan already asked Tim, but he's not available right now (but would like to stay in the loop). So, who could take over the search?

Related:

I'm wondering if it would make sense to move the discussion to the accu-website mailing list, which has been pretty much dormant since its creation. Apart from financial details, I don't see anything that couldn't be discussed in public. Plus it would give other interested ACCU members a chance to chime in.

Speaking of openness: Mick Brooks suggested that any code that is to be developed for the website should be made available as open source. I think that's a good idea, as it would allow users to find and possibly fix issues with the website. Even if that never happens, I feel like it is the right thing to do. Should the need ever arise, it would make it much easier to rebuild the website from a central location instead of having to hunt down the pieces.

Considerations: This should be made clear in the contract with whoever does the

customisations. We would also need someone who keeps the public repository and the actual website in sync (Mick?).

Report From Mick

Membership

Alan G asked me to look at whether we could do multi-year (e.g. 5 or
10 years at a time)
memberships. I got the happy path working, but got bogged down with getting the
information flow right for users that need to go back and edit things.
I think I've traced
this to a bug in the existing system, which allows members to change
their subscription
type without paying. I've just today asked Tim Pushman to look into
that for me - he's said
he'll get back to me soon. More as I know it.

In the meantime, we could do it manually. If it were just one or two
people, then they could
get in touch with me and I'd find a way to take extra payment and
update their record
accordingly.

One niggle - if we were to take a 5 or 10 year membership renewal from
someone, do we
have to make it clear to them what would happen if we were to stop
existing (current constitution
says we pay our debts with their money, with any remainder going to
charity), or changed
the terms of membership (say, stopped providing paper journals?)
during that period?

Website

I had an outstanding action to write something re: my ideas for a sort
of accu-mentored
website project. I distributed some scribbles to Dirk and Tom S (shout
if anyone else wants a copy).
Tom let me know he's been snowed-under, but Dirk was able to take a
look and believes that we'll
struggle to find sufficient interest to build the site ourselves,
which I understand. In any case, to do
a good job I still think we'll need to make a lot of effort as

customers/users to support any developer,
more than I'd realistically expect from one person. I suggest that we require from any developer not
just a working website, but at least include a means to deploy development copies of the site (without
disclosing any user data) so that any of us so inclined can get familiar with the code / DB.

As a test of my own commitment/interest I've grabbed a copy of the existing website + database
and made it work on my own machine, and started to try and understand how it works (see multi-year stuff
above). I've found a few bugs, and wouldn't say it's the cleanest code and DB I've seen. AFAIK there
are no automated tests of any variety. I'm not sure how much more energy to direct at this effort - are we
definitely committed to a re-write?