

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Publications Committee
July 2003

Technically you have already seen most of this report because it arrives on your doorstep at regular intervals in the form of The Fellowship Herald or the Mighty Messenger. However, I have a few more comments to make and some favors to ask of you.

You should have already received The Fellowship Herald 2003. The committee hopes you enjoyed it, and that you will contribute your suggestions for future issues, or even an article. Following the General Council meeting, we will put together a Mighty Messenger as quickly as possible so those of you who weren't able to attend the Summer Study Session can have a report of the proceedings. Another Mighty Messenger is expected to go out by the end of the year with information about the GC meeting in February and the summer study session location for 2004.

The primary goal of this committee, to serve our readers by providing information about Fellowship activities and to help readers to share their thoughts with other readers, continues to guide us in our efforts. We feel that our publications contribute to a feeling of community among readers of *The Urantia Book* and provide important information. We rely on you, however, to send us information about your study group, society, etc. for the Mighty Messenger, and to share your personal experiences with truth in articles for The Fellowship Herald.

We'd like to extend a thank you to those who have contributed to our publications during the past year, and we look forward to hearing from more of you.

Thank you.

Linda Buselli, Chair

Publications Committee

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Finance Committee
July 2003

The Finance Committee has advanced the strategies this year for reducing expenses while improving the efficiency and success of our organization. And as we do so, we remind ourselves that our goal is to introduce this wonderful revelation to as many people as possible. It is by this yardstick we can measure our efforts.

It is our committee's goal to increase fund raising to \$500,000 in 2004 and we would rejoice to reach a goal of \$1,000,000 for the 50th anniversary, in 2005, of the publication of *The Urantia Book* and the formation of *The Urantia Book Fellowship*. The committee continues to evaluate short term and long term strategies to accomplish these goals while improving our overall effectiveness.

The Finance Committee has this year coordinated its efforts with the database project by beginning the process of merging all member financial data with all other membership data. This permits the Finance Committee to sort and filter segments of our readership, allowing us to target different solicitations to different groups within the readership. For example, we are sending all financial supporters of past years a stamped addressed return envelope, which is not feasible to the whole mailing list, but easily done with this defined group. Next we are working at different solicitation styles to members of societies, members at large, and attendees of our International Conferences and Summer Study Sessions that have not contributed in the last few years. We are looking for ways to encourage them of the importance that their contributions make to the furtherance of our revelatory efforts.

The rest of the mailing list that have no current record of attending our events or supporting *The Urantia Book Fellowship* in any way will receive yet another style of solicitation and much less frequently, which reduces the costs of our solicitation efforts. Each of these solicitation letters will be evaluated for their degree of effectiveness and changed accordingly in the upcoming years.

Another important strategy our committee is working on is the promotion and importance of monthly auto-debit contributions. With the increase in all of our committees service efforts and need for funding, it is important for us to stabilize the monthly cash flow of donations. Currently we have most of the donations coming in at the end of the year. By encouraging supporters to make a regular monthly donation through auto-debit, it is easier

for the donor and may allow the donor to increase their yearly donation. An example: if a donor gives \$100 yearly and we are able to encourage them instead to donate \$10 per month, we receive an increase of 20% over the year and it is affordable to the supporter for the increase.

For long term goals, we continue working on strategies to increase fundraising through special bequests and wills. This avenue will be among the largest sources of funds for *The Urantia Book* Fellowship in the years to come.

I gratefully acknowledge the dedication and hard work of the committee members, and I am always amazed and heartened by the dedication of all the volunteers and supporters of this revelation. It is a delight and a pleasure to work with such a sincere team of revelatory workers.

Sincerely,



The Finance Committee

Robert Burns, Chair

Nick Curto

Jerry Pando

Larry Geis

Ken Raveill

James Gonzalez

The Urantia Book Fellowship Annual Report of the Education Committee July 2003

As a whole, the Education Committee was quiet for much of 2002, although a great deal of the educational labor for The Urantia Book Fellowship was superbly handled by the special committee and designated presenters who created the outstanding International Conference in Estes Park. Throughout the past year, however, many of the individual Education Committee members performed services in a variety of ways: they contributed to The Fellowship's publications, *The Mighty Messenger* and *The Herald*; helped produce retreats for their local Societies; and presented at regional conferences--such as at the "Joyous Living" weekend last month in Los Angeles (sponsored by The School for Meanings and Values). Our Committee members have also been collaborating with The Fellowship's Public Relations-Book Marketing Team, which will have a significant presence at this year's Summer Study Session.

In 2003, despite limited funding, an effort to revitalize the Wrightwood Seminar has begun. The current Wrightwood group's goal is to develop a program on the subject of "family". The outcome of this study will be to produce a Urantia Book-based interfaith, public-outreach presentation that embraces the ideals and values of family in the broadest context. The product could then be a centerpiece for Summer Study 2004, especially if we select an interfaith-friendly environment. This will allow The Fellowship another public venue for presenting key common teachings from TUB and the life of Jesus. After all, what could be more universally appealing than the ideals and values of family?

This summer, The Education Committee, primarily at my urging, has tackled a challenging and perplexing subject for this year's Summer Study Session. Under the general heading of "Revelation and the Religionist", we will focus on exploring the distinctions between socialized (even institutionalized) religions that evolve from sacred texts (or divine mandates) and the challenges that each of us as individual, truth-seeking religionists must face when belief encounters incongruent facts, and faith confronts doubt.

Jesus tells us: "There is but one struggle for those who enter the kingdom, and that is to fight the good fight of faith. The believer has only one battle, and that is against doubt -- unbelief." ^{159:3.8}

At this time, it appears to me that there are a number of relevant issues:

1. Recent discoveries of significant “human source” authors along with their source documents;
2. Recognition that some of the “facts” stated in *The Urantia Papers* (“which constitute the most recent presentation of truth to the mortals of Urantia”) may be “in need of revision”;
3. Public promotion of *The Urantia Book* by various groups and organizations, which seek to gain a wider audience and foster social acceptance of the book and its teachings;
4. Preparations by reader-believers to handle potentially greater and more critical social, academic, secular and theological scrutiny of the book; and
5. Controversy within the Urantia “movement” about unity and organizational purposes.

Will these factors coincide to meaningfully challenge Urantia Book reader-believers? Could *The Urantia Book* “movement” be soon facing something akin to a “Crisis at Capernaum”?

Should this be the case, regarding *The Urantia Book*, can we rely on the following statement from Jesus’ Epochal Sermon?

153:2.11 ...“Let us be patient; the truth never suffers from honest examination. I am all that you say but more.”

One of the desired outcomes of this summer’s study session is to evaluate and put the human source information in perspective, such that dedicated Urantian religionists may go forward with interfaith efforts and public outreach presentations with a deeper understanding of the evolutionary underpinnings of *The Urantia Book*, rather than naively portray it as a totally divine and perfect document.

Jesus, in speaking with Nathaniel about the veracity of any sacred scripture stated:

159:4.8 “Mark you well my words, Nathaniel, nothing which human nature has touched can be regarded as infallible. Through the mind of man divine truth may indeed shine forth, but always of relative purity and partial divinity. The creature may crave infallibility, but only the Creators possess it.”

The Summer Study Session in 2004 will focus more on “taking it to the streets”, therefore

we are planning to have the next Session in a favorable interfaith-oriented community, such as Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Your thoughts on this report and on any other ideas related to education are positively welcomed. My email address is: smith606@pacbell.net

Sincerely,

Lee Smith

Education Committee Chairperson

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the President
July 2003

The year, as we reckon it in The Fellowship, began with an International Conference at Estes Park in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado. We were blessed with the presence of some 725 Urantia Book readers, and 150 of their sons and daughters, from a dozen different countries who assembled together for the purpose of fellowship, worship and study. As has become the norm at these large gatherings, many of those attending were Fellowship members and many were not; some were IUA members; some were members of both the IUA and The Fellowship; some were not affiliated with any organization; two were Urantia Foundation Trustees. It can be said that there was something at this gathering for everyone. It can, perhaps, also be said that everyone there could find something objectionable. It can certainly be said that hardly anyone there would have rather missed it.

A signal event at the beginning of the conference was the launching of the Uversa Press edition of *The Urantia Book*. This launching coincided with an Executive Committee decision to sign an exclusive agreement with IPG, a major book distributor. Book sales over the year have been disappointing and the Executive Committee decided in its April meeting to terminate its relationship with IPG. Once the current contract with IPG lapses in the end of 2003, The Fellowship will be free to use alternate distribution methods, including direct sales to retailers, the method used in 1996 to distribute the first Uversa Press edition, which had proven to be quite successful.

Prior to the General Council's January 31st meeting, the Executive Committee held a special, retreat-like, session to discuss fundamental questions it normally has no time to consider during its regular business meetings. A fairly detailed report on the substance of this special meeting was given to the General Council and a summary appeared in the February 2003 issue of the *Mighty Messenger*. Some of the highlights of that meeting were as follows:

1. What should be the "official" Fellowship position regarding *The*

Urantia Book? This question provoked a great deal of discussion, much of it philosophical and often highly personal. There was no clear consensus about what the “official” position should be. But, although everyone present appeared to consider the book to either be a revelation or to contain a revelation or to cause individuals to experience revelation, a number of the participants felt that it may not be appropriate for The Fellowship to adopt an organizational position declaring *The Urantia Book* to be a “revelation”. Further discussion of this question is likely take place in the coming months.

2. What should be The Fellowship’s “face to the world”? Are we projecting what we think we need to project through our use of print publications and the website? It was generally felt that we are doing a fine job in both media, but a question was raised as to whether “political” material on the website is too easily accessible. Subsequent investigation revealed that one needs to dig deliberately for that type of material; it is not readily available to a casual visitor.

3. Is publishing *The Urantia Book* an integral part of The Fellowship’s mission or is it a time limited effort? A brief discussion of this question ended with a reaffirmation that publishing the book is essential to our mission at this time. It was felt that there was no value in speculating now about whether this will remain so in the distant future.

4. Should The Fellowship become involved in translations of *The Urantia Book*? The group reviewed current translation efforts and concluded that, for now, there is no need for The Fellowship to sponsor translations.

5. International outreach – Our major area of concentration has been in Mexico and in Central and South America. We need to find the resources for reaching out to Africa, Western and Eastern Europe, and Asia. During a discussion of this item at the General Council, there were suggestions that we need to challenge the younger readers in our movement with a meaningful international outreach and/or service project.

6. Organizational structure – There was a consensus on the Executive Committee that we need to review our constitution with an eye toward determining whether it serves our organizational needs in its current form. Should we determine that changes are needed, we would then have to decide whether to proceed with an incremental series of amendments or with a radical overhaul. This topic will require a great deal of attention in the coming year.

A number of General Councilors expressed interest in having a General Council retreat so that the entire Council will have an opportunity to discuss the philosophical basis for our organizational work. The Council will have an opportunity to pre-plan this retreat at its July 2003 meeting.

The office reorganization and virtualization work has continued throughout the year. The Wrightwood building has been on the market since early spring; The Fellowship's computerized database has been converted and is currently being updated, de-bugged, and made accessible (while secure) through the web. This work is highly detailed and time consuming. Once the entire system is fully operational, it will greatly increase our efficiency and our operational effectiveness and flexibility.

A great deal has been said this year about "unity". Many have been calling for unity between the Foundation and the Fellowship; some have condemned the actions of individuals on either or both sides that caused the "split" in 1989. To be sure, unity is a desirable outcome. Harmony among all organizations and individuals who are identified with the mission of spreading the fifth epochal revelation is something we would all want to experience. Indeed, as each of us seeks to do the will of The Father and as we recognize our brotherhood and our responsibility toward one another, we are already united in spirit. As we, regardless of our organizational affiliation, continue to focus on our spirit-driven work, while relying less and less on the institutions that are "Caesar's", the social unity for which so many of us yearn will begin to emerge.

In friendship,

Avi Dogim

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Membership Committee
July 2003

THE PAST YEAR:

Committee Membership: During the past year, the Committee had all its positions filled until January, 2003, when Wm. ‘Sonny’ Schneider (Hawaii) resigned from The Fellowship and the Committee. (Please see below for a description of events in the Aloha Society.) Other Committee members include Charlene Morrow (Oklahoma), Dale Szejnberg (New York), Lenny Cowles (Colorado), and John Causland (Michigan) who serves as the Committee’s secretary. Charlene’s term expires this summer and she has decided to not be a candidate for a Committee seat at this time. Richard Omura has agreed to become a candidate for one of the two vacancies. If you or anyone you know is interested in the areas of membership and fostering Society purposes, please contact us.

Name Change: Last summer the General Council passed the Constitutional amendment to change the name of Charter Committee to Membership Committee.

Membership Structure: The Committee finalized materials that describe membership, explain criteria, and facilitate application. The materials are now available for download from the website at <http://www.urantia.org> and follow the links *What Is The Fellowship to Membership Information*. Here are some highlights:

Societies – The standards for Society chartering requires at least ten Founding Members who have read the entire *Urantia Book* and who adopt a constitution to create an organization which participates in the representative governance of The Fellowship. The Fellowship does not require that a Society’s Charter Members and subsequent regular Members to have read the entire *Urantia Book* as these standards are determined by each Society.

Members-At-Large – The Executive Committee has the authority to approve individuals to be Fellowship members. Applicants are not required to have read the entire *Urantia Book*

Affiliate Organizations – The Executive Committee also has the authority to establish an administrative relationship with Affiliate Organizations. MAL applications are made available to the individual participants of Affiliate Organizations who wish to become

Fellowship members.

Societies: No inquiries for chartering were received during the past year and no new Societies were installed.

Evergreen – In January 2003, eight remaining active members decided that, “...we should let Evergreen Urantia Society of Washington fall by the wayside and channel our energies into the larger and more active Washington Urantia Association.” A request has been made for the group to return the charter document to The Fellowship.

Aloha – In February 2003, The Fellowship received a petition from 14 of 24 members of *The Urantia Book Aloha Society (TUBAS)* of Hawaii. These individuals agreed to rescind the special election of February 5th as is provided for in their constitution and they asked The Fellowship to assist in monitoring a fair election. They sighted numerous instances where the constitution of TUBAS was not being followed while some officers made arbitrary and unilateral decisions about membership and procedures. Several members resigned from the Society and thereby The Fellowship, sighting harassment and intimidation by these officers. Shortly after The Fellowship agreed this request, Bud Kagan when to court seeking a temporary restraining order against The Fellowship. The Fellowship then withdrew from participating in a new election. The majority of members believe that the Society does not function constitutionally. Discussions about resolving this dispute will likely continue in the coming months.

Members-At-Large: Welcome to Edward Risley of Renton, Washington and Theresa Ransbottom of Zephyrhills, Florida who applied and were approved by the Executive Committee to become Fellowship members. Theresa is now serving as a member of the International Fellowship Committee.

Affiliate Organizations: No application for becoming a Fellowship Affiliate has been received since the installation of “Centro didático-terapêutico Casa de FAD” on May 6, 2002 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Furthering Society Purposes: This Constitutional task has focused on the following:

- **TDA** – The Committee continues to foster an annual meeting of Society representatives primarily by providing information to new delegates and alternates and promoting the exchange of ideas and information.
- **SocAdmin Email List** – In January, SocAdmin celebrated its third birthday by adopting a revised and expanded set of guidelines. It is evolving into a wonderful tool for Society officers and representatives and General Councilors to communicate with each other.

NEXT YEAR:

Society Expectations: The Committee is faced with addressing issues of Society functioning and vitality. Should Societies be expected to maintain a minimum number of members? Should Societies be expected to abide by their constitutions? Should a majority of society members be allowed to petition the central organization for oversight? These issues are not currently addressed in The Fellowship Constitution. Possibly the TDA could discuss the characteristics of a well-functioning Society and recommend criteria to determine when a Society no longer a living part of the organization.

Administrative Communication: The Committee believes that Societies and individual members should have easy access to all administrative forms and materials. We hope to assist in making increasing amounts of information and materials readily available on The Fellowship's Website.

For the Membership Committee,

Bob Bruyn, Chair

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Outreach Committee
July 2003

2002 was a slow year for the Outreach Committee. As the chair I offered to forgo funding for my committee in deference to greater financial concerns within our organization. This was a challenge for a committee that is used to a modicum of funding. Sadly, all nonprofits were hurt in 2002 by the ebb of finances in post 9/11 America but Outreach Committee still accomplished a lot in spite of low funds.

In 2002 we did manage to help support several noteworthy outreach efforts including a couple of book exhibits in small spiritual expos. One such show was put on and managed by committee member Thomas Orjala in Spokane, WA. Although we could not provide the monetary support we usually provide for shows like the one Thomas did, we did have a ready supply of first edition Uversa Press Urantia Books to provide for these kinds of outreach efforts. Without funding, these books became our primary resource and we surely put them to good use. In fact, it may have been our best outreach effort ever.

I have always believed that books sitting in a warehouse are of benefit to no one. I have also felt that although the angels are very good at leading people to the book even they have a hard time leading people to a warehouse. The decision to get the books out of the warehouse prompted the angels to present us with several excellent projects to get them into the hands of interested persons. Bless their hearts!

The seraphim guard you; they do not seek directly to influence you; you must chart your own course, but these angels then act to make the best possible use of the course you have chosen. (113:5.4)

The New York Firehouse Project

Soon after deciding to put these books to good use, Nick Curto, a dedicated member of the New York Society's Outreach Committee, called us with an idea about sending one book to all the New York City firehouses. Nick explained that he had had a very meaningful spiritual conversation with a fireman and felt that perhaps, since firemen do often have time on their hands, the firehouse libraries would be a rich soil in which to plant The Urantia Book. Nick provided us with addresses and one book each went out to 215 New York City firehouses.

Outreach Committee member Jo Ann Wiedman is owed a great deal of gratitude and appreciation for this effort. She mailed out these books and hundreds more with love and dedication, at a time when huge and distracting professional changes were taking place in her life. Heartfelt thanks go to Nick and Jo Ann! It's indeed a privilege to serve with such loving and dedicated individuals!

The Interfaith Minister Project

Almost immediately after Nick called with his idea we got an email from Les Jameson, yet another dedicated member of the New York Outreach Committee. He wanted to send books to interfaith ministers. He had an email list of interfaith ministers and workers in the Northeast. He composed a letter and sent it out to the list. Soon we were receiving dozens of email requests for books. Most of the ministers who requested books expressed how they had always wanted to read it and how thrilled they were to finally be able to have it. Each person also promised to place the book in his or her organization's library. Les, of course, kept a list of everyone who received a book so that he could follow-up with them. Nearly 100 books went out for this purpose. Many thanks to Les, whose boundless energy for service is always inspiring!

The Puyallup County Fair

Next we got a call from Don Lee in Seattle, WA. Don and the Seattle area readers were doing an exhibit at the Puyallup County Fair. The fair was schedule to last for nearly two full weeks and it is no small task for a group of readers to arrange for volunteers to be at the booth full time, especially during the workweek. Yet, under Don's leadership, they pulled it off without a hitch, and are planning to do it again this year. We sent plenty of books and literature to Don and friends for this purpose and they placed well over 200 books at this event. Kudos to Don and the Seattle readers!

Books To Congressmen and Senators

About the same time as we heard of the Puyallup Fair we got an email from another wonderful reader in Omak, WA. Her name is Rebecca Bratrude and she explained that God was guiding her to send books to all US Congressmen and Senators. She asked if we could help. With a chuckle I asked her how many books she would like. We ended up sending her 200 books for this purpose. This sweet sister single handedly sent a book to each and every congressman and senator in the United States. Thank you Rebecca, your efforts are truly those of a second miler!

International Requests

In addition to the above domestic shipments of books, we also sent numerous cases

abroad. Several cases went to JJ Johnson in Pakistan. JJ has always done such amazing outreach work and he continues to quietly go about our Father's work. Because of JJ there are currently two Urantia study groups in Pakistan. Thanks JJ, for years of quiet and effective outreach service!

Following is an excerpt from a grateful Urantia Book recipient in Pakistan:

Good Morning in the name of Jesus Christ! We want to inform you that we received the book and have started to study it. It really it is a wonderful book! Thank you!

Evangelical Door-to-Door Church
Pakistan

Many additional books have gone out to various African groups at Norman Ingram's request. Norman continues to amaze us with his stalwart dedication domestically and abroad. Norman was also the recipient of many books that he placed from his bookstand on Venice Beach. Thank you Norman!

All in all, last year we placed 1,100 books in the libraries and with individuals.

Outreach Committee is deeply grateful for having had this wonderful service opportunity. We offer heartfelt thanks to our Fellowship for blessing us with the task of getting these books out of the warehouse and into the world and for graciously providing the funds needed to ship them. With special thanks going to the Angels who no doubt helped us find all those willing recipients and made our job so much easier!

Additional Outreach Committee Efforts

In addition to the book distribution project Outreach Committee also updated the Study Group Directory and is working with David Kantor to keep it up to date online. We will be publishing this directory only online in the future. Doing so will save paper and printing costs and allow interested individuals to print only those portions of the directory they need.

In Faith and Friendship,

Paula Thompson

The Outreach Committee of The Urantia Book Fellowship
Paula Thompson - Chair
Thomas Orjala
Robin Jorgensen

Robert Buselli
Brian Smith
JoAnn Wiedman
Les Jameson - Adjunct

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Interfaith Committee
July 2003

2003 has been a year of team building as well as action for the Interfaith Committee. We met several times this spring via conference calls to discuss the committee's immediate and long-range purpose and goals. After considering the past emphasis by the Committee on outreach to other major religious groups, we decided this year to focus our efforts on outreach to the Urantia Book community itself - an "intra-faith" approach to service. This decision was in response to the years-long breakdown of reader and organizational communication between members of the Foundation and the Fellowship. The Committee felt that by bringing to the community some of the communications tools already developed by other effective interfaith organizations, we could help empower individuals become more effective at building relationships and promoting harmony within the larger community of readers.

Because of this decision, the Committee is offering two workshops at the Summer Study Session that are geared toward this effort. We hope that these workshops will be the first step in an on-going effort to provide education about conflict resolution and productive dialogue among all readers of the Urantia Book. We hope to expand our efforts next year by collaborating with interested IUA members and offering workshops at conferences sponsored by both organizations.

The committee continues to recognize the importance of representing the Urantia Book and the religious movement it has inspired to the established world religions and interfaith organizations. We also recognize, however, that other religionists will not take the Urantia Revelation seriously until our organizations provide a positive example of inter-group harmony and unity of purpose. It is to this end that the Interfaith Committee is working in 2003.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca Kantor

The Urantia Book Fellowship
Annual Report of the Secretary General
July 2003

During this last year of my three-year term, I was given additional responsibilities:

1. member of site location team for the Summer Study Session (SSS 2003)
2. co-chair with Lila Dogim of the next International Conference (IC05).

We chose Villanova University as the site for IC05 after many months of site visits and research with Lila and Avi Dogim, Dale Szejnberg, Bob and Linda Buselli, Bill Rocap, and Karen Larsen. We made a commitment to Villanova after a final site visit with the site search committee and Gary Deinstadt and Bobbie and Steve Dreier who agreed that Villanova had all the elements needed for a successful international conference. We are continuing our efforts to bring together the right mix of skills to further the progress.

I made social contacts and did lots of networking in the reader community:

1. "Florida Students of The Urantia Book" Conference
2. Connecticut Retreat
3. I.U.A. Conference in France
4. Local area events
5. Four Executive Committee meetings.

As coordinator of the mail forwarding, office re-organization process that was implemented last year, I have the responsibility to direct requests or changes to the appropriate person or committee. So far this process has been working well.

I'm not under any illusion that any one person can turn the organization around. Some things we do well and some decisions we made did not materialize as expected. The risk of challenge and change requires emotional maturity to experiment with new approaches and learn from the results; to be steadfast in the face of pressure.

Working within an established group with a shared purpose, moral integrity, focused on high ethical standards without self-importance is the mark of the leadership of this organization. The enduring values of integrity that have been forged over many years have

given us the guidance and the initiative to pursue an even greater vision for the future.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Doreen Heyne

Secretary-General

Website Status Report

Oklahoma City Business Meeting, August 2003

David Kantor

Introduction

Over the past six years the Fellowship Internet presence has evolved from a simple website to a much wider range of services upon which the organization is becoming increasingly dependent. The website provides a primary means of contact with the public for purposes of promoting The Urantia Book and the activities of the reader community. It also provides us with a means of informing interested individuals about our organization.

In addition to these public services our organization is becoming increasingly dependent on the website and Internet services for its internal communications and business operations. As this process continues, it might be helpful to have a little perspective on present operations and developmental issues. The purpose of this report is to try and provide some of this needed perspective. This report will focus primarily on administrative issues, a little bit on technical issues, and will not cover the significant restructuring of content that is in a preliminary stage.

There are a number of ways of organizing -- into an architectural framework -- the data made available on a website. This framework is essentially an outline structure that guides site navigation and the philosophy behind the associations that are made between documents and services. The Fellowship website is constructed according to a model which is somewhat like an archive, or an encyclopedia.

Some Considerations on Going Virtual

Going virtual changes some of the areas of concern associated with maintaining the well being of the organization. Some of these are:

Protection of services and data from hackers: At present we experience 2 or 3 attacks on our security each week. In six years of operation there have been 2 attacks serious enough to take us offline for a short period of time. This may become a bigger issue in the future if The Urantia Book becomes more widely known and is associated with some controversy.

Sufficient redundancy to assure zero downtime: A backup network should be in place somewhere physically separate from the primary network. This issue is addressed in a little more detail later in this report.

Changes in staffing: Going virtual does not mean that we can operate with no employees. Going virtual eventually will require employees, volunteers, or consultants with more highly specialized skill sets than

would be the case with a non-virtual organization. Executive Committee members, who bear responsibility for the well-being of the organization, will need to be sufficiently informed about Internet processes in order wisely to direct the work of these people as well as effectively to guide continuing development.

Separation of public and private services: In-house and public data services should be running on physically distinct machines and perhaps eventually, physically distinct networks. Security and backup procedures would thus be much easier to manage and the organization would be in a much more secure position.

No data corruption: This is primarily a matter of making sure that people inputting and editing our data are well trained and that good backups exist. Much of the data entry and management process can be automated.

Protection of the privacy of system users: A good privacy policy must be drafted and put in place. Its provisions need to be clearly available on our website. Protecting the privacy of our users includes how we use their data and how we protect it from being accessed by unauthorized individuals. We will soon be able to let readers log on with a password and edit their personal address information. The Executive Committee will need to provide guidance on the implementation of this and other procedures that can reduce administrative overhead for our organization.

Enough in-house people who know the system to minimize using high-priced consultants: This is a similar situation to that which we have had with Dan Massey being able to provide information that helped to minimize our legal expenses. Fees for good technical consultants are on a par with fees charged by attorneys. Microsoft charges \$250.00 for addressing one technical problem. DellHost charges from \$50.00 to \$175.00 per hour for technical assistance.

Sufficient documentation to minimize consultant fees and to facilitate new people coming onboard to help: At present very little exists in the way of documentation except for a 3-ring binder of notes that I maintain. Areas in need of more accessible documentation are:

1. Details of website architectural structure
2. Details of IP address assignment and DNS services (these are technical details necessary for system maintenance)
3. Records of outside support services for which we have contracted
4. Records of license authorization codes for software we use
5. Records of payment for and expiration of domain names

6. Records of usernames and passwords for people who have access to the network for the contribution of website content
7. Details of system security scheme
8. Details of database schema and logic
9. Details of database backup and archiving procedures
10. Details of website backup and restore procedures
11. Details for retrieving archived versions of the website, archived email, etc.
12. Details for the management of email list servers
13. Location of records of correspondence with individuals and organizations with whom we maintain business relationships that support our online services
14. Records documenting the location of data used to maintain our services. For example, the location of the email address list for the urantianet newsletter service.
15. Copies of contracts, legally binding agreements, and approved workflow procedures need to be archived and made accessible to organization administrators.

(Development of a web-accessible documentation database is a task that needs to be addressed in the immediate future.)

A scalable and expandable architecture: The organization must have a long-term idea of goals and objectives for the system. This is essential for the guidance of day-to-day maintenance. It is easy under pressure to cobble together solutions to problems. If care is not taken, the code used to manage the system can evolve into a chaotic collection of such last-minute cobbles which is impossible to understand. When solutions to present problems are developed with an understanding of long-term objectives, desirable efficiencies may be realized.

A robust backup and restore system: A formal procedure for the backing up of organizational data needs to be drafted, approved by the Executive Committee and put into operation. The Executive Committee needs to review this periodically and make sure that backups are being made and archived per the approved procedure. Tests to assure that the data can be successfully restored need to be made periodically.

(It should be noted that the ultimate organizational backup would be the ability to easily revert to

a non-virtual operation. Contingency plans should be in place for this possibility and our virtual presence should be designed with this possibility in mind.)

Using common out-of-the-box software and keeping current with upgrades to all software and operating systems: Doing this will make it much easier to bring new people up to speed if necessary or to seek assistance from outside consultants. In-house coded software and clever patches may appear useful in the short-term but they are inevitably disastrous in the long-term and should be completely avoided.

Effective measurement, analysis, and reporting tools: Ultimately neither the Executive Committee nor the individuals directly managing Internet services can make good choices without good measurement, analysis, and reporting software. We need to know which areas of the website are most popular, where are our users coming from, which search engines are most effective in directing people to our website, what visitors are seeking, which website features are seldom used, which paths users most frequently take through the website, the pages on which they enter, the pages from which they leave, etc. Purchasing, installing, and using this software should become a priority as soon as possible. (It is an item which I've had to cut from my budget request for the past two years. I am hopeful that, by reducing some other expenses, we will be able to squeeze it out of this year's budget.)

All of the above could be classified under "*Maintaining the ability to assure continuity of all business operations.*"

Fellowship Internet Services at Present

Effective Internet services must reflect and support the core objectives of the organization they represent. For many people, our Internet services will provide their only contact with our organization. More effective Internet services can only follow upon a more sharply focused customer service model. We use the term "reader services" but we could substitute "customer service" and benefit greatly from studying customer service models in mainstream business literature.

At present the website is developed assuming the following three core objectives:

1. Stimulate interest in The Urantia Book
2. Provide information services to readers
3. Facilitate the development of social infrastructure within the readership

Our Internet services should support these core objectives or those objectives that might be established by further Executive Committee or General Council action. In any case, members of the Executive Committee need to be sufficiently informed to play a constructive administrative role in content management, developmental direction, and in the overall public image projected by our Internet services.

The Fellowship currently provides a variety of Internet services to the readership. An outline of these includes the following:

Websites

Urantiabook.org – Primary English website. (Also reachable via ubfellowship.org)

Ellibro.org – Primary Spanish website

The Fellowship has made its server and network resources available to other reader groups. At present these secondary websites are:

Uversapress.com

Retreatnetwork.com

Stillnessfoundation.org

Urantiabook.fm (Fellowship audio archive server)

Interfaithspirit.com (Website of the Interfaith Committee)

UrantiaGGC.org (Website of the Golden Gate Circle Society)

UrantiaNYC.org (Website of the New York Society)

Two new Spanish websites are presently being developed – GrupoOrvonton.org and Guetza.org. These will supplement Ellibro.org. GrupoOrvonton.org will be a password-protected site for administrative use by Spanish speaking readers. Guetza.org will provide on-line chat and other communication services for Spanish readers.

An important part of being able to provide a more comprehensive range of web services to the public involves distributing the responsibility for content creation across a variety of individuals and groups. At present the following individuals have security clearance to access specific areas of our network where they develop and maintain their own web spaces.

Richard Omura, Interfaith Committee

Michael Bain, Retreat Network

Tim Christiansen, Golden Gate Circle Society

Ken Glasziou, Innerface International Newsletter

Les Jamieson, Fundamentalism Studies

Les Jamieson, Uversa Press

Les Jamieson, New York Society

Sandy Porter, Stillness Foundation

Larry Watkins, technical support

Current Spanish content contributors:

Agustin Arellano, Mexico

Yolanda Silva, Chile

Email Services

The Fellowship currently provides email list services for several internal groups. At present we manage the following lists:

EC

Council

Socadmin

International Fellowship Committee

Family Life Committee

Prayer requests

Inquiry responses

PR and Book Marketing (not yet fully functional)

Urantianet services

Occasion-specific lists such as temporary lists for conference coordinators

I have avoided providing public email lists simply because they take a great deal of effort to monitor. I refer inquiries about such services to Pat McNelly who manages the UBRON discussion forums. In my opinion UBRON is one of the best Urantian services on the Internet and Pat is deserving of our recognition for the quiet service he provides in keeping this system online.

Developmental Directions

Studies of the evolution of corporate websites reveal distinct phases in the evolution of institutional web services. I've compiled the material which follows from three books on the topic. "Maintaining and Evolving Successful Commercial Web Sites" by Ashley Friedlein, "Building Enterprise Information Architectures" by Melissa A. Cook, and "Designing Large-Scale Web Sites" by Darrell Sand of Netscape Communications Corporation.

Please bear in mind that development may reach a plateau of equilibrium anywhere along the described developmental spectrum, depending upon the objectives of the organization and the volume of user traffic through the website.

Phase I: The Early Webmaster Phase

In this initial phase the job of managing site content is usually up to a Webmaster of some kind: someone charged with managing and updating the Web site whether part time, full time, in house or outsourced. Smaller, less complicated sites or sites that do not change that often can quite happily be managed by a webmaster.

In this phase site changes typically are made directly to the live site by the Webmaster. He or she will have a local copy of the files of the Web site to preview changes through a browser before setting them live and also to act as a rudimentary form of backup. Testing of changes is often done once the changes have been set live with any errors fixed directly as they are found. The site consists of several hundred files.

(The network upon which Urantiabook.org is currently running contains a development server – a machine on which website materials are developed and tested, and a public server – the machine which is accessed by website visitors and to which other content creators publish their materials. There are thus two complete and current copies of the website on separate machines at all times.)

Phase II: The Mature Webmaster Phase

By now the site has grown to consist of 1,000 or more files. (Urantiabook.org presently contains more than 19,000 files consisting of 605 Gigabytes of data.) Interactivity and functionality on the site is

increasing beyond the simple presentation of static web pages. Demands on the Webmaster are now coming from multiple sources within the organization. The site has become of increased interest and importance to the business, so quality control and uptime are more of an issue than in the first phase.

In this phase the organization begins to see the need for a staging server. This is a machine which is intermediate between the development server and the public server. The staging server is a machine accessible via password. When documents are completed on the development server and ready for the public server, they are first published to the intermediate staging server where they may be tested and reviewed by a larger group prior to going public.

By this time the Web development team consists of several people but all changes are still channeled through the Webmaster, creating something of a bottleneck. There are enough changes and additions being requested and enough people working on the development team that it is becoming increasingly difficult for each person to understand which changes belong to whom and which are ready, or not, to go live. Quality failures begin to appear in the form of incomplete link pathways, missing graphics, and other errors. Developing some method of version control becomes a necessity.

In this stage more of the work begins to be automated. Software used to develop the site becomes more comprehensive. Uploads to the public server can become automated. Templates can be created and provided to content creators to make their jobs less technical.

Phase III: The Early Database Phase

This phase sees the beginning of a transition from a website consisting of many static files into a site where the content is increasingly stored in a database and individual pages are increasingly created dynamically. Moving into the database phase helps to solve some of the Webmaster bottleneck problem. Site updates can be more easily automated, more advanced functionality may be introduced and the content can become increasingly dynamic. Personalization becomes more feasible along with more advanced search features. Content from multiple documents can be assembled by software to meet the requests of Web site users. This also provides a foundation for the more dynamic sharing of content across web sites.

The technical skills necessary for developing and managing the website are becoming far greater than was the case in the early Webmaster phase. Databases need administering. Optimal schemas and architectures need to be designed. Code often needs to be written to read and write content to the database from Web interactions and forms as required. Administrative tasks increase as increasing complexity increases the number of potential failure points.

At this stage the development team usually consists of more than five people managing the organization's data and content assets within the database. Increasingly, content is being provided from multiple sources within the organization directly to the staging server. As the number of content contributors increases, so does the need for administrative checking and approval prior to material going

live on the Internet. Hardware, network, and software requirements increase proportionally to increasing traffic and demands on the public site. Increasingly, software content management tools are deployed.

Phase IV: The Mature Database Phase

By this time the entire operation has been placed under the control of a commercial software Content Management System. The site has become a commercial enterprise with transactional capabilities and other systems integrated with it. Content is published not just to a Web site but also through other interactive channels such as data capable mobile phones, wireless handhelds, etc. Content may also be formatted and stored to feed directly into non-Web channels such as print media, CD and/or DVD production. By this time the core team may consist of ten or more full-time people.

Producing and managing multilingual and international versions of the content often become a key focus at this stage. The Content Management System provides a structure for distributed management, content creation, and publication. The development environment itself is becoming increasingly distributed. There may be a core team managing the operation, but this may be supplemented by freelance specialists from time to time who may be working from home -- and satellite development teams, who may be distributed around the world to cater to local versions of the site. It becomes increasingly important to have tools and processes to manage communications and work in this distributed, and yet still collaborative, development environment. Different time zones add to the challenges. Virtual project management tools and extranets with work management features such as task queuing, approvals management, discussion threads, and file sharing can help.

The technical infrastructure has evolved accordingly. Demands for system availability will have risen sharply as the site has become increasingly important as a business channel, meaning that sufficient redundancy needs to be built into the system to assure zero downtime. If localized versions of the site are being created and maintained in foreign countries by development teams based there, then further development environments need to be set up, and they may even require their own dedicated servers and networks to serve their version of the site to acceptable performance levels in their particular region of the world. Keeping all systems in synch and maintaining centralized management control with localized content ownership, presents additional administrative challenges.

* * *

The evolution of Urantiabook.org over the past six years has followed much of the developmental sequence outlined in the literature used above. I would describe our current state of development as bridging the mature Webmaster phase and the early database phase. I do not foresee the Fellowship needing the sophistication of the mature database phase in the immediate future (although such a need would be a pleasant and welcome surprise.)

Given this schematic of Website development, I would like to highlight the following areas which have

become current development issues.

Segmentation

In addition to a viable content model, a website which is beginning to implement a foundational database should give consideration to a segmentation model. With a database it becomes possible to provide a modicum of personalization for website visitors – the system knows something about the person visiting the website and displays information targeted to that particular user.

While complete personalization is beyond anything we need at present, we can create segments into which we can put all website visitors. Pages such as the home page or the “What’s New?” page can have areas dedicated to the display of specialized information. For example, if a member of the General Council logged onto the website, he or she might see information about an upcoming Council meeting. Any member of the Fellowship might see a link to an internal newsletter that was not available to the general public. Unidentified visitors or surfers would see more general information designed to inform them about the book and about the Fellowship.

This concept is in line with our recent discussion about providing historical archives to readers while making it more difficult for the general public to find these documents. It would be helpful to have Executive Committee input regarding an effective set of categories for a productive segmentation model.

Migrating content development and maintenance to Fellowship committees

Some time ago we agreed that each committee should have a web liason person as a member – someone who was web literate and could help the committee utilize web resources to further its purposes. Each committee, with the possible exception of Judicial and Special Projects, stands to gain considerably enhanced effectiveness by utilizing currently available Fellowship Internet resources -- with virtually no increase in budgetary demands.

If each committee has such a member, these individuals can form a pool of backup persons who have some familiarity with the website’s technical structure and with Fellowship web publishing procedures.

There is a real need for a committee to take on the responsibility of maintaining the history archive – selecting documents from present activities that should be archived for future reference. There are still many documents of historic interest needing to be scanned and added to the existing archive. It would be helpful if Committee chairs would play a more proactive role in stimulating this much needed structural change.

Designing more efficient work-flow procedures

“Going virtual” includes modifying workflow in the organization. In some cases this will be

relatively substantial. We will saddle ourselves with unnecessary inefficiencies if we simply digitize current workflow procedures that have evolved in the environment of an office management system. The Executive Committee should take an active role in seeing to it that these new workflow processes are clearly defined and implemented. This will require an understanding of present workflow objectives combined with insight into how they may be effectively realized in the new environment. Documentation of these workflow procedures is just as important as documentation for the technical aspects of our operation. We must make sure that information essential to the operation of the organization does not reside only in the mind of a single individual.

Study group database updates: The site and the data in the database need to be kept up-to-date. Conference announcements and their link trails need to be removed after the event has passed. Reader address information and study group information need to be constantly updated. Once study group information has been updated in the database, new pages need to be automatically generated and uploaded for display on the website.

Reader database management: Guidelines and workflow procedures need to be established to control the updating of the reader database and the provision of mailing labels to valid requestors. Rules for database management and procedures for a robust backup and restore system need to be developed and implemented.

Archiving of approved meeting minutes: It would be helpful to the organization to have fully indexed archives of General Council minutes and Executive Committee minutes. At present we have a good collection of Council minutes available but I have been unable to obtain a set of back Executive Committee minutes. The workflow procedure which needs to be implemented here (in addition to someone finding and providing back minutes) is for a copy of the *approved* minutes to be sent to the website for publication. The minutes that get distributed prior to meetings are not the final copies. Sometimes there are specific items in the pre-approval minutes that we do not want in the permanent record, such as votes for a particular person running for the Council.

Publications: There should be an established workflow of materials from the publications committee to print media as well as to the website. The website needs copies for its archive as well as copies to send to the email list of persons wanting to receive these publications via email rather than through the postal service.

Conference presentations: Conference presenters should be strongly encouraged to provide printed (or computer file) versions of their presentations for further use in Fellowship print and electronic media publications. This would greatly expand the audience for such presentations and provide the Fellowship with materials to publish for readers who are unable to attend conferences.

Online Conference registrations: We can now provide online registration. This requires new workflow processes to assure that credit card charges are managed properly. Registrants can receive automated confirmation that their registrations have been received. How this is done needs to be

thought through and relevant workflow processes implemented.

* * *

I have mentioned a number of items which I feel warrant administrative consideration. "Going virtual" represents a fairly radical restructuring of our organization and informed participation by Executive Committee members and General Councilors is essential to the effective realization of this change. Note that I said "informed" participation -- it is absolutely essential that we cultivate the participation of individuals in the process who are technically literate in such areas as web design, information architecture, online community building, online financial transaction management, and relational database management. In addition we must keep abreast of emerging communications technologies and be prepared to exploit the opportunities they might provide for facilitating our mission.

Lastly, we must appreciate the fact that we are utilizing available resources to create an infrastructure for the spread of the revelation that may be used by upcoming generations of readers, readers in different parts of the world, readers using languages other than English, and reader organizations that have yet to develop. Surely this is worthy of some careful consideration and decisive action.

David Kantor