



The Urantia Book Fellowship
IT Services Report
July, 2008
David Kantor

The Fellowship website is in process of a complete revision. With the advent of the Urantia Book Historical Society archive and website, many of the historical documents will be replaced with links into the Historical Society archive. This will reduce maintenance issues for the Fellowship website and allow us to concentrate on developing resources in other areas. (<http://www.ubhistory.org>)

This past year a major reformatting of the online text of The Urantia Book was completed. The online text now provides embedded links to audio resources, related Bible references, synopses, topical index entries, and pdf formatted papers for printing. (<http://urantiabook.org/newbook>)

The Polygloss, which allows any two translations to be viewed side-by-side, has been complemented by Urantia Book Translator. Translator provides one column in which any translation may be displayed while the other column provides live edit boxes for revision and translation work. This is a major step forward in creating online tools for use by translators. It also assures uniformity of formatting which will make it much easier to develop secondary works across all translations. Troy Bishop has put in countless hours on this project with its far-reaching implications for facilitating the dissemination effort.

The Paramony has been reworked so that it easily can be made available in any language for which there is a translation of The Urantia Book. We have Larry Watkins to thank for this.

Major steps have been made this past year to lay the groundwork for using international print-on-demand services to eliminate shipping costs and make it possible for local and regional leadership to print some of their own materials. Harry McMullan's books, "21 Steps to a Spiritual Awakening" and "When Things go Wrong," in both Spanish and English are currently being formatted for print-on-demand services. The Topical Index for The Urantia Book is also being formatted for easy download and local printing. Other materials including The Urantia Book itself will follow. Nick Tamm of Boulder, Colorado, is a print technology specialist and has been a great help in planning our move into this domain of dissemination effort.

The Uversa Press Edition of The Urantia Book has been formatted for e-book publication and is now available for the Amazon.com Kindle. A version for the Sony Personal Reader is in process and should be published before the end of the third quarter.

Additional standards are being created and formatting work is being done to enable selected materials as well as some admin resources to be available for mobile devices.

Bobbie Dreier continues to manage the online study group directory. It now contains contact information for groups across the full spectrum of Urantia reader organizations, thanks to her efforts.

A great deal of work has been done on the admin side of IT services. A completely new database will be implemented in the weeks following completion of IC08. In addition to providing for significant administrative efficiencies, the new system when complete will provide services for Societies and study groups, the ability to coordinate volunteers and assemble working teams for specific projects, and the ability for Societies to manage and utilize Fellowship records for readers in their own regions. Alan Goodman of RMSF has devoted significant effort to this project over the past nine months, bringing the perspective of a professional database designer to the task.

The goal is to evolve efficient, low-cost means of managing growing global dissemination efforts. Our challenge is to utilize the economic and technical resources presently available to disseminate the revelation as well as to provide a foundation which might support the work of revelation workers in the future. This means putting into the hands of readers anywhere in the world the resources needed to publish supportive materials, papers from The Urantia Book, brochures, handouts, posters, etc., and to develop their own regional distribution mechanisms.

Over the past few years demands for IT services -- particularly on the admin side -- have increased substantially. With the Internet, any single reader can engage in global outreach. The Fellowship is moving forward to provide tools and resources that can be used in such a changing world.

The Fellowship is in great need of volunteers who can help with the expanding opportunities and challenges. The Internet provides tremendous dissemination possibilities. We need reader-volunteers with technical backgrounds willing to put in a few hours of work weekly on an ongoing basis.

Following is a list of opportunities -- for readers with technical skills -- to participate by contributing a few hours a week to the greater task. If you are interested in helping, please contact David Kantor, dkantor606@yahoo.com. When you see the word, "management," in the descriptions below this means getting to know the software involved in a particular process well enough to exploit it as fully as possible or to assist others in doing so.

Search Engine Management

- Manage Search Engine submission process.
- Become familiar with primary search algorithms in use.
- Optimize key web pages for search engines.

Email services management

- Manage list subscriptions.
- Provide technical support for users.
- Develop resources.
- Manage technical aspects of mail server.
- Work with database administrator to manage automated mailings.

Admin website management

- Keep archive of meeting minutes current.
- Keep archive of committee reports current.
- Publish admin documents.
- Keep policy documents and web-based admin forms current.
- Keep admin records current -- current Councilors, EC members, Society officers, etc.

e-Publications management

- Manage e-mailing list.
- Collect information to be published.
- Format and publish e-newsletter.
- Format and publish special announcements as needed by the Fellowship.

Internet A/V resources manager

- Manage conversion of existing materials to web-compatible formats.
- Manage media server.
- Provide tech support for readers wanting to publish their own A/V materials.
- Provide tech support for groups wanting to do their own podcasting.

Server administrator

- Monitor event logs and take care of day-to-day maintenance.
- Manage load balancing and server optimization.
- Manage users and groups.
- Monitor usage and manage licensing issues.
- Manage installed applications.
- Manage firewall control over Fellowship network access.

Admin tech support

- Be able to provide basic application and OS tech support for volunteers using their own computers for Fellowship work. This will be basic Windows applications such as Excel, Word, Outlook, PowerPoint, etc., and basic Windows OS issues.
- Provide tech support for Councilors and EC members using Fellowship IT resources.

Conference web services coordinator

- Manage registration and payment forms.
- Develop event-specific registration forms.
- Manage event promotional websites.
- Archive obsolete forms and registration records of past conferences.

Web store manager

- Understand and manage the software supporting the Fellowship's web store.

Person to manage coding of web-based forms for interaction with the database

- Forms for Society use of central reader database.
- Forms for subscriptions to Fellowship publications.
- Forms for internal admin use.
- Should be familiar with the basics of 3-tiered web-enabled processes and applications.

Document titles, descriptions, keywords

- Work with Search Engine Manager to update documents with titles, descriptions, and keywords for purposes of search engine optimization.

Document culling

Review existing website documents and identify those which should be moved to the historical archive. These can be deleted from the website and replaced with links to the Urantia Book Historical Society website.

Proof-reading

There is an ongoing need for proof-reading of documents.

Link checker

Hyperlinks throughout the website need to be monitored for breaks and fixed as the underlying structure changes.

Person to oversee development of mobile services

Reformatting key pages for mobile device access.
Development of UrantiaBook.mobi for reader services.
Development of FefAdmin.mobi for internal admin services.

Polygloss Formatting

Work on uniform formatting of existing translations.
Develop style sheets for master files enabling display in various media.
Manage version control policy.
Understand and be able to work with Polygloss and Urantia Book Translator software.

Technology advisor

It would be helpful to have someone working professionally in the area of business systems to advise the Fellowship on long term technology trends and provide advice when major purchases are being contemplated.

I would like to say a special “thank you” to Larry Watkins, Alan Goodman, and Troy Bishop without whose dedication and programming skills our forward progress would be extremely limited. I would also like to thank Saskia Raevouri (SquareCircles), Pat McNelly (UBRON), Tim Hobbs (DataConnect), Meinhardt Greeff (Truthbook), and Victoria Clark (Historical Society) for their enthusiastic sharing of problems, solutions, code snippets, and vision.

David Kantor

June 20, 2008

“You who today enjoy the advantages of the art of printing little understand how difficult it was to perpetuate truth during these earlier times.” 93:7.4