

From: Ray Trygstad [trygstad@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 05, 2005 10:37 PM
To: Tim Berners-Lee
Cc: Gabriel Fenteany; Michael Chapman; Gerard Manning; Gene Thursby; T.Matthew Ciolek; Hanno E. Lecher; athornhill@conbio.org; Noiret, Serge; Lynn H. Nelson; Lopez Martin, Ignacio; George Laughead Jr
Subject: Re: Resignation from the WWW VL

(Taking a deep breath and plunging in...)
Some of this can be explained much better than I can, but I would like you to understand the core of the matter quickly since I gave you the first heads-up on this. I am certain that others who are party to this discussion will correct any errors I might have made here, and I speak for myself as a VL member and not on behalf of the VL or the VL Council.

It is true that we did not elect a new Council when the current Council's term expired in 2002. As this contingency is not covered in our Constitution (<http://vlib.org/admin/Constitution>) or Bylaws (<http://vlib.org/admin/SepBylaws>), the assumption was--and is--that the previously elected Council would constitute the Council until a new election was conducted. Sometime in the spring or summer of this year, as I understand it, a Council member, Michael Chapman, assumed responsibility for maintaining the index at vlib.org. He was assisted in some reorganization by Council member Gabriel Fenteany and by George Laughead Jr., who was also working on the history index. Mr. Chapman moved the Index of the VL to his own server and at some point following that action would no longer share passwords for access with anyone else on the VL. October 2005, Mr. Chapman held a physical meeting of the VL in Switzerland, attended by four people, at which a "caretaker council" was elected who in turn elected new officers. ***In my personal opinion*** (I cannot speak for the rest of the Council in this) this election was illegal as it did not follow the procedure prescribed in Article VI of our Constitution. On top of that, two of the four people in attendance, Arthur Secret and Raoul Sanchez, are not actually members of the Virtual Library as neither one, to my knowledge, maintain a VL. Minutes of this meeting may be found at http://vlnavmar.usnaweb.org/vlmembers/VL_ag05.pdf. I am absolutely certain that Michael Chapman has a completely different perspective on this and I sincerely hope he will take the time to explain his actions, but I know what our Constitution and Bylaws state and I know how things appear to those of the properly elected Council members who have been part of these discussions.

The other major part of this dispute is Mr. Chapman has unilaterally decided to dismiss what is probably the largest single section of the VL, the VL-History Index, based on vague charges of "creation of some bizarre link patterns [which] risk being seen as 'link spamming' (akin to citation circles) by machine users" as well as some other disputes that I am not entirely aware of. I believe that Serge Noiret, who now manages the VL History Index, will address his specific issues in a separate email. On a minor note Mr. Chapman also dropped my site from the index and although he says I was notified as per the Bylaws, I find no such notification and nothing but pleasant exchanges between him and I in my email archives at the time he said it was done. As I have seen no evidence that termination of my membership in the VL followed the procedure established in our Bylaws, I still consider myself and my site to be members of the VL and will fight tooth and nail to preserve the integrity of the Virtual Library.

In all of our communications over the past week as things have deteriorated, Mr. Chapman has never responded (that I can see) to any of the calls for free and open elections involving all members of the VL; even if they were held today, he has complete control over the database of members and the mailing list, and many of those who would oppose him have either been dropped from membership or have withdrawn and could not participate in the process. Gabriel Fenteany, whose resignation has prompted this current email exchange, as recently as the end of August stated "As I understand it, George is worried that Michael is trying to take over the VL. I do not think this is true." and "I think that Michael is willing to share server access to others." I certainly understand that Gabriel feels betrayed but I sincerely wish he would remain and help the rest of us restore the VL to a member-run organization.

I am very saddened that the ring of mutual trust and respect that was the Council of the World Wide Web Virtual Library has been torn apart. I honestly do not know what you

who wish to see the VL remain a viable, vibrant community of scholarship, and I hope you might work with us to restore full member governance of the VL.

--Ray

Ray Trygstad
Maintainer, Naval and Maritime pages of the WWWVL

On 12/4/05, Tim Berners-Lee <timbl@w3.org> wrote:

> I am very saddened to hear of this crisis within the VL.
>
> Some organizations can weather such crises and survive.
> In fact, many volunteer organizations do have such crises and do
> survive. I don't know whether a teleconference or a face-face meeting
> would be able to help here.
>
> I had hope that the VL would be run as a non-profit association
> governed in a fair open and democratic way. When such is the case,
> those in control can always be removed by election.
>
> Have general meetings not been held at all, and the council not been
> re-elected? Who currently controls the VL?
>
> I have not been Ccd on the previous emails -- if they are archived,
> could I have a pointer to the archive? I do not have anything like the
> full picture.
>
> The Virtual Library is a valuable thing for the global community, and
> it does represent the integration of a lot of effort from many people.
> Those involved
> have a duty to ensure its survival in the original spirit.
>
> Tim Berners-Lee
>
> On Dec 3, 2005, at 13:49, Gabriel Fenteany wrote:
>
> > I have carefully looked over the e-mails sent by the maintainers of
> > different History WWW VL sites. I am shocked by what I have learned.
> > I am saddened by the fact that all the History WWW VLs are leaving
> > the VL project.
> >
> > As a member of the first and only generally elected WWW VL Council
> > - elected on Dec. 17, 1999 along with Michael Chapman, Matthew
> > Ciolek, Bertrand Abraham, Hanno Lecher, Gerard Manning, Lynn Nelson,
> > Charles Petrie, Alan Thursby and Ray Trygstad - I can only say that
> > the present VL seems to share little in spirit or practice to the VL
> > of that time.
> >
> > I am writing to say that I am hereby resigning from the WWW VL. I do
> > not wish to be associated with an organization that: (1) no longer
> > respects the efforts and contributions of maintainers, even those
> > whose histories with the VL go back to its very origin; (2) does not
> > respond to concerns raised by others, again even veteran members of
> > the VL community; (3) does not act in complete transparency, which
> > has always been the policy of the VL; (4) does not re-establish the
> > traditional means of dialogue that the VL has
> > used: the two-way, unmoderated VL-wide discussion list; (5) takes
> > actions against individual VLs without due process, without
> > informing the broader VL community and with opaque motives.
> >
> > I will consider rejoining a WWW VL that operates in the spirit of
> > the original one. Until that time, please remove my VL, <http://www.biochemweb.org/>, from the central VL catalog at <http://vlib.org/>. I will make the appropriate changes on my VL to
> > distinguish it from the remnants of the once-noble WWW VL project.
> >
> > To everyone: I regret this decision and have very much enjoyed
> > getting to know many of you. I have worked hard on behalf of the WWW
> > VL for the last, close-to 7 years. However, since the present VL has
> > changed so much from the original, and since I think its viability

> > is very much in question, I feel I have no other alternative at this
> > time.
> >
> > Thank you and best regards,
> >
> > Gabriel
> >
> > Gabriel Fenteany
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