

# The Code4Lib Future

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# Background Purpose

- Not a new issue (Roy Tennant presented on this in 2006)
- The purpose of this presentation is to raise discussion, not prescribe solutions
- Attempt to be even-handed. Obviously I have an opinion or I wouldn't be up here
- Me: Co-founder, board member, and President of Linux Users Group/In Princeton, Inc. - a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation



# Code4Lib activities

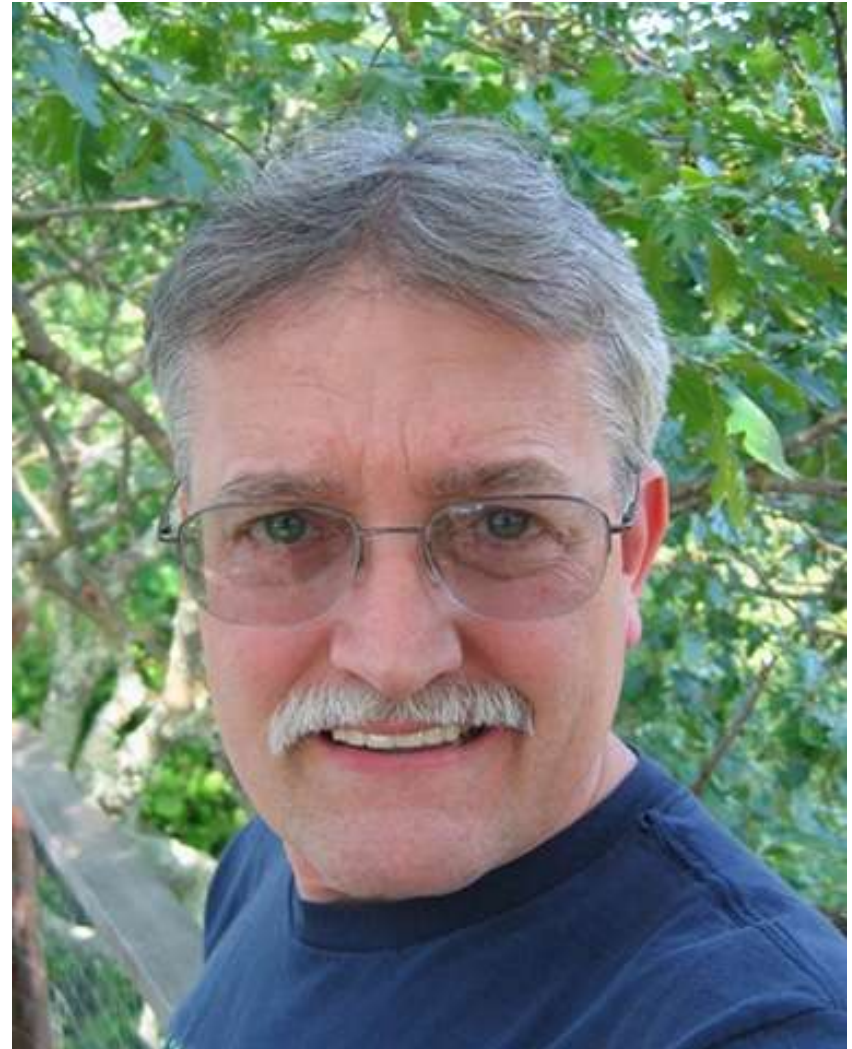
- Mailing list
- Web site
- Planet blog aggregator
- IRC
- Conference
- Journal

# Code4Lib “Governance”

- “We reject kings, presidents and voting. We believe in rough consensus and running code.”
  - David King (1992) *Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) Credo*.
- Roughly how Code4Lib has operated thus far

# Roy Tennant on Code4Lib

“If you want to participate, just do it. If you want to lead, just do it. Don't expect anyone to appoint you to anything, because we won't. If you see something that should be done, simply step forward and do it.”



# Decision Making

- Tribal “Elders”
- IRC “clique”
- Last minute
- Haphazard
- Sometimes after the last minute
- What if someone doesn't step up?





- ◆ **Code4Lib server outage**
- ◆ **Pre-conferences**
- ◆ **Voting**
  - ◆ **On presentations**
  - ◆ **On locations**

# To organize or to not organize

- Reasons to keep Code4Lib as is:
  - It's not broken, why fix it?
  - There are already enough “formal” organizations, we don't need yet another
  - The way that Code4Lib runs is what makes it unique, and valuable
  - As Kevin Clarke put it, Code4Lib is an “experiment” and its “loose association” is what makes people (well at least him) come back

# To organize or to not organize

- Reasons to formalize Code4Lib as is:
  - Smoothing out the bumpy road
  - Responsibility will help ensure that things don't fall through the cracks or are rushed at the last minute
  - A more formal organization will help
    - a) Open up more grant and sponsorship opportunities for Code4Lib
    - b) Get travel funding
    - c) Get recognition from Promotion and Tenure (P&T) and similar committees
  - A more formal organization does not necessarily mean a bureaucratic structure

# Summary of the issues

compiled by  
Michael Giarlo



# Summary of the issues (con't)

1. "Formality" and "committee" are loaded with negative connotations of bureaucracy
2. General agreement that we wish to have continuity
3. Participatory spirit of Code4Lib has been one of its hallmarks and points of attraction.

# Summary of the issues (con't)

4. Code4Lib is by nature highly decentralized and (to some extent) democratically self-managed
5. Code4Lib is neither top-down or bottom-up. It has a “bazaar-like infrastructure.”
  - However, it is not flat either
  - Appears to be general agreement about wanting to keep Code4Lib as decentralized as possible/reasonable
6. Need to encourage individuals to take on leadership positions

# Organize this! Organize what?!

- Even if we agreed to formalize, what would we formalize?
- Just the conference
- Code4Lib as an organization
- Code4Lib Journal already has a “pseudo-formal” structure (as discussed 3 hours ago)

# Options for the Code4Lib future

- Options
  - Keep everything the way it is
  - Join with another organization
    - I doubt there would be much agreement to this, but it is a possibility
  - Formalize organize Code4Lib
    - Can be done in a number of ways
    - Either “legally” (tax status, etc.) or informally

# Advantages of Informal Organization

- No legal paper work
- More flexible
  - Don't have to “play by the rules” as much as if you have a legally recognized organization
- Easier to dissolve

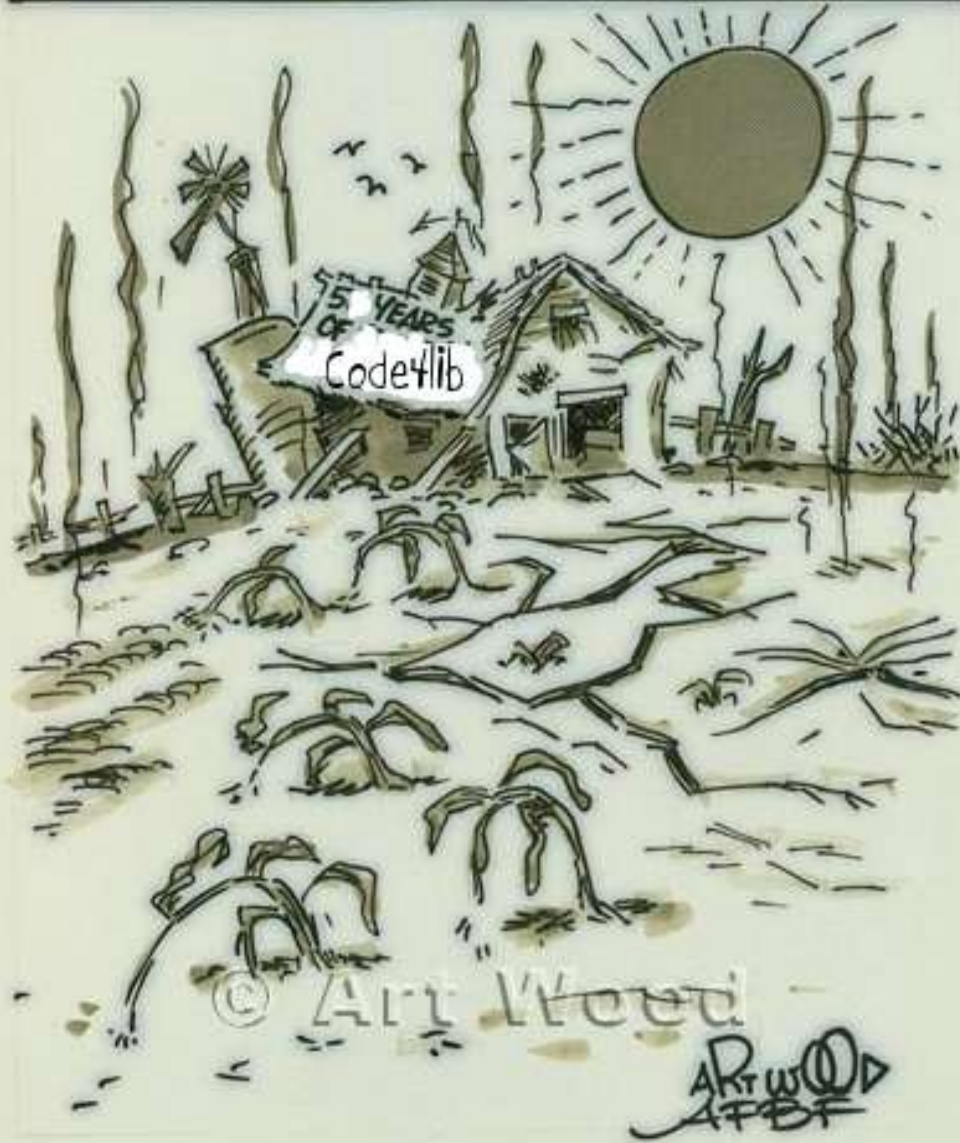
# Advantages of Legal Organization

- Tax exempt status
- Legal entity
  - Law suits
  - Recognition
- Assets
  - Can have them (bank account, donations, etc.)

# Different Types of Legal Entities

- Can be a tax exempt without incorporating
- Can be incorporated without tax exempt
- 501(c)(3) — Various charitable, non-profit, religious, and educational organizations (more coming)
- 501(c)(7) — Recreational club organizations
  - Easier to get, but not as many benefits. While the organization is tax exempt (at least on a federal level), donations are not tax deductible

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



# Recommended Course of Action

- Form a Task Force
- Task Force should
  - Study options
  - Write a report with recommendations
    - Should we formalize?
    - If so, recommend a way to do this
- Community to vote to implement (or not) report recommendations

# Thank You

## Questions/Answers/Suggestions?

“It isn’t an attempt at revisionist history as much as it is trying to put the genie back in the bottle by coming up with formal definitions for all of the stuff that is successful.”

> <http://dltj.org/article/what-is-dublin-core/>

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