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Strategic Planning Working Group Update Potential Database / Data Storage Solutions January 2021

As per the last SPWG meeting, I looked into possible solutions to our data storage issues along with prospective costs associated with it.

I began by looking into the options that cost no money. While there are a number of solutions for storing personal data, there is no free option for sharing data over even a small network of people.

I looked into the lowest cost options for Google drive, Dropbox and other similar cloud based storage systems and found them equally lacking. I examined the features available at the different price points and realized that only the midrange storage solutions provided the services required. This costs an average of 23 dollars per user per month. At first I was stunned by the exorbitant costs involved in this undertaking until I learned the definition of a user in this case. A “User” is defined as someone that can add, subtract or otherwise reorganize files saved to the cloud. We don’t need 18 users to be able to access this information, we only need at a minimum 1 user to make and organize the database. The rest of the members would then be able to access any information in the database. The “user” is the administrator of the database.

At the beginning it will be fine to have only one or two users to begin the initial setup. When we start scanning in older hardcopies, it would probably be better to add one or two more in order to break up the labour and make the work more manageable. Once all the older data has been entered and filed, we can scale back the number of users to one or two again. While it would be cheapest to have one user, I wouldn’t recommend piling that workload off on one person.

Along with the cloud server, we would also need to invest in a decent scanner (if there isn't one in our inventory already) to take the many years of hardcopy and digitize them. We may have to wait for the pandemic to end before we can approach this step in the process.

The first year's cost will be the highest, and while this is only a very preliminary estimate, I would place the number around \$1000 for the first year. Annual costs after initial setup I would estimate to be between \$300 and \$500. We could ask for permission to use some reserve money or convert some of the unused refreshment money in order to cover the costs for 2021 and add it to the budget submission every year thereafter. It is my opinion that these costs are more than justified and must be seen as an investment in the future of the ACPD.

I looked into the possibility of a discount as we are a volunteer association, but we are disqualified from applying due to our government affiliation.

I would also be remiss if I did not point out that this is major undertaking. It is a project that will require the support of all of its members and must not be undertaken on a whim. A large quantity of the information will be old and outdated because each Council is different and operates independently from the others, but it is critical to be able to look up what has been tried before and how; Who was helpful in the past and why; What has failed and must be tried again; What has fallen through the cracks and when? We can no longer afford to rely on institutional memory. Some of our long standing members are no longer there for us to consult with and that knowledge has been lost forever.

With regards to accessibility however, I don't have any definitive answers. Many companies either didn't know what I was talking

about or simply wouldn't reply to my questions about it. It may not be a problem however as Paula has told me that she has not had any difficulties using Dropbox or Google Drive.

Please keep in mind that this is only preliminary research. There may be many other options or solutions out there that I wasn't able to find or am not aware of, but this is the best that I have come up with over the past two weeks. I do not profess to be an expert in any of this and would welcome other perspectives. I would recommend one of the larger programs like Google drive or Dropbox as they are compatible with most software on the market and people are already familiar with them.