Botanical Society of America – IT Report – Spring 2019

Recent Major Projects
- Training new Membership Manager in CiviCRM database use, reporting, and functionality as well as acclimating her to making changes and improvements on botany.org and evolutionsociety.org
- Preparation for SEB migration to CiviCRM. Not completed because of calendar conflicts, but it's 90% ready.
- GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and session management improvements for Botany Conference.
- Preparing description of news for Awards Submission and Evaluation Module project, hiring and overseeing outside contracting with project now nearing completion
- Assisting in the transition of BSA publications to the new Wiley hub online

Upcoming in 2019
- Overhaul of botany.org. This will be a project showing continuous improvement throughout 2019, involving many steps. The first step – migration of most internally linked static pages to our content management system – should be complete by the time you read this.
- Updating of SEB and SSE main web sites
- Evaluation of Botany Conference future technology
- Potentially, we could migrate AFS to CiviCRM during the coming year. They are currently still using our old Executive Director application as their membership database, and they need to change to something else and sought out our assistance and bid on the work from BSA. We have sent them a proposal that minimizes the amount of time BSA staff would need to spend on the project. They have not responded as of yet. We estimated the hours spent would be in the range of 10-15, plus whatever help they need in cleaning up their own data.

A note about the data breach…

As you are probably aware, 2017.botanyconference.org was listed as a breached web site earlier this year. Very little information about the breach is available, and recent access logs show no illegitimate activity. Public reports about the breach suggest that is may have been several years old, which makes some sense as that site was created as early as Fall 2016.

However, I can say that there is very little critical information even stored on the server that hosts that site. We don't store credit card information ANYWHERE on our systems, and never collect critical information like social security numbers. The BSA has used a single sign-on system since 2010, and the password database for that system is encrypted and stored on a completely different server. Within the 2017.botanyconference.org site, data that is interesting to hackers would probably

only be names and email addresses, as well as author addresses; things publicly available from other sources. If the hackers were able to get access to other databases once they were in the system, they would have been able to access passwords from pre-2010 botany conference sites, and we have some evidence that this might have happened.

Once we became aware of the breach, we implemented the notification process we developed earlier in 2018 per GDPR guidelines. I also did the following:
- Deleted all the passwords in the old Botany Conference web sites
- Limited external database access to known IP addresses that need access
- Analyzed recent access logs to find any successful logins from unknown IP addresses – there were none.

Since the breach might have happened as much as 2.5 years ago, it is entirely possible that the "hole" through which the hackers accessed it was closed long ago via routine software updates or maintenance.