Background re Internet Resources used by Canadian Yearly Meeting – August 2017

Resources:

Internet Resources include: E-Mail; E-Mail Discussion Lists; Web Sites; Web-Based Collaboration Software; Online Cloud File Storage; Social Media platforms, etc.

The Internet Resources Manager (IRM) is a contracted position currently managed by P&C (previously by HMAC). This is currently contracted to CAPFLEX Networking (a company owned and operated by Bruce Dienes). Due to the regular turnover of volunteer committee members and clerks, and transition of the work to different committees, the history and purpose of this position is often poorly understood. Essentially, the work is to manage existing resources, consult and advise on current issues and future risks and opportunities, respond to ongoing technical issues and provide training as required.

Time Line

- In 1997, CYM initiated its first web site, crafted by Helen Thomas.
- In November, 2000, CAPFLEX Networking took over management of the web site. This coincided with .ca domains becoming available, and quaker.ca was registered to host the web site and for email. There was an update to the look and feel of the site in December 2001. Typical annual cost for domain registration, web hosting, software licenses, maintenance, updates and technical support was between $2,000 and $3,000 plus tax.
- In 2002 we added more information about CYM committees, made downloadable forms available, and added an on-line calendar that was updated by CYM Office.
- In 2003, CAPFLEX started offering web hosting on quaker.ca subdomains for Monthly Meetings and other CYM bodies (e.g. CYM Archives, etc.). These subdomains could be hosted on the CAPFLEX server or redirected to a third-party host. Design could be done by someone in the meeting, or by CAPFLEX, or by a third-party designer. HMAC, who was overseeing communications for CYM at that time, asked CAPFLEX to develop a description and costing sheet to send out to Meetings, but for inexplicable reasons, the CYM clerk at the time asked HMAC not to advertise these services. As a result, many Meetings did not know about this option, and we ended up with a hodgepodge of different domain names and web site styles across CYM.
  E-mail discussion lists on lists.quaker.ca became available.
  One large piece of work was to convert all the advance information for CYM Gathering and make it available online. Another is the ongoing updating of Friends Serving CYM and the contact information for local Meetings.
- In 2007, we did a redesign of the site at the cost of about $1000. There was more activity and updating on the site and annual costs rose to between $4,000 and $4500. Separate sites for QIAP and CFSC were set up, in addition to the Archives site.
- In 2012, CYM started to restructure its approach to Internet services, and looked to diversifying the providers. CAPFLEX was involved in consultation re needs for redesign of the site, setting out requirements and consulting on a job description for an incoming web developer. CAPFLEX installed and configured a new platform for web design (WordPress). Total cost for this above the standard annual contract was about $2,000.
- Extensive redevelopment continued through 2013 and 2014. CAPFLEX annual contract dropped to $3500. Additional costs for ongoing technical support in developing the new site parameters and implementing Simple Press, the online discussion board software cost about $2,000 per year between 2013 and 2015.
- Current annual contract with CAPFLEX for hosting, tech support and software licenses is approximately $4,000 per year. Some CYM committees are using the Simple Press interface for working between face-to-face meetings
- The current management of the web resource is now divided between three sets of responsibilities: The IRM handles the "back end" of the server and web site, ensuring functionality and security. The Web Developer (currently Islandside) manages the "front-end" look and feel and operation of the Word Press web site, except for the Simple Press plugin, which is managed by the IRM. The content on the site is managed by the CYM Editor. For information about the roles, responsibilities and costs of the two new positions, ask the P&C Clerk.

Outline of current issue with email on quaker.ca:

In a nutshell:

- Many people cannot receive emails from quaker.ca email addresses
- This is due to many reports of SPAM from quaker.ca emails. (There are over 450 quaker.ca addresses.)
- This is because SPAM coming in to quaker.ca is being forwarded from quaker.ca emails to Friends' personal email addresses, and being auto-reported.
- When SPAM is reported often the last sending server is blamed (i.e. quaker.ca), not the originating server
- This causes the entire CAPFLEX mail server, with dozens of email domains not related to quaker.ca, to be blacklisted, and so mail from all those domains has trouble being delivered, particularly to Microsoft domains like Hotmail.com, Outlook.com, Live.com, etc
- Recent changes to policies of Internet Service Providers make it very difficult to get UNblacklisted
- This makes it no longer viable to host email for quaker.ca on the CAPFLEX server.
- Recommend moving to the free Google Apps for Not-For-Profits ASAP (i.e. starting to move on that today!)

The long version, with details:

As you may be aware, there has been exponential increase in SPAM and other problematic misuse of email over the last few years. In response, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have been stepping up their anti-SPAM campaigns and blocking IP addresses of mail servers that they believe are associated with such activity.

The issue with the quaker.ca emails is that we have dozens of them, and most auto-forward to other addresses. **When a message is forwarded that contains SPAM, the blame is often put on the last place it came from, not the originating address.** Thus, when any SPAM gets through these many addresses, it gets blamed on quaker.ca and it reflects on the CAPFLEX server. In addition, when people receive the SPAM, they often "report" it as such (or their email program auto-reports it) and that counts even more against then CAPFLEX mail server, even though the SPAM did not originate there.

Up until a year or so ago, there were fairly simple methods to contest a blacklisting of a mail server. You could go to an index of blacklists, check your status, and make a request to be removed, explaining the situation. Lately, Microsoft, Google and other large ISPs have stopped making their actions public, so we don't know if or why we have been blacklisted, and attempts to have that status removed fall on deaf ears**. This is why quaker.ca emails cannot be received by Microsoft addresses such as hotmail.com,. outlook.com, live.com, etc**., and why Gmail will not send from these addresses.

I have tried repeatedly to use the forms that Microsoft and Google offer for delisting, but to no avail, probably because there are so may email addresses on quaker.ca that SPAM continues to get through.

Recently, I reset all the SPAM filters on quaker.ca to a more extreme filtering. (If I take it any further, it will start filtering out good emails.) This has not changed our status.

The really annoying factor is that **it is the entire mail server that is blacklisted, not just quaker.ca. This means that this impacts about 100 domains on my server**, and has made it very problematic for me to offer email services. I am recommending that clients switch to Office 365 or Google or other provider for email services. It has become impossible for me to continue offering mail forwarding services, so we need to find an alternative solution for quaker.ca email. **I am recommending that we use Google Apps for Not-For-Profits**

Recently, Google made it possible for Canadian not-for-profits and charities to use Google Apps for not-for-profits, which is **a free service** initially offered only to US organizations. I am assuming that we qualify, even though CYM is not incorporated, because of our Federal charitable status. We can find out by registering for Tech Soup, the organization that provides low cost software to not-for-profits and charities. If we qualify there, it is the first step to getting a free Google Apps account.

Google Apps will give us a central web interface for quaker.ca email, e-lists, file sharing, collaboration, shared calendars, video conferencing, etc. See https://www.google.ca/intl/en/nonprofits/products/ for a description. The paid version costs US$50 per account per year, so free is a really good deal!

If we move the quaker.ca email over to Google, it will use a different IP address (i.e, one that is not blocked) and Google has the clout to ensure that its emails are not blocked, as long as we conform to its terms of service**. This does not affect the web site quaker.ca, which would remain on the server and is not affected by the blocks**.

None of the email addresses would change, but how people access the email would, if, like Cameron and Kerry, they are not forwarded addresses. They would log in to the gmail interface, but the email addresses would still be quaker.ca ones. We currently have about 140 emails, and 150 forwards and 170 email aliases. So 460 to move over. (Estimated)

Another benefit of having the Google interface for the management of email and other communications such as collaborative projects or shared calendars, is that **anyone can be trained to manage it and have access to it**. This diversifies your IT portfolio and provides flexibility in management. Let me know if you have questions. --   Bruce Dienes, CAPFLEX Networking