

A digest of the email discussion about Web sites, etc.

The first item below is Julie's conflation of the first couple of drafts of the priorities for the Web site. Below that, in chronological order, are all the contributions to the discussion, with email clutter edited out.

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Priorities for FAA Website
30 April 2020

<http://frederictonartsalliance.ca>

Top-level hierarchy:

1. Home – with a “Latest News” section as the main part of the page (this section will be dynamic and can be changed regularly and easily, with focus on the 2020 Artists in Residence program for the summer, starting with the Call for Proposals info that is on the current Home page)
 1. DONATE button on the front page, below the News section
 2. Footer – prominent Facebook link, DONATE link/button, City of Fredericton logo and statement that the website was created in partnership with the City of Fredericton, **[[anything else here??]]**
2. Arts News
3. Activities
 1. Artists in Residence (this will be the home of the new blog* that will be set up for June program start)
 2. Art in the Schools
 3. Art off the Streets
 4. Gala and Annual Art Auction
 5. Election Forum
4. Links and Other Resources – this has links to all the publications and resources that are currently on the home page, plus Links to the 2018 and 2019 Artists in Residence pages (<https://artistsinresidence2018.weebly.com> and <https://artistsinresidence2019.weebly.com>)
5. About, with “Join” on this page, too
6. Contact, with “Join” on this page again, too

*Artists in Residence Blog – we are open to suggestions on the best page structure, whether it is a blog or other option, to optimally facilitate showcasing one artist per week throughout the summer. We want to make sure each artist can use live streams, videos, audios, photos, documents, text, or other popular/likely virtual options for sharing their work with the City and the world. The current artist's contributions to the “blog” should be showcased on the home page as well as the 2020 Artists in Residence page, and as each week passes, the posts from the previous week should remain and move down the 2020 page, and the new artist's posts should be at the top of the 2020 page as well as on the home page (the “old” artist's posts should disappear from the home page as the new artist starts and is the new person to showcase). This will need to be easy to maintain, hopefully by a summer intern who can serve as the “tech facilitator” for the summer artists, with changeover to each new showcased artist happening once per week.

Graphics details – we will need to get nice photos and graphics/images to make the site attractive. Any advice on kinds of photos/images/graphics and/or colour schemes or themes to use would be appreciated! We may be able to look through our archives for source material.

Other considerations/concerns:

1. We currently have 8-10 email addresses provided by our current website host (Canadian Web Hosting, <https://www.canadianwebhosting.com>). Would Squarespace have this same email service?
2. How much would what we need in Squarespace cost, on an annual basis? **[[We will need to understand how this compares to what we currently pay for CWH.]]**
3. We would like to make sure the new site and all pages are mobile-friendly and not too long (don't have to scroll and scroll to get through the content for each page!).
4. Could we have a user manual or information on how to change content as well as make moderate or large changes in structure to the site? Online reviews of Squarespace suggest that certain types of maintenance may have gotchas or not be really easy to figure out, so we want to make sure we can properly and effectively manage the site down the road.

Down the road – additional projects:

1. Interactive calendar for arts events and activities, with a simple online submission form that could be managed easily by the ArtsNews coordinator via email. The overall goal is to basically renovate/overhaul ArtsNews so that people find it easier to use and locate the information they want on upcoming arts happenings in the City.
2. Moving all the archive documents – Russ has indicated he can do this over time. We have a significant directory structure (almost 5 GB, in over 4000 files in 350 folders), so we need to make sure this structure is easy to set up and populate.
3. City may be interested in using or duplicating the Artist blog, if it really works for us and if they like it. We have also talked about linking up with other local arts organizations to host, or at the very least link to, their online content, so that we can provide a central place to come and find online arts content for the City!

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Julie, Friday:

Please find attached [above] a new version of the web design document, with the excellent suggestions and questions from Kitty and Russ, plus a couple of other ideas from my discussions with Angela at the City. Please let me know what you think of the new document! There are a couple questions in yellow in there for you, too. I look forward to hearing what you think!

I also have one additional question for all of you:

Are we all OK with the new website being hosted on US-based servers, via a US-based service? Our current site is on Canadian-based servers. I am typically opposed to going outside Canada for hosting but understand that Squarespace (based in New York) is Kerry's expertise, and Squarespace itself sounds like a really nice, all-inclusive and well-integrated service, and it may not be a big deal for us, but I always like to steer clear of potential issues that could stem from having the site in another country, usually related to privacy. If we choose to go ahead with Squarespace, can we continue to use our .ca domain?

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Kitty, Friday:

I would really, really prefer if we could stay in Canada. Being hosted in the US does have privacy issues, and a whole other set of laws, including the Digital Millenium Copyright Act, which is a whole other kettle of fish.

Does Kerry have the skills to do this in Wordpress, instead, bearing in mind that Wordpress is a very different animal than when our website was first set up and maintenance should be significantly easier (no need for Russ to break things to make them work)?

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Russ, Saturday:

I'm just getting to this, but I was going to write pretty much what Kitty says before I even looked at Julie's new version. I feel exactly the same way about US based sites, however nice they are (I have to say that yesterday I looked to see what SquareSpace offers as email, and it's not necessarily a dealbreaker, although it would be a version of gmail).

I think I'll contact Canadian Web Hosting's tech support and see if they have suggestions about how we might get done what we want to do and remain with them.

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Katie, Saturday:

Agree completely with Kitty and Russ. If we could stay with CWH would be great.

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Julie, Monday

Thanks for your notes and thoughts on this. I'm sorry to throw a wrench into the plans, but once I read details on the Squarespace platform, I realized it was New York-based and that they "...store your data in multiple Tier III data centers across the United States" (see <https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us/articles/115012540827-Where-does-Squarespace-store-my-data->). So I just thought we should understand the full implications of going with them.

Based on what I have read so far, I think Squarespace will not be available through other web hosting services, but I look forward to hearing what Russ finds through his contact to CWH. Maybe there is an alternative,

Julie

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Katie, Monday

Groan! - K

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Russ, Monday

I don't yet have much in the way of good news. I've not heard back from CWH, but over the weekend I spent some time setting Weebly up so that we could use it on our site, and poking at it. My take on it is that it will not let us do anything like what we're imagining, either for the main Web site or for AiR. I can see why Charlotte could use it for the AiR blog, as that seems to be what it's designed for. It's extremely narrow in the range of choices it gives you, and they all seem to be commercial or single-event oriented. Maybe someone with more skill than I could whip it into shape -- we can give someone access who'd like to try, but I'm far from optimistic. I'd like to be sure what the Okanagan site was built with; I had thought it might be Weebly, but I can't see any evidence of that, nor any likelihood of building something so visually complex. But that might just be me.

And I'm about certain that SquareSpace can only be used on their site. If we're going to stay Canadian, I think we're limited to Weebly or WordPress on CWH, or looking for another Canadian-based web hosting service. There are others.

I have begun to wonder just how irrevocably damaged our current WordPress site is. It might be possible to fix the structure. There are, after all, only a limited number of pages I've manually edited. If it could be cleaned up, we (that is, someone with the graphic and web skills) could then make it look like whatever we want. WordPress is, I think, the basis for most of the sites we see; certainly it's the most widely recommended platform ("WordPress now powers 30 percent of the web, according to data from web technology survey firm W3Techs").

I'll wait a bit to hear from CWH; I hope they'll be able to suggest something. I'm not extremely optimistic, however; even though we've been with them a long time, we're a pretty small operation.

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Kitty, Monday

I think if it's going to be Wordpress it would probably still make sense to migrate the old website information to the new Wordpress platform hosted by CWH - with all its built-in bells and whistles - rather than trying to "unbreak" the old one. As someone who briefly tried a blog with the Wordpress platform 10 years ago, I can confirm that the new Wordpress looks much different than it did then!

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Courtney, Tuesday

Okay, there's a lot to unpack here, I'm going to bullet form it:

- What is the fear of US server? Many large companies and organizations use servers that are based in the states, I think this used to be more of a security issue in the past, but I think that we don't need to worry about this anymore. Though the website is accessible in the states it doesn't mean that it would go under US law, it would still be Canadian laws protecting us. (*Kitty, there has been precedent set in the last 5 years to corroborate this) We could still keep the domain name registered in Canada and just have square space as the host.

- I would suggest to every artist (CND or US) to put watermarks on their work because you can make a screenshot of anything so the copyright issue is tricky. For us, we just need to be careful not to plagiarize anything ;)

- The idea of revamping the old site would be more work than it's worth. It needs an entire facelift that needs a more useable "back of house". If you would all like to stay with Wordpress (which I understand has a better backend now), then we need to look at closer to \$4000. This is not something that Kerry would do. It also has a monthly cost of \$11-30, without any plug ins. Wordpress looks great, but will be a much larger cost for the initial setup and subsequent monthly payment.

- Russ - we are not looking at Weebly to be the blog - we would have a page on the website that would be the AiR page. The only connection to weebly would be the link to the previous years as to not lose the content. For the archival things why not put that on a google drive - or realistically (and statistically) is anyone going back and reading archival minutes? If the AGM minutes were there to give a nice overview I think that would be enough information for people if they are casually looking it up, otherwise it could always be accessed easily, just not directly on the site?

- Julie - I'm not sure what you mean by "I think Squarespace will not be available through other web hosting services," but in speaking with Kerry (and having done it with CSAC) we were able to keep our domain name in Canada and be hosted by Squarespace. Maybe you meant domain? because Squarespace is the web hosting service :)

- My main point is: what is the goal of the website?--- I think the goal is to get people excited about the arts in Fredericton, offer opportunities to artists and arts organizations, celebrating our AiRs, and sharing information about the going ons of the community. What is the best way to do this? Through a website that is attractive (yup people have unconscious bias), easy to navigate, and has good information. I think we need to look at the website as a tool for all of the things that FAA does. If we had more traffic on the website, more people would know about the programs and an all-over good thing for the FAA.

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Kitty, Tuesday

Courtney,

What is this precedent of which you speak? As far as I am aware, the privacy issues inherent in doing business in the United States are still particularly acute if it's hosted there. For more on copyright, see: <http://frederictonartsalliance.ca/pdfs/CopyrightAddendum.pdf>

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Courtney, Tuesday

Hi Kitty,

My understanding from this document (particularly on the DMCA) would only be an issue if we breach a copyright of someone else's... so if we aren't planning on that, shouldn't we be okay for that part? It seems they would just ask us to take it down if we did by mistake.

This document is also from 7 years ago and things have changed a bit (Facebook privacy in particular) but I understand that there is good reason to be cautious. You're absolutely right that USA has looser restrictions in regards to the "privacy" of a cloud based server (aka, US be creeping in the background) but as per "security", the fear of corruption of files (not quite sure if we are concerned with security or privacy?) or... copyright infringement would all be covered under Canadian law. The bonus of a CNDN server is that they can refuse access to information from the US, this would not be the case in the vice versa.

I don't have the case law (sorry) but from what I was reading there have been successful cases of the internet being a "global reach" and that the location of the place of business was the defining factor, not where the website is hosted.

SO in short - yes, Canadian servers have better privacy laws, but i think "security" on either would be the same. I don't think we have very sensitive data to be protecting (this is just an assumption, call me out if I'm wrong) and anything an artist puts up should have their watermark to prevent copyright infringement from others. As per our own DMCA hesitation - it looks like it's only important if we are infringing on someone else's copyright (again, call me out if I'm wrong). So, my main point is that for less than half the cost we can produce a really nice website - is the more than double cost worth the (in my opinion) minimal added security of privacy? I guess that's a question for the whole board to decide.

Happy to have further discussions, there's no doubt I could be missing something, but from what I see it seems we don't have very much to worry about?

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Kitty, Tuesday

Hey Courtney,

If it's ok with you, I'm going to add some of this thread back to the group as a whole, because I think it's important that we all understand the possible ramifications of using a US host.

The problem is less us/ our artists breaching copyright, and more malicious actors *claiming* that we have. Anyone can make a complaint, and as soon as they do, we're stuck taking down content and responding to it. The DMCA regime is something we don't want to get stuck in. There are a LOT of frivolous DMCA complaints, sometimes even by the person who is actually the copyright infringer against the creator, other times just "4thelulz" or even as a revenge tactic. There are a lot of shitty humans out there, and sometimes they just decide randomly that you're today's target.

I don't think security is particularly a concern more so in the US but I'll let the tech people speak to that.

Privacy is, though. Squarespace is going to be governed by the laws of the US, even if our organization isn't. Which means that the host will have to comply, and turn over our private data even if we don't agree, or even know about it. And our host will have access to all of our members' private data, so in effect, the US government does, too, any time they care to invoke "national security". To be clear, the US government doesn't give two hoots about us as individuals or the FAA as an organization. But what if there's an actual national security threat hosted by Squarespace? I'm not willing to count on Trump's NSA to not behave badly and vacuuming up everything they can get their filthy paws on.

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Courtney, Tuesday

Hi Kitty,

You can share no prob, I didn't know until now that our members' private data was on our website though which certainly gives me more concern for privacy. Is there a reason we have that information on there? I think the odds of the US government invoking the patriot act towards our arts group would be small, but I do understand that there is the possibility there, and that our laws under the Canadian server would better protect that information. I think if our members' data has to be on the website, then absolutely the server should be in Canada; before that though, should our members' private data be there at all? Can you tell me what sort of information is on there?

As per the copyright, would that be kind of the same in Canada? If some asshole-human decided to claim infringement, what's the difference from being accused in the US vs. Can? Clearly you have far more insight to this than me, I'm just thinking if some whack-job wants to be malicious towards us, are we significantly more protected in Canada? That answer would be a huge decider for me.

So all in all I see 2 roads here:

1. We do a quick job of getting a new website up and hire Kerry to turn everything over to Squarespace, including a page where the artists can present their virtual experience. A precaution for this would be that the archival, membership, and other sensitive information would not be transferred to this site as there would be concern for privacy laws in US that allows easy access to data. The upside to this is that we get to access the \$2000 from the city to build it. I also like this option because it would be great cross-coverage for the FAA if the blog was directly accessed through a new website and exposing more people to FAArtsnews.
2. We hold off of building it, and really take a deeper look into what we want out of the website. It's a big undertaking to build a new website (no matter which option), so if we want to really take a step back and look at all of our options as per privacy laws, nonprofit rules (eg. minutes must be stored in CND server and/or hard copy duplicate has to be in Canada), plug-ins, feasibility, cost, and so on, I understand that there's a lot to unfold. In this case, we could set up a Blog site (seems like weebly is the best option?) just for the AiR people in time for mid-June. Clear downside is no financial help from city, but the bonus to this could be that we hire a summer student (if possible) to move things over to wordpress and save on costs of a website developer. If a summer student can't figure out the back of house of a website, then the next cat who takes the reigns probably won't be able to either.

Thanks Kitty for helping me better understand this, I feel that a website is so important to the image of the organization and that FAA is genuinely suffering from it. I don't mean that to sound so dramatic, it's just that I go to a lot of conferences about website presence for the arts (it's a hot topic, clearly), and people will give a website like 10 seconds to get to where they want to go. If anyone is accessing ours on a phone they are not looking at it for long and I think we, and they, are missing out on opportunities. Bottom line, FAA does amazing things and not enough people know about it. :)

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Kitty, Tuesday

Our membership lists from year to year, as well as any emails that would be hosted through the website would be on a Squarespace US site. Lots of stuff potentially on the board-access-only parts of the site, but that wouldn't stop the NSA. Other than that, not too much that I know of, but maybe others do.

The copyright regime in Canada would actually require someone to go to the trouble of suing us, which is expensive for them and would be a significant deterrent to all but at least arguable claims. There's no requirement to use the DMCA framework if the site is hosted entirely within Canada. On the other hand DMCA is designed to presume copyright infringement until proven otherwise, so it's a pain in the ass.

To your point about setting up a Weebly for the summer, I don't see why we couldn't set it up to accommodate the City's wants, too. I just think that the Wordpress option for the rest of the website makes the most sense if we want to keep it on CWH. Doesn't seem like foregoing City money is a foregone conclusion.

I agree that it's really important to get this right! I definitely don't have all the answers.

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Julie, Wednesday

Thanks for all of your input on this, Russ, Courtney, and Kitty, and for all the time you have devoted and information that you all have shared. I know this is not an easy question to answer but is one that we need to clearly understand before going forward. The concerns about our website touching the US are vast - for example, proponents trying to access online information have even claimed such wild things as "the .com domain is *owned* by the US, so any website ending in .com, even if it is hosted in another country for a non-US organization, is subject to US laws." In this case, the non-US organization and website are protected by the laws of the other country, so they have some protection, but in our case, if our site was actually on a US server, we would have no recourse to protect our information. In addition, as mentioned, we may not even know if somebody has been looking in it. I understand we are not a big target, and we do not have a lot of sensitive information on the site, but to me, it's the principle of the thing - I think it is a bad idea to give the US any way to bother us. I am really sorry that Squarespace is tied up with all that, because it looks and sounds like a fantastic and friendly all-in-one, very nicely integrated and easy to use solution to building beautiful, effective websites, but if we were to go with them, we would be handing over our autonomy. Sorry to be so paranoid, but it's my experience that it pays to be paranoid in these types of decisions.

I wonder what our other options are? There is another company, Web Hosting Canada (<https://whc.ca/en>, which I actually thought was the Canadian Web Hosting that Russ was talking about for the longest time...!), that says it offers "over 300 apps," including Wordpress, Drupal, and many others. If we don't want to go with Wordpress or Weebly (or do we?), I wonder if there was something else in their long list of options that would work? There may be other hosting services, too, or other made-in-Canada solutions. I haven't had the time to investigate, but maybe it would be better to consult with an expert. What is Kerry's range of expertise (and accompanying charge)? Should we contact her to ask?

Thanks again to all for your input on this. I would be happy to call Kerry, if you'd like me to, or Matt Carter or other folks in town who run their own sites, for further advice and information.

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Katie, Saturday, May 9

My sense on this is that we should do it right, and once! Take a bit longer to get it right, but have something that really sings as a result.

Do we need another meeting?

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Katie to Sheila Hugh MacKay Foundation, Wednesday, May 13

Dear Kathryn McCarroll,

Words fail!

Your unexpected offer of \$2,000 to help us with our digital and electronic outreach could not have come at a better time.

I greatly appreciate your recognition of the importance of ArtsNEWS to the greater Fredericton area and the broader work of the FAA in general.

You may not be aware that this year - because of the COVID19 pandemic, we are unable to run our usual artists in residence program out of the Casemate in the Garrison District. As a result, we are organizing a series of virtual residencies, where the artists selected by our independent jury will be given an opportunity to highlight their work on our website for a week at a time.

This is going to mean a major overhaul of our website to accommodate the virtual residencies, and we hope to make the website a better vehicle for serving our arts community. We have encouragement from the city in this development as well so there is a broad understanding that this will be beneficial in the long term - not just during the season of pandemic.

It is a major vote of confidence in our little volunteer organization for which I am most grateful.

I am happy - no, delighted - to agree fully with the four conditions attached to your offer. It will give us the resources to move ahead with the website overhaul in a timely manner (a concern as the pandemic will probably make it impossible to hold our regular fall fundraiser this year which normally provides us with the bulk of our operating funds).

Thank you just ever so much.

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Russ, Thursday, May 14

Fantastic news about the grant from the Sheila Hugh MacKay Foundation. But of course it now makes it even more important that, as Katie says, we take the time to get this right. I've been reading the correspondence about it, and thinking.

A couple of quick reflections: I think it's fairly clear we don't want to go to a US hosting service. It's not that we have much personal information on the site. Our names and email addresses and home addresses is not much to worry about. The fact that, as Kitty notes, our email correspondence using the frederictonartsalliance.ca domain is on the site might be a concern, I guess, but it's virtually all business. And anyway, just as a reality check, all the email conversation on the GoogleGroups site is already open to, um, US prying. But, almost as a matter of principle, I'd argue that we should stay in Canada.

I've had no response from Canadian Web Hosting to my request for advice. However, I have gone back into my own attempts to do something to upgrade the current site, and it seems pretty clear that we can't "fix" the current WordPress structure. I tried to do that last summer, working from CWH's WordPress, just to see what the issues might be, and after some correspondence with the helpful tech people ("Here I understand that you are trying to edit the current pages using a WordPress installation,

kindly note that Wordpress works completely in a different way, you won't be able to edit your current site with a WordPress installation on it. The only option here for you is to edit the pages manually," said one consultant), was brought to see that it can't be done. Editing the pages manually is what I'm doing. We need to start from scratch.

This makes me much more open to the notion that we could change hosts. As I said, I know there are others. One is the one Julie mentioned, Web Hosting Canada (OK, is it the Judean People's Front or the People's Front of Judea?). I have no strategy for deciding, except the possibility that whoever we get to do the actual build of the Web site would want to use something other than WordPress, in which case a site like WHC which offers many possibilities might be better. But that depends on who is going to build the site.

I'd also agree that the three issues -- the AiR hosting, the Web site, and the ARTSnews interface, are still actually separable, and the one with the most immediate deadline is the AiR hosting issue. Further, I think that one's technically pretty straightforward: we simply create a changeable link on our main Web site and each week a new artist works with whatever she wants to use, and we create links to it on the fly. The work she does doesn't have to, and in fact shouldn't, be on our Web site: that should constitute the portal through which the audience gets to her work.

The real problem is not so much the site itself, as the function we want the site to serve: publicity. We can't count on tourists walking by the Casemate. And I think it is a mistake to think of the attractiveness (or lack thereof) of our Web site is a crucial consideration (clearly, the fact that it's not optimized for phones is a problem). We have one thing we want to publicize, and we can essentially take over the whole front page of the existing site to do that. The challenge is getting people to click on links to, or to search for, the FAA site in the first place. And it's a challenge we're facing right now, as we try to publicize the existence of the Call for Applications. We're using only two venues now, as far as I know, the ARTSnews and our Facebook page, and I'm sure that we need to be using others -- CBC, probably other radio (and possibly TV, though there sure doesn't seem to be much local TV these days), the Gleaner, other local digital news outlets like Grid City, The East, Music Runs Through It, ArtsLinkNB, probably others.

Most immediately, I think, we need to work out a publicity strategy, for the call for proposals right now and for publicizing the artists later. Secondly, I think we need to find someone with the expertise to advise us on creating a Web site that will serve as a basis for all this, and which will allow for, or include, the creation of a searchable online events calendar to replace the online PDF which Bridget creates each week.

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Courtney, Thursday, May 14

I think my stance has been pretty obvious throughout this, but here's a link that I found that highlights what I look to as key elements to designing a functional website: <https://www.lyfemarketing.com/blog/web-design-best-practices/> There are some really great points in here, and it seems that they correlate to the MANY conferences, workshops and sessions on digital marketing that I have attended in the last 5 years. I don't think the most important part of the website is the publicize the "one thing" that we are pushing at that time, as we want people to come back often to the site to explore all of the things that FAA does.

Russ I may be interpreting this wrong, "And I think it is a mistake to think of the attractiveness (or lack thereof) of our Web site is a crucial consideration", is this to say that the attractiveness of the website

isn't important? If that's the case, I would have to strongly disagree with that. I would even argue that it's the most important part as you need to capture people's attention to be able to feed them the information. If it's not attractive and hard to navigate, we don't have a chance. I also want to make sure that you know this is not a personal attack of your work on the website, a javascript back-end is a nightmare to control and I applaud your patience!! :) It worked for what was needed at the time (and I thank you for your time and effort into this website) but I think we can now move into an age of ease that will make it easier for anyone to update.

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Russ, Thursday, May 14

And Courtney, no, when I said "And I think it is a mistake to think of the attractiveness (or lack thereof) of our Web site as a crucial consideration," I did not mean it's attractiveness isn't important. I meant that it is not a crucial consideration in the publicity about the AiR program. We don't need to have a more attractive Web site in order to use it as a base for the program; we can start with it the way it looks if we need to.

And I'm not defensive about the way the site looks: I didn't create it. I am a little defensive about it on behalf of the person who did create it, Cat LeBlanc, because at the time we all thought it was just fine, as did I, and that it was way, way better than the text-only one I'd created a few years earlier.

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Julie, Monday, May 18

I will write to Kerry and let her know that we are going toward WordPress or Weebly, etc. and to thank her for all her time and info, and that we are sorry we can not go with her for a SquareSpace site. :(

I also investigated the tech behind Matt Carter's Grid City Magazine site - it's this:

<https://www.theme-junkie.com>

It looks like they provide pre-built site "themes," which you can populate with your content and then add on extras, rather than building a site from scratch. So it's not really helpful for our case, I don't think, since we will be hiring someone with the expertise to manually design and build the site for us, though we can browse through their theme library for ideas and looks, if we like.