Software Underground

Board Meeting

30 July 2020

Homework for the board

- Please add a short bio and the link to a headshot file to this document: https://docs.google.com/document/d/18F2rFFNlz1D_p_Qc5NWnx_ea-8dMSqC62D TyRCYX_qo/edit?usp=sharing — people are acting on this now: thanks everyone!
- Please take a look at the 'Welcome Bot' that Chance and Steve have implemented in #general. It welcomes new sign-ups to the Slack. See https://swung.slack.com/archives/C0138FEJRUZ/p1595021479151400

Agenda

We will start at 16.00 UTC on Thursday 30 July. Quorum is 5.

We will post the Zoom meeting link in #swung-org channel in Slack after any *in camera* session.

Board members present: Matt Hall, Leiaka Welcome, Steve Purves, Brendon Hall, Dieter Werthmuller, Chance Sanger, Jo Walsh, Luisa Zuluaga

Also present: Brian Burnham, Leonardo Uieda

Filippo Broggini sent his apologies.

The previous meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting are on GDocs here > https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jCrSOc1TChs0SQcoOOZIrEZEF7lQ9t4EguWg0Dn3 h4Y/edit?usp=sharing

...and on GitHub here > https://github.com/softwareunderground/swung-org/tree/master/board

I promise to be faster this month!

Nobody had remarks to make about the previous minutes.

Instead of Robert's Rules

I propose we adopt a strategy of seeking consensus on decisions, with the specific goals of:

- Try twice for unanimity.
- Settle for majority (5 out of 9), but without substantive objections.

In the face of substantive objections, proposers should address them with mitigations.

The meeting process I propose is:

1. Listen to the proposal.
2. Ask clarifying questions, and listen to the responses.
3. Raise objections and propose mitigations.
4. Important things the proposer needs to know; or offers of help.
5. Proposer defines next steps, if any. Interested allies join in offline.

I propose we test-drive this for the next meeting or two.

This proposal was accepted by everyone.

Introductions: The board took a few minutes to go around the virtual table to meet everyone.

Jobs for board members

I believe we might get more done if we adopt areas of responsibility. This doesn't necessarily mean "do everything" but it does mean "pay attention and seek help, support, input, volunteers, or whatever you need". We are still figuring out what Swung wants to do, and how it wants to do it, but let's start thinking about roles.

Some possible portfolios include:

- Treasurer and GenSec — finances, meetings, corporation. This is Matt, and the only role that exists so far. I'm horrible at it, but it seems like the easiest way to manage the transition period.
- Community — looking after the Slack and the 'member experience', and meetups.
- Events — coordinating recurring and special events (Transform, GeoDevCon, Field Camp, etc).
- Education — focus on students, training, educational outreach, mentoring, webinars, etc.
- Technology — our own tech choices: Slack, Zoom, AWS, stuff for meetings; TechSoup.

- Data — or maybe Open Science? — looking after open data and open access... and maybe open source? Licenses, education, outreach.
- Partnerships — sponsorship and donation; open software for industry, industry funding for projects; OSDU.
- Publications — I don't think this is a thing yet, but maybe it will be.
- Other: Early Career, Knowledge (e.g. the wiki), Communications (blog, social media, press)

I propose that we each think about what this list could / should look like, then about which one(s) you yourself would like to be involved in. Then we can think about gaps (in the roles or in the board).

Dieter made a remark about this item before the meeting started:

> For me the **Jobs for board members** reads like that, Jobs for board members. However, I think we are the founding board, and our main purpose should be to bring us smooth and swiftly to an AGM to get an elected board up and running. If we get occupied with the regular board tasks I doubt we will do a good job in the founders task.
>
> I think we have to rephrase and rethink these, let's see what we can come up with... E.g.:
>
> - how does the AGM look like, how does proposing for and voting for board members happen, how regular will it happen, I don't know what else is involved in 'official' duties of an non-profit org...

He followed this up in the meeting with the comment that board members should be a line of communication here, perhaps delegating or coordinating, but not *doing* everything themselves.

So it seems sensible to think of our purpose more in terms of designing sensible roles / areas, rather than in terms of getting stuck into them and / or delivering on them.

Steve made the comment that some of the roles are quite large, others much less so. He wondered if there's another way to slice them that helps with this. Leiaka suggested that there would be teams involved in most of these things, not individuals.

Jo, drawing on her experience in OSM, suggested thinking about 'Jobs for the community', and 'Working groups', each of which would have at least one board member involved to act as a point of contact with the board and other groups.

Luisa explained how this works in Geolatinas, which created 6 working groups, whose membership is quite fluid so that members can contribute to them on any level or time period. Some of this flexibility arises from being relatively small and having no budget. But it's very member-driven and fit-for-purpose and we can learn from that.

Dieter suggested some L1 regularization: have as few working groups as possible, lumping not splitting, at least in the beginning.

In summary, we determined to continue this conversation between now and the next board meeting, then move to start or solicit working groups in the community. Our first task is to define some rough and large areas of activity, as outlined above.

Anti-racism policy and action

- Referring to [the petition document](#) we have been reading, I want to call out point 8:
  - *"Acknowledge the inequities inherent to fieldwork while affirming that cutting-edge geoscience happens in many different spaces."*
  - This is an issue for black people and for other minorities, it's an issue for women, and an issue for disabled people. It's also a global issue.
  - *"Societies can lead by disseminating best practices to make all field programs safe for and accessible to everyone."*
  - There is a conversation currently happening on Twitter and elsewhere about the degree to which fieldwork is essential to geology. There's a clear relevance here to digital training, research and work. I think Swung should have an opinion on this. **Volunteers to write a blog post?**

There was quite a bit of interest in this topic, and some good discussion.

Jo and Leiaka were quick to point out that there's nothing to be gained from direct engagement with the current debate on Twitter. Everyone agreed.

But they and everyone else supported the idea of contributing to the wider / slower / less-flamey debate with a blog post, and maybe other things later, about the role here for digital geoscience.

Luisa remarked that there's a strong emotional / cultural undercurrent (that fuels the flame war), and that perhaps it's a challenge for virtual methods to provide some of that emotional (awesome / wondrous) response.

Steve observed that it could be interesting to (in an event, for example) deconstruct fieldwork a bit. Is it just a tradition-driven path to poor (inefficient, biased) data collection? How could we do better with digital (autonomous data collection, etc)?

Brendon reminded us that it's not about replacing fieldwork, and that we should be careful not to make it sound like anyone wants to throw out all that work and experience.But it's about looking forward and asking, "What can we do better/fast/more-of now that we have these tools?"

Leiaka pointed out that we cannot go into the field right now and so need to find other ways to do research containing outcrop-derived data. We should look for that intersection of the field geologist's research and geocomputing.

[Leiaka also volunteered to draft a blog post for the Swung.org site. Thank you!!]

In general, my [Matt's] feeling was that we were in general agreement that: (1) fieldwork is important in earth science, but it must become safer and more accessible for everyone; and (2) that there is a big role for technology in both that goal, and in augmenting or even substituting for fieldwork.

- To this point, and to the second half of point (13), about financial barriers, I think we need to rethink the Computational Field Camp and discuss ways to transform it into a more accessible and equitable event that works as a model for inclusive field camps. Since the inaugural event this October can almost certainly not go ahead, **I propose turning it into a virtual design charette to produce a blueprint for a globally accessible digital-centric field camp experience.** If there's time, we can/should also have a virtual hackathon on low-cost sensors for field data collection. **We could use another person on the organizing team for this: volunteers or nominations?**

This was part of the same conversation.

There was general interest in making something work here. This could be:

- A standalone virtual event on the digital field.
- A track at the putative fall research conference.
- A series of shorter events / webinars / Zooms.

Either way, my suggestion is that we ask, "What would be the outcome of this?" and work backwards from that.

The conversation will continue in #field-camp. Jo, Leiaka, Brian Burnham, Dan Austin, and others have expressed interest in the topic.

Use of Swung's properties

- Will Swung host (Relevant? Member? Cross-project?) projects on its GitHub? See https://swung.slack.com/archives/C0138FEJRUZ/p1593084021109700 **Volunteers or nominations to draft a policy on this?**
- Related to above: Quick discussion on bringing in other projects as 'channel' into Swung. E.g., have a channel 'Fatiando' in Swung, and a channel Simpeg, etc (GemPy, Segyio, welly, and devito already exist). See https://swung.slack.com/archives/C0138FEJRUZ/p1592419184093800?thread_ts =1592412786.089000&cid=C0138FEJRUZ. **Again, we should probably draft a policy... volunteers or nominations?**

We talked briefly about this.

There was general agreement that the status quo (no process, people can create channels at will) can continue — it's not a problem yet. It might be a good idea to write up the policy, but it's not urgent.

The GitHub organization works on similar lines, although it is not as easy to create repos. But this works too, for now.

Leo Uieda, one of the people asking about this, was present. We can continue the conversation in #swung-org if necessary. Thank you to Dieter for taking an interest in this.

GeoDevCon / Research meeting

- Nutshell: Transform is about outreach and education, but we would also like to support research and application — a more traditional conference purpose. But, not like any other conference! Virtual first, free to attend, not just talks, no marketing...
- Steve Purves and Julio Rodriguez are up for helping organize this. Julio also asked Andrea Balza, who said she'd like to know more. I think we need a team of at least 4 to get going on this. **Volunteers or nominations?**
- Depending on how we go about it, I think the budget could be on the order of USD 4,000 no problem (money left over from Transform).
- Timing: November.
- **Next step: that team should meet before the end of August.**

This was not discussed; we can talk about it outside of the board.

Parking lot / next meeting

- Jobs for ~~board members~~ the community. This is top of the agenda next time.
- Dieter pointed out that we had hoped to set dates for Transform 2021 and the Annual General Meeting at this board meeting. We can start the process in August and aim to confirm at the next meeting. [Update: Matt just posted a question in #swung-org to start this process.]
- Matt will actually show a budget to Jo and present it next time.
- What is a member? We must start this conversation next time.
- A brief conversation with a member indicated there might be some interest in a 'certification' program around the concept of a "digital geoscientist". The first step of such a thing might be as simple as a 'skills passport'. Please think about this for next time.

These items will go into the next board meeting, along with those things we committed to revisit, such as the anti-racism list.