

Report on the SRCF 2011–2012

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1 Chair’s Report (Daniel Thomas)

This has been a reasonable year for the SRCF. Things have kept rolling along. I accidentally graduated (it seems a traditional thing for SRCF Chairs to do), a 1.5 year term is too long, I have stopped innovating. Fortunately we have a chance for a change as I will not be standing for the next committee.

1.1 Events

The SRCF Committee should organise a number of events over the course of an academic year: Michaelmas is particularly busy with the Freshers Fair, Welcome Social¹, talks to both the Part IA and II CST students about the SRCF. In Lent there is the AGM and potentially the MRT. In Easter there is the Garden Party and sometimes a dinner.

1.1.1 Easter

We held a successful Garden Party on the Trinity Hall which was sponsored by OpenMarket (formerly MX Telecom). We had good attendance and an enjoyable time was had. Again a dinner was not organised though we had intended to do so.

1.1.2 Michalemas

The Freshers Fair (FF) resulted in some 35 people signing up to receive one email informing them of how to sign up and numerous people were informed of our existence (last year we had over 100 sign ups but we were not as careful to take email addresses). Several people indicated some interest in potentially helping on the committee or as sysadmins but we did not really follow up on that.

Nicholas Tomlinson gave a brief talk at the Part II CST project briefing on how people could use the SRCF for that. I gave (my worst so far) talk at the IA induction lecture. We failed to organise a talk for the IB students on how to use the SRCF for their group projects.

We held a Welcome Social in the Bridgetower room of Trinity Hall (thanks to Malcolm for booking this).

We managed to submit our accounts on time this year (last year we were late) though it was a little tight and slightly stressful when the Proctor’s secretary refused our accounts for not being printed on the correct form (but rather on a much better one we have used for the last n years).

¹not a squash after confusion in previous years when we were thought to be the University Squash Society

1.1.3 Lent

No events or meetings have been held so far this term. We should really have organised the AGM, held an executive meeting and run a Machine Room Tour at the beginning of term.

1.2 Membership

We had a particularly poor year in terms of October signups and this was not rectified by higher signups in later months.

Membership exceeds 6849 and we have over 2240 users and host over 880 societies (less users and societies than last year).

1.3 Outlook

The SRCF will have an increasingly difficult task to remain relevant in the next decade unless it innovates better than we have in the last year. This is mainly because Google and others are breaking into our space by offering software as a service which is easier to use than the SRCF systems. We can still provide much greater flexibility than they ever can so the enthusiast market should remain ours for a good while yet. Fortunately there are many enthusiasts in Cambridge and even Google can't beat us on price.

2 Financial Report (Ben Millwood)

Much of the beginning of my tenure as Junior Treasurer was spent sorting out the forms and signatories and other stuff that the previous treasurer, having mysteriously disappeared, left in a bit of a mess. There were some outstanding payments and donations to be cleared up, too. Suffice to say, that's all now sorted and we don't currently owe anyone anything, as far as I'm aware.

We've received roughly £336 in donations since I became treasurer. Many of these have been in thanks for our generosity – e.g. when we increase quotas or help fix their websites. Some have come fairly unbidden from alumni following event-related e-mails we send, so we ought to always remember to remind people how much we need them. There was a minor hitch when the subdomain switchover rendered our donate button inoperative for a few months without us noticing. This is now fixed.

We also received income from the sale of the old Cyclone for £120, and the AlphaServer and tape robot were eventually sold for a less impressive £1.

Our sponsorship deals fared a little better: OpenMarket sponsored us £100 for the garden party in May Week, and have offered to double this for our next party.

In hardware terms, we've been donated a couple of new servers (by Third Light), and got rid of a couple of old ones.

Overall, we're currently operating at a loss, although we have considerable distance to fall before we hit the ground at this rate. The increased sponsorship ought to help out, but we will need donations to increase too; I suspect that this is linked to service quality which is linked to sysadmin shortages, but effective PR is required as well.

2.1 Summary of accounts

A summary of the accounts will be circulated on paper at the AGM.

2.2 Future

Depreciation looms: our original estimated lifetimes for both our main server, pip, and the VM cloud servers, have now expired. They're not actually falling apart as we speak, but future committees would be prudent to plan for the replacement of both pip and our other hardware, if it suddenly becomes necessary. There is a sizeable emergency fund for exactly this purpose, but it's an emergency fund for a reason; we'd be in a risky position if it all disappeared. Indeed, having now more hardware than ever before, we may even wish to increase the emergency fund in case the CUSU server room burns down or something. pip was originally bought with some help from the societies syndicate, so we may wish to consider appealing for their assistance again; realistically, however, this will not cover the price of replacing anything and anyway is slow and difficult; we once again find ourselves at the mercy of our donors (<https://www.srcf.ucam.org/donate>).

Tasks for a new treasurer in the coming year: firstly, of course, just ensure the handover is smooth; on the grounds that I might accidentally graduate, I recommend this is done before the end of this academic year. Secondly, we currently have two different inventories, one for the executive and one for the accounts book; at least the latter is not in good shape and ought to be reformed. I made an effort to make the accounts more comprehensible back when I was preparing them for submission, but more work needs to be done, especially in asset tracking and valuation.

2.3 Thanks

Particular thanks are due to CU Yacht Club, Peterhouse JCR, and CU Canoe Club for donations as societies, to Third Light for their donation of hardware and to Open Market (formerly MX Telecom) who sponsored our garden party. Tomas Ostasevicius, "Zebbie", Rubin Xu, Bogdan Roman, and Jonny Kram all made personal donations too, along with several members and societies who wished to remain anonymous.