



# Old Saw *Articles*

The Newsletter of the Guild of New Hampshire Woodworkers

by Jim Seroskie

## The Journal, Old Saw & Our Digital Age

Our major operational expenditure for the past seven years has been our Guild magazine—The Journal. Journal costs have been remarkably stable—\$15K per year or roughly three quarters of our annual membership dues. We have done well to contain these significant expenditures over a seven year period.

In the meantime, the Guild has moved to an all digital means of communication and member service. Those expenditures began small but have escalated. We have a diverse and flexible public website ([gnhw.org](http://gnhw.org)) and a second site ([gnhw.cloverpad.org](http://gnhw.cloverpad.org)) for membership maintenance, calendar and member communication (i.e. routine text based emails). Our weekly email newsletter is through a free mass mail service—MailChimp.

The public site, member site and MailChimp are highly intertwined.

### Times have Changed

When our membership was smaller, we communicated with the membership and managed the Guild much differently than today.

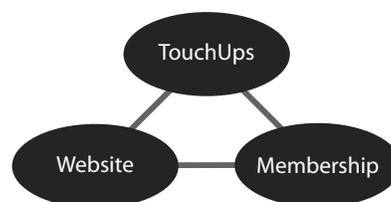
- There was a time when some members did not have email—now all do.
- There was a time when all members paid their dues by check—now 85% pay online.
- There was a time when our tri-annual 300+ symposia registrations and payments were

by mail—now most are handled via the internet.

- There was a time when subgroup email lists were maintained by each subgroup leader—now members sign up on their own through their member profile.
- There was a time when our only means of communication with the membership was through a printed newsletter, hand stuffed, stamped and mailed five times per year—now we do a weekly TouchUps email.

*You get the idea—it is now a different and arguably better world.*

Our Guild has gone digital. But our digital infrastructure is not without issue nor is it free. Expenditures have been higher in the past year and going on into the future. To compensate, our budget for the General Fund was adjusted in February, 2016 in part by shifting money from our publications to our website activities.



## Public Website

The public site is based on Drupal—an adaptable general purpose open source software platform. It has been essentially issue free for three years with one important exception—security updates. This type of maintenance has been a challenge for us. More on this below.

## Member Website

Our member site is a service called Wild Apricot. It is the most popular and least costly membership service available for non-profits and associations. But after six-plus years, issues have piled up now exceeding 50 items. Wild Apricot has resolved just six of them over that time—a frustratingly slow pace. Some remaining items are high priority, others are low and many falling in the middle.

Since mid-July of 2015 we have had close to 40 software issues arise requiring investigation and resolution in support of a member or administrator. During a recent three week period, 12 different issues arose—two of which were new to the list. These each take time and attention. We have had embarrassing snafus, many investigations requiring technical support, and we have lived with a site which can at times be confusing for member and administrator alike. Some incidents have reflected poorly on the Guild.

We are working to move our membership activities from Wild Apricot to a more capable platform (CiviCRM) by the end of 2016.

CiviCRM is open source software which integrates well with Drupal. We will at last have a unified site based on Drupal with a membership backend provided by CiviCRM—everything on the same server and under our control. There will be a single login for each member and administrator to all services. Some of the many planned benefits will be:

- Simplified member renewal and event registration processes
- Member user forums
- Sunapee volunteer online signups
- Simplified calendar maintenance



- Provision for automatic event and member directory location maps
- Integration of our TouchUps email list with MailChimp
- Member-only search capability of our Journal and Old Saw archives
- And we will fix almost all of the over 50 items on our issues list

Most important is that we finally can take control of our own destiny.

## Move to Skvare

In late 2015, we migrated our site to a new host (Skvare pronounced “Square”) who specializes exclusively in Drupal/CiviCRM websites. They are experienced developers able to provide the support needed to make this integration happen. Skvare takes total responsibility for security including server and application software maintenance. This is hands-

off for us, something we needed to get to some day anyway. That day has arrived now and is working well—actually a big relief.

The Guild will continue to be responsible for design, configuration and content maintenance for the entire site for the foreseeable future. However, we cannot depend completely on a single individual for critical infrastructure in the long run. We need long term backup and Skvare provides us that support. Even then, the unified site can be transferred to another provider when and if that time ever comes.

### **Plan Going Forward**

The software is open source and free but there are costs such as server hosting, server security and application security. Technical support for our site building activities is also significant this year. In February, we approved a 2016 budget which gets us through the year with an ending balance of roughly half of what we typically run. After this year, we expect to see surpluses averaging close to \$4K annually. However, we will likely establish a reserve fund which will eat into this surplus.

We have no plans to raise dues and see no need. We have maintained our current dues structure of \$40/year since September, 2009. We are exploring plans to open other revenue sources including obtaining institutional grants, and making it easier and more attractive for members and the public to donate. Steering Committee member Bob Wyatt is leading this effort.

The Journal is of course our biggest single expense. To free up money for our digital activities, we were planning to reduce our annual page count by 20% and limiting our publication to two somewhat larger issues per year at 48 pages each.

However, co-owner Michael Ames at PuritanCapital contacted us in late April to say he has cut our costs for our current and future issues by 13%. This is our second cost reduction in the past two years. The savings come from his increased usage and therefore lower fees per page he pays on Puritan's digital press. He is passing the savings on to us.

The Steering Committee considers The Journal as a signature effort of the Guild. We have decided to apply the cost reduction money from Puritan to add back some of the page count we cut in February. After the Spring 2016 issue, we will be printing two 56 page issues each year. The budget for next year and beyond will be 112 pages—\$10K for print and \$1.2K for postage and service.

We will also cease printing The Old Saw thereby returning to publishing it as an online-only publication. The focus will still be on Guild business.

### **Conclusion**

The Journal is an important publication and part of our education mission. However, our digital infrastructure is central to the operation of the Guild. Without infinite resources, we needed to rebalance our spending. After this year, we expect approximately half of our dues to be allocated to The Journal, one quarter to our internet infrastructure and to run a surplus for the foreseeable future.

Of course, TouchUps continues as our weekly email newsletter. ●



## Guild Advertisers

See the ads — [gnhw.org/guild-advertisers](http://gnhw.org/guild-advertisers)

### Tools & Supplies

[Chester Tool Works](#)  
[Gary R. Wood & Co.](#)  
[Liogier Hand Stitched Rasps](#)  
[Rockler—Cambridge, MA](#)  
[Rockler—Salem, NH](#)  
[Williams & Hussey](#)  
[Woodcraft—Newington, NH](#)  
[Woodcraft—Woburn, MA](#)

### Wood Products

[Classic Designs](#)  
[FBN Millwork](#)  
[GH Everts & Co.](#)  
[Goosebay Lumber](#)  
[Highland Hardwoods](#)  
[Maine Coast Lumber](#)  
[New London Wood Products](#)  
[Northland Forest Products](#)  
[The Millwork Shop](#)  
[Wolfgang's Wood](#)

### Schools

[Epic Woodworking](#)  
[Homestead Woodworking](#)  
[North Road Guitars](#)  
[The Breed School](#)  
[The Wood Finishing School](#)

### Services

[Manchester Tool Repair](#)  
[Northeast Saw \(Sharpening\)](#)  
[Tru-Cut \(Sharpening\)](#)