

The Future of Servas

Servas is an international, non-governmental, multicultural peace association run by volunteers in over 100 countries. Founded in 1949 by Bob Luitweiler as a peace movement, Servas International is a non-profit organization working to build understanding, tolerance and world peace. Servas is well placed to work with governments and other groups at many levels, from the UN to local municipal government. It is a multi-generational organisation where people of all ages enjoy the convenience, spirit and camaraderie of the Servas network.

In the last 60+ years, Servas has opened minds, not just doors to hundreds and hundreds of people. We hope that it has encouraged all Servas travellers to discover the rewards from “questioning” that can lead to life changing insights if we rekindle the vision that inspired Servas in the first place. It is the communities that we work and live in, our personal experience and thinking, our relationships with our neighbours and our reaching out to needy people far and near that will build the kind of world our grandchildren will flourish in.

In order to build these relationships and have a holistic experiences, it is important to devote a little time and effort to building interconnecting networks not only among the travellers but also among the hosts. By combining all our efforts to make the Servas experience exceptional, it could result in a great deal of fun, music, stories and new friendships. We thus need all Servas to befriend foreign college students near them, make contacts with young people who could become good Servas travellers. We need to write stories in periodicals that reach the kind of people who would make, not just travellers who are looking for cheap lodging or superficial tourists, but people who care about the future of our world and want to learn how they can contribute in a way that makes a difference.



**The Whole is Greater than
the Sum of its Parts**

Bob Luitweiler, in his book 'The Seeds of Servas', "... realized .. that the fruits of peace lie deep in the roots of our ways of living. Our willingness to share more equitably the resources of our crowded planet, our acceptance of diversity and respect for all peoples are the root of peace. As each experience took me deeper the disorganized piece of the jigsaw puzzle began to create a picture. I began to realize how totally interconnected everything is - how social, economic, political and personal relations not only fit together into a complex world but every little happening sends a ripple through the whole ocean of human society. Everything has a cause and an effect. Nothing happens in isolation. Little by little I discovered the wholeness of the global human family, its inspiring aspects and its depressing ones and its total interdependence. I was drawn into a lifelong quest, a quest I am still pursuing that has kept me young at 81."

Let us all be like Bob and embrace Servas by doing all we can to make it a successful travel-work-study and peace organisation.

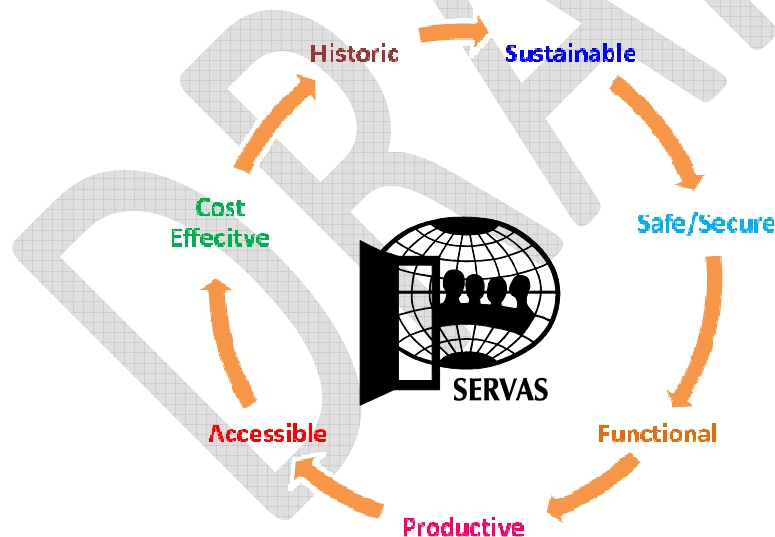
Technology Working Group

The General Assembly (GA) of Servas International held in Mar del Plata, Argentina, in September 2009 not only marked the 60th anniversary of Servas, but also the start of a new era. A resolution was passed to introduce Servas Online (SOL) which will be a secure and user friendly internet application for Servas Hosts and Travellers.

The SOL system will help attract new and younger members, reduce the operational costs, increase efficiency for all national groups, increase the quality of the host lists while reducing costs. Increasing the visibility & efficiency of Servas International, will make it the preferred organisation for travel purposes.

Executive Summary:

The SOL system will not only make it more accessible to current and potential travellers and hosts, but will also facilitate the work of local coordinators and administrators. With SOL, all members will be able to enter and update their personal information that is stored in the system and decide for themselves how much of that information is visible on screen. Every user will have his/her own log-in name and password and travellers will be able to search for possible hosts in a given area. When they have found someone they like, they can send a request through the system to the host, who then decides whether or not to accept the traveller. The host would then allow the traveller to see more details of their personal data, such as their email or street address.



The introduction of SOL will not change certain facets of Servas, namely

- The personal interview for all new members.
- The printed Letter of Introduction with a valid value stamp.
- The printed Host-Lists will still be available for those who prefer them.

While the building/buying of this system will initially involve a financial liability, these costs will be an investment in the future of Servas. There will be considerable savings to be made by the reduction in printing

and distribution of the paper Host-Lists and hopefully, SOL will make travelling so much easier that Servas will attract many more new and younger members.

With the view to making Servas more sustainable, productive and cost effective, it is going to be a challenge and daunting task as we work across international borders to create a safe and secure system that will be streamlined and functional across the globe.

Scope of Project:

In July 2009, a group of ICT and Servas member met to discuss the future of Servas in a technological savvy world. The following main objectives were agreed upon:

- That all member countries be placed online by 2011
- That ONE system be implemented
- That each member country be given the option to decide the level of host information to be made available online
- That the present printed host list system be retained and run parallel with the online system till 2012 unless otherwise advised
- That the personal Servas interview is in no way to be abandoned

By researching a number of different hospitality organisations, it was determined that the following characteristics are to be included in SOL:

- Safe worldwide data base in a democratic country with strict legislation protection personal data, clear data privacy, protection of the private sphere, no abuse of personal data.
- No commercial advertisements
- A contact between members (travellers and hosts) can only be established after successful interview and payment of the member's fee (full membership).
- For unlimited travel with Servas, the traveller needs - as always - a Letter of Introduction (LoI) with a valid value stamp.
- The option to look up hosts according to geographic criteria worldwide. No contact details allowing identification of the host are displayed.
- No lists with personal contact data are offered electronically to any traveller.

It is important that a secure uniform system be developed that caters to the privacy laws of the majority of the member countries. This can be done under HTTPS protocol. This will cut down on bureaucracy and reduce the risk when hosts share personal information with potential travellers online.

Since it is not feasible to have different systems for different countries, those counties that are hesitant to use the online system, can retain the printed host list system, circulated by hand or post.

Specifications of Project:

The specifications of the different components of SoL are detailed in a separate document. Some of the key aspects of it are application tracking system, user friendly application, registration of travellers and host, electronic stamp and tracking of financials.

Alternative Analysis:

Another consideration is whether to make or buy a software system and/or component. It is necessary to decide whether software should be developed (or maintained) in-house, acquired as custom software, or purchased off-the-shelf. This should apply to the entire software systems as well as software system components.

The final decision of the make/buy analysis should be documented and reported to stakeholders, and retained for future use. This should include:

- Expected classification of the software to be acquired
- Availability of in-house staff and funding resources
- Availability of software product(s)
- Projected licensing and support costs
- List of potential suppliers
- Security consideration
- Potential risks related to supplier's viability and past performance

Obstacles:

Any new system needs to be prepared to face obstacles, some of which may be:

- Benefits for those members who do not have internet access
- Possible difficulties in accessing internet in remote areas
- System failures
- Traveller behaviour
- Reputation
- Business costs
- Privacy issues
- Electronic host lists
- Competition from other hospitality servers

Benefits:

The introduction of SoL should reduce bureaucracy and streamline the process for the travellers and hosts, while at the same time simplify and speeden it up. It will also make updating and validation of data easier.

The Estamp add-on will simplify the accountability of the amount of money received between national treasurer and international treasurer.

Because everything is happening in real time, there should be faster handling of complaints.

It will reduce the amount of money spent on printing and distribution of host lists.

It will increase the interaction between hosts and travellers. Also travellers visiting different countries will not need to carry heavy host lists.

It will be a more interactive site (ability to load video clips, and access to other social networking sites) which we hope will appeal to younger audience

Project Schedule:

Phase I - System development completed by end of 2010

Phase II - Secure system development completed by mid 2011

Phase II - Implementation and testing by the early 2012

Cost Estimate/budget:

As per the motion moved and approved at the GA 2009 meeting, it was resolved that each member country that has more than 100 members will be asked to contribute the equivalent of 1 CHF per member for the next three years. All member countries will also be encouraged to contribute separately to the development of this system as they see fit.

Additionally, a percentage (yet to be decided) of travellers annual fee be paid towards the development of this system for the next three years.

A. Contributions from member countries + Adhoc contributions + Contribution from travellers

B. Programme development costs + ongoing maintenance +

A - B = SoL

Quality Assurance/Quality Control:

It is perceived that there will be ongoing maintenance and development after the first three phases are completed. This is to ensure that the system is continuously updated as new features and requirements are added. A group of experts will be needed to ensure that SoL's functionality does not compromising the fundamental nature and underlining significance of Servas.

Staffing Requirements:

Project Leader (PL):

Project Manager(s) (PM):

Project Engineer (PE): The PE is responsible for the technical specifications of the project.

Project Team (PT): The PT, which may include the engineers, policy & procedure experts, financial advisors, consultants, Beta testers, trainers and other discipline managers, is responsible for helping the PM in the preparation of the project.