The 2024 Year of OSMF:

A Collective Board Report

The Board is wrapping up the 2023/2024 Board year by reflecting on accomplishment (what we did right) and on rooms for improvement (what we did wrong and how we can improve).

Accomplishments

In-person Meetings and Conferences

Our **annual face to face meeting** in Frankfurt was a great success. The Board needs to build personal relationships and that's hard to do while discussing business on video and while coping with cultural differences and global time differences. Thanks to the leadership of Craig and Dani, who assessed and researched various travel options to meet our budget and purposes, we met in Frankfurt and had two days of very productive strategic workshops under our awesome facilitator Allen Gunn, as well as time we spent socially in restaurants and strolling around Frankfurt.

The working relationships between Board members were one of the main topics of the workshop, and during the year, the majority of Board members have been working together really well. See more on the blogpost: [Highlights from the OSMF Board Spring 2024 Meeting](#).

The **State of the Map 2024** conference was held in Nairobi, Kenya, and it was an outstanding success. We celebrated our shift from European venues to a new region in a very joyous African way.

Heartfelt thanks to the SotM Working Group, OSM Kenya and the huge team of local volunteers who were the backbone of the conference's success, making it possible for many African mappers to attend their first global SotM. In addition, together with HOT's Open Summit Travel Grant, we awarded 50 travel grantees and 10 online scholars from 27 countries. You'll find more details in the article "[Cheers to the heart and sweat of this year's SotM Travel Grant Programs](#)".

Aside from SotM 2024, we have made **improvements on supporting local (regional and national) SotMs.** We have updated and improved the text in the pages to clearly communicate about [SotM Quick License and benefits of getting the license](#) including OSMF support by acting as an intermediary to receive funds to be passed on to the local organizers. We have successfully supported the sponsorship distribution for SotM Europe 2024 and FOSS4G/SotM Oceania 2024. In addition, we received some funding from Meta and we are in the process of disbursing them to eight regional and national SotMs happening in November to March 2025.

This year we **extended our participation outside the OSM Sphere**. Sarah participated in a United Nations Mapping Conference in Spain which helped to strengthen our relationship with the United Nations and related mapping bodies. You can read more on Sarah's post-conference report: OpenStreetMap at the UNMaps Conference 2024.

Roland attended a conference of the European Traveller Information Services Association. One delegation brought forward the idea to involve OpenStreetMap in the implementation of the Safety-Related Traffic Information (SRTI) & Real-Time Traffic Information (RTTI) law of the European Union.

Arnalie and OSM contributors x Wikimedians, Eugene Villar and Dennis Chen, hosted a session on OpenStreetMap at the Wikimedia East and SouthEast Asia-Pacific Conference, growing our links with our sister open community Wikimedia in the ESEAP regions.

Last year, we had representatives attend regional SotM conferences in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. This year, Mateusz and Dorothea presented and staffed a booth for OSMF at SotM Europe, and now we plan to send Dani to participate and present at the State of the Map Latin America.

This outgoing Board believes that we need to be more engaged, especially in person whenever possible, with regional and local State of the Map Conferences and other mapping-related and open community related convenings.

Good Governance

We have made changes to our Rules of Order.

The Rules of Order are there to guide operations and business between Board members. We already have a good set of rules but we do need to upgrade them to cover more issues as unforeseen incidents occur.

We had a case of a Board member signing a procurement contract without reading it (see 2023-12-11 Emergency Meeting). To avoid a recurrence, we have drawn up a comprehensive procurement policy setting out three levels of authority for small, medium and large procurements.

A Board member failed to properly document personnel assessments. We fixed that problem by changing the manager role to another Board member and are avoiding recurrence by defining the manager role more carefully, and making sure to appoint a second manager for each employee and contractor. See the 2024 Personnel Committee Report.

We received an anonymous complaint against a Board member, alleging improper conduct (see 2024-09-06 in-person Board meeting in Nairobi notes). We resolved the issue internally and are now introducing a whistleblower policy (currently in the draft) to set rules for handling any future events of this type.

We want to ensure that if a member of the community makes a complaint about a board member, the Board will investigate the matter regardless of personal views or relationship with said board member. Further, anyone who raises a complaint, anonymously or in person, must be protected by rules of conduct.

Onboarding new Board members

The onboarding of new Board members has been unstructured in the past and has been completely left to our administrator. We have significantly revised onboarding processes and this new Board elections will see current Board members involved in onboarding 3 new Board members with a far better process. Craig, Dani, and Mateusz all expressed great interest and excitement in helping out new Board members with onboarding. We want everyone to feel welcomed and accepted from their first day!

OSMF's move to Europe

We have reached a point in arranging our move from the UK to Europe where we have a draft constitution of the new European OpenStreetMap entity. Many thanks to Sarah for this difficult and time-consuming work. That constitution will be circulated and adjusted in 2025 and we'll start the administrative planning. We hope to get final approval to move from the 2025 AGM. See 2024-08 Board meeting notes.

Documentation promotes transparency and teamwork (GitLab is great!)

The adoption of GitLab as a way to sort and manage our many tasks, issues and threads has been very successful. We now have procedures for incoming mail and for joint discussions on a wide range of issues. The discussions and linked documents are archived and are searchable in a way that is far better than email history or even document storage systems.

Modernizing our communication platforms through Discourse

Our new Community Forum has blossomed over the last year and proved to be a more welcoming and inclusive space to discuss OSM and OSMF topics than the old email lists. We thank our Community Forum moderators for tireless monitoring of participant safety (See 2024 report), LCCWG Moderation Sub-Committee for their work on putting the Moderation in OSM official channels up, and the Discourse administrators for setting up our instance: Grant, Tobias and Rubén.

OSMF Membership Campaign Drive

Together with volunteers from all over the world, Arnalie led and mobilized a campaign to spread awareness about OSMF Membership as well as grow and diversify our membership. They saw tremendous success:

- ~392 sign up's from March, most of them were through the [Active Contributor Membership Program](#).
- The Foundation expanded memberships to 16 new countries.
- Four countries added more than 15 new members: Libya, Niger, Nigeria and Colombia.
- Priscovia, a team lead on the campaign, has joined the Membership Working Group.

[Read more about the campaign on Arnalie's OSM Diary](#).

Building better liaison with Working Groups

To better support communication and coordination between the Board and Working Groups (WGs), the Board has assigned Board Liaisons to the WGs. The Board Liaisons act as focal points to the Working Groups and represent the Board in the processes of the WGs. It is an existing rule that Board members may not be the Chair of any Working Group. A second Board Liaison is also put in place as a back-up to ensure continuity of coordination and support. [See 2024-03 board meeting notes.](#)

Working Groups

The Board is not directly involved in Working Groups, but we depend on their awesome work and we support them. We'd like to celebrate their wins through this report.

Operations Working Group and the Data Working Group

We had a couple of attacks on our servers as part of an attempt to make us pay a ransom. Our Operations team went to a lot of effort to block the attackers and the map service response time was sometimes diminished but was never lost. We didn't pay any ransom.

We have had multiple incidents of large scale vandalism relating to the conflicts in Israel/Palestine and the Ukraine/Russia conflict. Our Data Working Group and Operations Working Group did excellent work to block the vandalism and roll the damaged parts of the map back to only good data.

The Operations Team have been busy rationalising and organising our servers, putting more software into containers and ensuring that we have a remarkably low cost but highly reliable delivery platform. Many thanks to them for keeping the engine room running so well.

We need to mention the dedication of Mateusz in his ongoing campaign to ensure attribution of OSM on sites that use our map tiles or map data. He is a one-man attribution machine.

More updates from Grant's post: [A Year of Infrastructure Progress: Site Reliability Engineer 2023/2024 Update](#).

Engineering Working Group

The Engineering Working Group continues its great work on developing software solutions for the OSM systems. Our main project this year has been the Vector Tiles development, which has now reached a testing phase. The Board has been making an effort to identify funding for the EWG to address our software development backlog.

Communications Working Group

The Communications Working Group has seen a growth in volunteer numbers and is working efficiently to process and publish information not only about OSMF but also about local OSM activities and achievements. For instance, this year there was a [big and successful communications campaign around our 20th birthday](#), which had a timeline of OSM over the years, helped aggregate a [listing of the global celebrations](#), and [sourced hundreds of birthday wishes](#).

Other notable accomplishments and successes include:

- An update of the WG Goals, Content Pillars and other ways of working to better reflect modern communications and the current size of OSM
- The CWG supported board, OWG, MWG and other working group communications via the blog and promoted and amplified local, regional, global SotMs
- Staffed a table at the global SotM in Kenya, including sharing our new membership brochure, stickers and other useful materials
- Optimized social media content by updating to a system that allows to post on 4 social media accounts at the same time

With their collective and collaborative efforts, the CWG has increased social media reach and engagement.

Membership Working Group

The big issue in the MWG has been the problems with CiviCRM, some of which have been addressed and others remain on the priority to-do list. The small team has been awesome in their dedication to fixing all errors and communicating with affected members. A special shoutout to the MWG Chairperson and leader, Michael Spreng, and admin Dorothea, for their dedication and tireless work to ensure our membership database is running smoothly and accurately. If you're interested in volunteering, please contact the team.

Local Chapters and Communities Working Group

Following the updates to Local Chapters pages to clearly communicate the eligibility requirements, process and timelines, LCCWG has been handling the review of 2 new applications and 3 pending applications from the last few years from organisations that want to become Local Chapters. This gives the Board more time to think and move strategically without worrying about Local Chapters applications.

Additionally, LCCWG has been advancing community topics such as Microcosms, OSMF Affiliation Models, and how to better support communities and local SotM organizers. They provided community-first expertise in proposing the Meta funding to support local SotMs.

For 4 consecutive years now, they have been organizing the Local Chapters and Communities (LCC) Congress. The LCC Congress is a virtual event gathering OSM contributors and communities all over the world to share their stories and learn from each other. More information here.

Legal Working Group

Legal WG continues to provide a valuable consultation service in support of our trickier administrative work, reviewing contracts and advising on intellectual property and copyright matters. They have helped the board greatly this year with the ongoing move to the EU, joining the meetings with our lawyers and interpreting and explaining the legal language.

State of the Map Working

In addition to the success of SotM 2024 as mentioned above, the next SotM will take place in Manila, Philippines. This is the first ever global SotM in the Southeast Asia region and we couldn't be more thrilled. You can see for yourself by watching the teaser video.

Financials and Fundraising

Our financial systems have seen significant improvement with Roland submitting a well structured budget for approval this year. This is the newest improvement of a multi-year improvement project that has been started by Guillaume in this then role as treasurer.

We are working on improving the budget process in a number of ways that will make financial control easier and more accurate. We were fortunate to have Harrison Devine as an accounting advisor and much credit is due to him for guiding the process. There is more detail in the [Treasurer's Report](#).

Craig has spent a lot of time working on CiviCRM, which we plan to deploy for fundraising. Fundraising is an easier use-case for CiviCRM than Membership tracking so we expect CiviCRM to perform better than the existing email and spreadsheet approach. However, out of caution, we plan to run it on a separate development server for about a year before looking at integrating the two workstreams.

This year we chose not to organize a broad based fundraising campaign, instead giving space for the CWG to focus community engagement on celebrating OSM's 20th birthday. While there has not been much publicly visible activity in fundraising, there has been a lot of activity which we should be able to share soon. We have been working on 3 major donations, which will each support OSM core operations and engineering in different ways. Unfortunately we can't share details just yet, more coming up.

Diversity

The Board is fairly diverse, with members spread across the globe, offering a wide set of skills, speaking six different home languages, and it brought complementary interests to the table. This term we celebrate having three women on the team, the most women representation ever. We hope that this testament of representation will encourage and make it more welcoming to become a voting member and to stand for a position on the board. Having strong board rules on supportive behaviour are our tactics for raising diversity even further.

Rooms for Improvement

The troubles with CiviCRM

A [summary of the issues around the membership registry has been posted in the Community Forum](#) for transparency and to encourage constructive discourse. Issues with Paypal payments are ongoing. It is a priority to resolve them.

Given the current size of the MWG, this is simply not something they can handle on their own. If the OSMF membership wants an audit, a group of volunteers needs to be convened and step up to do it, preferably containing people with some experience in reading logs and who are not afraid to run some SQL on a database if necessary.

Further down the road, all options are open right now including moving away from CiviCRM. But even there it is unclear if that is the simpler option because we may not find a provider that can support our special requirements for active membership.

Board conflict

The last years have been difficult, with tensions in exchanges between Board members. This year (2024) is the year when we had the most ever number of women leaders in the Board: Arnalie, Dani and Sarah; however, they were particularly affected by the tensions. The problem had been clearly identified but due to structural issues, solutions were not easy to implement. For a while a work-around was to collaborate and socialise on external chat channels.

The new Board will need to take steps to enforce clear and consistent boundaries, to educate and reinforce self-esteem among members, offer mutual support, keep up continuous commitment to transparency, open collaboration and documentation, and encourage constructive but honest conversations. If necessary, the new board must take legal steps.

The OSM Etiquette Guidelines and Code of Conduct must be adopted and strictly enforced even in Board spaces. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Document, document, document

As mentioned above, documentation promotes transparency and teamwork. All Board members should make it a habit to document their work to increase trust among each other. Setting aside internal team conflicts, the Board needs to work together, not as separate individuals, to advance OSMF goals and missions. They must also set aside personal interest and declare personal conflict of interest in order to strategically think and act for the Foundation.

Towards a more strategic Board

We acknowledge that historically, the OSMF Board has contributed to the organization's operations and execution of tasks which takes up a lot of time ([see Mateusz' diary: OSMF board - how much time I am spending on it?](#)). Moving forward, we highly recommend that the OSMF Board shift towards being a more strategic Board. This will ensure a more sustainable OSMF and OSM project, allowing the Board to set clear objectives, make informed decisions and envision the OSMF's future direction.

The Back Room

The Board must thank Dorothea for her ongoing and hard work keeping our admin systems going. Dorothea never gets anything wrong and is very polite in telling Board members when we get things wrong. Dorothea is a strength to the organisation.

In conclusion

The last year has been very productive, although difficult, in developing the organisation, the finances and governance. We acknowledge the hurt and frustration over the conflicts that arise. The OSM Foundation is a lot stronger for our year as Board members, and we hope that it will continue with the new set of Board Members.

Signed by:

Arnalie, Craig, Dani, Mateusz, Roland and Sarah
Members of the 2024 OSMF Board