The C Plus Plus Alliance, Inc.

A California 501(c)(3) non-profit (FTB #4057027)

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https://cppalliance.org
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Boost Owners
https://github.com/boostorg

Hi, Vinnie Falco here. I'm the president of The C++ Alliance. I've been involved in supporting the Boost Library Collection for the last seven years, including authorship of a handful of my own libraries in Boost. Recently, our diligent and professional offer to acquire the boost.org domain name from the Beman Dawes estate failed, and I write to offer some insights regarding this situation.

Participation in Boost is declining. There are fewer posts to the mailing list, fewer libraries proposed for review, and less participation in reviews. Boost's value proposition is not as clear now as it was before C++11 was released. The decline is visible in the mailing list activity:

https://cppalliance.org/pdf/Boost-ML-Charts.pdf

The Boost Libraries requires a financial sponsor for its shared assets which includes the boost.org domain, website and mailing list hosting services, and the download hosting services.

Implementing new ideas to increase participation is risky, as success is not a given. The Alliance invests in Boost knowing there are no guarantees yet we move ahead anyway as it is preferable to doing nothing.

Trying to eliminate all risk impoverishes the community in exchange for safety. Yet risk always exists, as the need for financial support necessitates trust that the funding entity's actions will remain in alignment with the libraries over time.

Thus far Boost has passively relied on the Foundation to manage shared resources. The Foundation's efforts to emphasize C++ standardization instead of improvements to Boost now imperils the project. The community might reconsider this arrangement with the Foundation, given the facts which follow.

The boost.org domain registration expired in 2022, two years after Beman Dawes' passing. The website became temporarily unavailable until Network Solutions allowed a renewal without authorization from the registrant, Beman Dawes.

The Alliance discovered in March of 2024, that the Foundation does not own the boost.org domain, and is instead owned by the estate of the late Beman Dawes which is controlled by Beman's surviving spouse.

The Alliance subsequently learned that if the spouse were to pass away, the domain would go to auction as there is no written or electronic document (to our knowledge) which bequeaths the domain to any other entity.

After renewing the expired boost.org domain in 2022, the Foundation appears to have made no further efforts to secure it properly. In June 2024 the Alliance made a fair offer to the Beman estate for the domain, including a generous scholarship fund. Upon discovering this offer, the Foundation endeavored to blow up the deal.

For reference, here is the proposed offer:
https://cppalliance.org/pdf/Domain-Name-Purchase-Agreement.pdf

The Foundation never owned the boost.org domain, and the community was not informed that it was at risk of loss through their inaction. Yet in public the Foundation proclaims they have financial and legal obligations to Boost.

For reference, here is the Foundation's position regarding Boost support:
https://lists.boost.org/Archives/boost/2024/02/255920.php

The Alliance and the Foundation are both registered 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, bound by State and Federal regulations (required to maintain their tax-exempt status) to ensure that all activities have charitable benefit. From a legal perspective both are equally suited for acting as custodian of Boost's public goods.

Boost's website, mailing list, and release scripts are serviced by the "wowbagger" server which runs an old operating system, presenting a maintenance challenge. The Foundation pays for the server, but Alliance's IT department has been administering it.

The wowbagger hard drive reports periodic failures, and parts of content on boost.org such as library documentation become unavailable. The Alliance is aware of these failures, as the Foundation solicits our IT department to help resolve them.

The Alliance has a new cloud instance which implements both the new website and a static copy of the old website, a mailman3 upgraded version of the mailing list, and updated release scripts which can be pressed into service when wowbagger reaches its end of life. The Foundation has no visible transition plan or resources deployed in anticipation of this event.

In 2023, I published "The Future of Boost," an essay outlining some ideas on how the community may come together to help Boost thrive again with initiatives that improve and popularize the project

For reference, this is my essay:
https://cppalliance.org/boost/2023/05/08/Future-of-Boost.html

The Foundation invests only the minimum effort for Boost: routine web server and mailing list maintenance, and supporting the release download. Their published minutes go back years and contain no serious ideas for restoring the project. Much of the time spent on Boost is about how to reduce spending.

For reference, here are the Foundation minutes:
https://cppalliance.org/pdf/Boost-Foundation-Minutes.pdf

At CppCon 2023 the Alliance promoted Boost with a set of color brochures and a poster presented to conference attendees. There are no visible efforts from the Foundation to promote Boost at important C++ conferences or anywhere else.

For reference, here are the brochure and poster files:
https://cppalliance.org/pdf/Boost-CppCon-2023-brochure.pdf
https://cppalliance.org/pdf/Boost-CppCon-2023-poster.pdf

In the last 18 months, the Alliance originated all the messages posted to the Boost X account, with permission from the Foundation.

For reference, here is the Boost X account:
https://x.com/Boost_Libraries

The Alliance publishes recurring reports intended to show our level of financial commitment and extent to which we support the Boost libraries:

For reference, here are the reports:
https://lists.boost.org/Archives/boost//2024/02/255964.php
https://lists.boost.org/Archives/boost//2024/05/256778.php

At the March 2024 Foundation board meeting to discuss the Alliance's financial support for shared infrastructure, someone expressed that "The C++ Alliance isn't the Boost alliance. They could shift to doing something else." While this is true in theory, it is the Foundation who appears to have shifted to something else by creating the Beman Project: a "new initiative separate from Boost that gets back to its original purpose of improvements to the standard library."

For reference, here is the Beman Project website:
https://www.bemanproject.org/

There was no mailing list discussion before the launch of the Beman Project. The Boost community had important questions about the project, yet there is only silence on the mailing list. Discussions about the Beman Project take place off-list

When the Alliance donated the new website it developed to Boost, related conversations took place on the mailing list. The community joined us to help bring the website to completion, as can be seen in the participation of its GitHub issues.

For reference, here are the GitHub issues for the new Boost website:
https://github.com/boostorg/website-v2/issues

The Beman Project has seen an impressive amount of development in a short time, including roadmaps, repositories, and even a new website, all happening in the span of just seven weeks. This shows what the Foundation is capable of when it believes in something, yet no similar efforts are apparently being made for Boost.

For reference, here is a Beman Project repository:
https://github.com/beman-project/beman

Foundation board members, many of whom are unknown to the Boost community, rarely participate in the mailing list. Yet they are quite active on the Beman Project's Discourse:

For reference, here is the Beman Project's Discourse site:
https://discourse.bemanproject.org/c/development/4

Foundation board members are very active in the C++ Standards committee (WG21), attending meetings regularly. Two Foundation directors are also chairs of their respective WG21 working groups, and the Beman Project is focused on submissions destined for the standard library. The Foundation's activities seem to prioritize WG21 involvement rather than Boost.

The negative opinions of Boost shared by some Foundation board members can be seen in a draft of a Beman Project presentation for WG21 which asks "What's wrong with Boost?" Answers include "the world that Boost was born in no longer exists", "Boost cannot be molded into what we need", and "reviews are stuck in 1990." This position is at odds with the stated mission to support Boost.

For reference, here is the text of the draft:
https://github.com/vinniefalco/beman/commit/c73fb3f48845b3677fce7d2152487c71f67ee033#diff-9f92c71924ad97dfb88f52cac82b5fac7966620b3785cbbf4677a7e4e3a63d68R48

The Foundation chooses its board members in a face to face meeting every year at C++Now. The mailing list is not consulted, and there is no stated criteria for how board member selection is aligned with the interests of the libraries. Recently added members have little to no involvement with Boost.

When the Foundation onboards new board members, it appears they are not apprised of the history of Boost and its online culture. This can be seen when board members who infrequently post to the lists make statements which reflect a misunderstanding of how Boost's governance works. Not in the least by top-posting, but many such examples exist.

The passing of Beman Dawes created a leadership void for the libraries. He can't be replaced, yet Boost still needs new leadership if it has any hope to thrive again. The current situation is not working, as Boost's shared resources (including its domain name and web server) are controlled by an organization seemingly disinterested in improving Boost.

I would humbly ask that you consider trusting The C++ Alliance to be Boost's financial supporter and custodian of Boost's shared resources. This will empower Boost developers to fulfill a bold vision which respects its culture by placing the community and the libraries first. You can expect to see a continuation of the same level of care and support that we have already demonstrated in the last seven years.

I don't want to "control Boost." Instead, I'd like to help make Boost even better. Please join me in this effort.

Thank You
Vinnie Falco