Website Redesign
Request for Proposals

Release date: January 21, 2020
1. Overview

The American Folklore Society (AFS) has initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to identify a vendor qualified to plan, execute and help deliver a WordPress redesign of AFS’s public-facing website, www.afsnet.org. The budget limit for this project is $15,000.

This RFP is specifically for the first step in a multi-step redesign process, but the goal is to find a partner for the complete project; preference will be given to a vendor who can guide a concept-to-completion project.

Afsnet.org is the result of a CMS component in an AMS package that AFS depends upon and will continue to depend upon for some time to come. AFS is looking for a partner to work with staff in a phased implementation of a transition to a WordPress site, that will, in the earlier stages, replace some of the functionality of our AMS/CMS, but that might allow AFS to transition entirely away from the current AMS/CMS in the future.

In the coming months, AFS will work with the current CMS/AMS provider to implement a revised template that will provide a fresh look and responsive design for membership services. At the same time, we will move our publicly-available resources to a WordPress site, minimizing our usage of the current CMS. We’re looking for a vendor who can guide that short-term improvement in a direction that will advance the longer-term transition to a WordPress site, one that yields an enhanced user experience, provides better online information and visitor assistance, meets high standards for design and development, and allows AFS staff to customize and add new functionality as user needs change.

AFS invites proposals for a WordPress site that can be implemented within the coming months in coordination with a redesign of the current CMS/AMS, as well as for a plan for future work that may take more time but that will advance the transition to an independent system.

This RFP will assist AFS in the selection of a qualified vendor with whom AFS will enter into a professional services agreement for the delivery of specified stages in the AFS Website Redesign Project. Upon completion of each component, AFS will assume day-to-day responsibility for content management and site administration, with technical site maintenance to be provided by the selected vendor on an ongoing basis.

Please reference Appendix A to learn more about the American Folklore Society.

2. RFP Process

- **RFP Issued**
  18 December 2019; revised 21 January 2020

- **All Questions Due**
  7 February 2020
  Please send questions to americanfolkloresociety@gmail.com.

- **RFP Due**
  28 February 2020

- **RFP Review**
Proposals will be evaluated and AFS will narrow down the submissions and select the top two or three providers to proceed to the next round of the selection process. The selected providers may be asked to attend an in-person presentation, but we hope to complete the selection process through virtual meetings.

- **Proposal Presentations & Final Evaluations**
  Week of March 16, 2020 (Tentative)

- **Selection of Website Vendor**
  The vendor who has been selected will be notified. Along with this, all other candidates will be notified.

3. **Scope of Work**
   a. **Website Goals**
      Our ultimate vision for this project is to redesign the AFS website so that it is fully customizable and capable of adapting to changing user needs, preferably using WordPress. The immediate objective is to introduce WordPress functionality while keeping our current AMS, Your Membership, as our member portal and retaining, as necessary, some public-facing functionality powered by the AMS. Our overarching goals include:
      - Continue to build awareness of, and interest in, the American Folklore Society, the field of folklore studies, and the topics that our member folklorists’ research through a visually engaging website with content capabilities we can build over time including blog, podcast, or other additional features.
      - Direct current and potential members to the member portal provided by our AMS, Your Membership, from our public-facing web pages.
      - Provide a coherent design across the site that represents AFS in a consistent and aesthetically compelling manner. Work with the AFS team to ensure all branding guidelines are implemented.
      - Deploy a WordPress-based content management system to allow non-programmer AFS staff to perform day-to-day site administration and to easily update site content with consistent formatting.

   b. **AFS will measure the following:**
      - Increase visits to and engagement with the AFS website, including engagement with public-facing pages and within the member portal.
      - Increase AFS memberships
      - Increase donations
      - Increase registrations for the AFS annual meeting
      - Increase search engine visibility

   c. **Current AFS Website**
      The current website does not provide an overall easy user experience, and is primarily oriented to our membership. Much of the site assumes prior knowledge of our organization and is not easily navigable for those coming from outside our discipline.
To review feedback of the current website, and to learn what the organization does not like about the site, please see Appendix B.

d. Third Party Vendors

AFS currently works with the following third-party vendors whose services are incorporated into the website.

● Your Membership

AFS works with the Your Membership (YM) AMS and CMS which provides the following services.

These functions currently work effectively, and would likely be retained during the first phase of the redesign process. They could be replaced in later phases:

- Publish pages for access by members only
- Provide a platform for member sign-up and renewals
- Manage membership records
- Provide members with access to a member-only directory, and the ability to customize their own public profiles
- Collect donations
- YM provides design services, including a responsive template; this stage in the website redesign may take place as a preliminary step before or in coordination with the first phase of migration to a WordPress site.

These functions exist but have noticeable limitations. Since they are integrated with the AMS, they may be retained during the first phase of the redesign, but would be high priorities for improvement in later phases:

- Manage group membership and group communication tools (primarily, member-initiated email to all group members or to individual group members), and file sharing
- Sell membership-related items, such as section memberships, through an online store
- Host elections (voting accessible to members only)
- Collect and share survey data using customizable surveys
- Support administrative messages to various groups of members using customizable directory searches and customizable message templates.
- Manage registrations for our annual meeting through the events manager and online store
- Collect and publish job openings in our field

These functions exist but most have noticeable limitations. These should be replaced by a WordPress site in the first phase of the redesign:

- Publish public-facing web pages; improved image handling, text editing and layout customization is desired
- Publish calendar items (users may submit, but admin must approve)
- Publish news (AFS Review) in customizable categories; additional functionality is desired, like tagging, collecting submissions, and creating/sending an email newsletter digest that links to those news posts
• Collect data on an as-needed basis using customizable forms; data is available only to administrative users at this time; additional functionality with customizable forms is desired

• Dotster
AFS currently hosts the website through Dotster. Hosting for the new website may be flexible but is dependent upon the needs of continued coordination with the Your Membership AMS.

• YouTube
AFS currently posts videos from filmed annual meeting sessions and from the Why I’m a Folklorist project on YouTube. Integration of these resources into the website is desired.

• Google Analytics
AFS has installed Google Analytics to track engagement with the site. However, staff utilization of this service is currently minimal.

• Zoho Creator
AFS currently utilizes Zoho Creator to manage the submissions, review, and scheduling process for our Annual Meeting. Staff also publishes the schedule and addendum in an online program for the meeting. Better integration between Zoho Creator and membership data is desired, but is not required in the first phase of this project.

e. AFS Website Assets
AFS will provide the following items to assist in redesigning the website:

• Photo and video library
• Website copy for AFS pages

A site map of the current structure of www.afsnet.org can be provided upon request; in winter 2019, AFS staff will revise the current structure as part of an upgrade to a responsive template provided by the current CMS/AMS provider.

f. Website Requirements

• Branding / Consistent Design: Establish a unified theme throughout AFS’s website. The theme should be easily updateable or modifiable on a site-wide basis. Design should coordinate with and direct members to/from the existing CMS/AMS in phased roll-out.

• Responsive Design: Craft a site that provides an optimal viewing experience, with ease of readability and a minimum of scrolling or panning required. The website should be easy to view on a wide range of browsers, operating systems, and device platforms (including accessibility devices).

• Navigation: Provide hierarchical menu structure with consistent orientation and content flow, and support for navigation and dynamic site mapping.

• Streaming Audio/Video: AFS would like to provide access to our current (and expanding) YouTube video collection directly through our website. AFS members may also want to host a podcast through the site in the future. Please include streaming options for these potential sections of the site.

• Blog: Website should support a blog with an easy-to-use backend to add pictures, videos, labels/tags, scheduling of posts, etc.
- **News and email newsletter**: Collect and publish submissions for the *AFS Review* (online news) with an easy-to-use backend to add pictures, videos, labels/tags, scheduling of posts, etc.; the AFS Review could be migrated to a blog platform if that format can match the current online news functionality and can support the automatic generation of an email newsletter based on news posts (with the ability to edit the newsletter prior to sending the message). Preferably, news items should be organized into categories/headings, but they should also support tagging.

- **Forms**: Currently, AFS can use the YM CMS to customize forms to collect data for administrative use, but the user experience and functionality is limited by the available template. Please include options for improved data collection, potentially including:
  a. Collecting data that is accessible to members, the public, or designated (non-administrative) individuals, to be determined on a case-by-case, as-needed basis.
  b. Allowing administrative users to customize the look and layout of the data collection form, rather than only the format of the data fields.
  c. Allowing administrative users to customize data reports (eg, editing the look/layout of a report or selecting specific fields).

- **Simple databases**: Maintain a variety of simple databases to collect member-submitted data (editable by staff), and provide public, searchable access to that data (eg, “find a folklorist” based on areas of expertise, directories of public programs, consultancy reports, list of relevant online resources such as blogs/podcasts/online groups, AFS and section prizes).

- **Search**: Provide comprehensive search capability using search engines, tags, keywords, and a site map.

- **Events Calendar**: Website must include an events calendar with easy formatting and event input. Events must include social media and email sharing options. AFS staff will add many events, but calendar should also support events submitted by site users. Events submitted by site users must undergo review by AFS staff before being posted publicly.

- **Reporting**: Provide ability to track page hits of individual pages and allow for reporting function and statistics that display total pages, popular pages, browsers used, etc. Use of Google Analytics is mandatory. Setup of Google Analytics for ease of use and training for staff on the utilization of this data is preferred.

- **Social Networking**: Provide capability to incorporate social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, etc.

- **RSS Feeds**: – Provide capability to integrate RSS feeds.

- **Other Requirements**:
  - The website must be designed and tuned for high-speed upload/download response times for both low and high bandwidth.
  - Create a variety of templates made available to AFS for webpage designs.
  - Provide easy-to-use image handling.
  - Training on CMS – PDF instructions, in-person training, etc.

- In later phases of the redesign:
  - **Replacement of the YM member portal**: Provide solutions for AMS features like member log-in, members-only pages, section membership, event registration, store, and donations pages.
• **Email communications**: In addition to maintaining the current AMS’s capacity for administrative messages to members, support for member-to-member messaging, preferably with tools that can mimic or match listserv functionality in allowing members to communicate directly by email with customized groups, and to email a reply to messages sent to the group.

4. **Proposal Terms and Conditions**

   • All proposals should be received by January 24, 2020.
   • Submit your proposals by emailing americanfolkloresociety@gmail.com.
   • All proposals must include a statement of authorization to bid, signed by a principal of the responding company.
   • All proposals must use the proposal format outlined below.
   • Proof of Liability and Worker’s Comp – Provision of professional liability insurance will be required. Please include your limits of coverage.
   • Bidder status: bidder must disclose any relevant conflicts of interest and/or pending lawsuits.
   • Please note AFS reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason at its sole discretion.

5. **Proposal Instructions & Layout**

   As part of your proposal, please address the following:

   A. **Title Page**

      A title page of the proposal must include company’s name, website address, corporate address, and telephone number. Also include principal contact’s name and email address.

   B. **Table of Contents**

      The proposal must include a table of contents.

   C. **Executive Summary**

      Provide an executive summary of the project approach, major objectives and milestones, as well as how your company will help AFS achieve website goals and objectives.

   D. **Company Information**

      - Description of company and core services
      - Organization capacity (staff size, location)
      - Resumes of key team members who will work on the account
      - Three professional references
      - Statement about company’s liability insurance and worker’s comp coverage.

   E. **Website Process**
Briefly describe how your firm would approach this project and detail the process of a website redesign. Include meetings, reporting, major milestones, and evaluations.

Provide overview of content management system.

Include schedule/timeline of deliverables, such as major milestones and beta testing timeline.

List relevant case histories with information on accessing online demos or examples, and include cost of those projects.

**F. Website Requirements**

Please address how your company will address and meet the website requirements laid out in Section 3f (pp 4-5), with reference to the current YM functionality described on p. 3.

- Identify steps that can be implemented immediately
- Identify steps that would advance the transition to an independent CMS.

**G. Reporting & SEO**

- Describe how your company tracks and measures website analytics and SEO.
- Provide a sample report of tracking website analytics.

**H. Budget**

- Provide an overall budget for the website.
- Include a breakdown of the following items:
  - Overall Website Development (Website Strategy, Site Map Development, Wire Framing Design, Coding, and Implementation)
  - Maintenance and support: Identify any costs that should be assumed as part of the site and ongoing costs for maintenance and support needed in the future.
  - Hosting: Identify whether AFS must or is highly encouraged to host with your company. If hosting is provided as an option or requirement, provide pricing options and address how this will be integrated with the existing Your Membership site.
  - Third Party Services: Identify any third-party services that will be outsourced to complete website. Please list cost for those services.
  - Training and Style Guide: Identify costs to train AFS staff to use site tools and provide a style guide.
  - Other charge areas: Please identify whether there will be other expenses, consulting fees, travel fees, future work, etc. to complete this project.

**I. Creative Concepts**

- Provide two (2) to three (3) creative concepts for the AFS homepage.

**6. Additional Information or Clarification**

Contact: americanfolkloresociety@gmail.com
Appendix A
About AFS
About the American Folklore Society

Since 1888, the American Folklore Society (AFS) serves the field of folklore studies, comprised of people and institutions that study and communicate knowledge about folklore throughout the world. Today, the Society produces publications, meetings, and both print and web resources to support our members’ work to study, understand, and communicate about folklore, and to help them build professional and social networks inside and outside our field.

Our 2,000 members and subscribers are scholars, teachers, and libraries at colleges and universities; public humanists working in arts and cultural organizations; and community members involved in folklore work. Many of our members live and work in the US, but their interests in folklore stretch around the world, and today about one in every eight AFS members is from outside the U.S. Folklore and folklorists have also contributed unique intellectual insights to the creation, analysis, and evaluation of public policy.

The humanities discipline that AFS serves is organized somewhat differently from most. A number of universities support centers, programs, and departments in folklore studies that offer undergraduate majors and minors, graduate degrees, or most often both, and whose faculty and students energize the field by creating their own approaches to scholarship, teaching, public service, and professional preparation. The majority of folklorists in academic life, though, work solo or in small teams across the range of humanities and social science departments at U.S. universities, engaging in undergraduate and graduate teaching, research and publication, and service in our field and in those of their departmental homes.

Most notably, in the last 45 years, folklorists—building upon the long history of public interest in our subject and of public engagement by our field—have built homes for their work in government arts and humanities agencies at all levels, in not-for-profit organizations devoted to public education about folklore, and in private consulting practice. These days, almost half of U.S. folklorists, including an increasing number based at universities, work in this “public sector,” engaging with audiences of all ages and descriptions through public programs, including cultural tourism programs, festivals, museum exhibitions, and the development of curricula for school programs.

AFS’s energetic repertoire of activities supports folklorists and their home institutions across the field. The AFS annual meeting is the largest single gathering of folklorists in the world and offers multiple opportunities for face-to-face communication and a growing online presence as well. Our flagship publication, the Journal of American Folklore, began in 1888 and is one of the oldest and most respected folklore journals in the world. It is now accompanied by a multimedia site for audio and visual documentation to supplement JAF articles and reviews. We also publish five other journals (Children’s Folklore Review, Digest, The Folklore Historian, Jewish Cultural Studies, and New Directions in Folklore) as well as the AFS Review online newsletter and opinion/essay venue, embedded in the AFS website.
We issue position statements on a variety of cultural, educational, and professional issues, part of our ongoing advocacy for the work of folklorists, traditional artists and communities, and the appreciation of vibrant expressive life. We support the work of six committees and some 30 sections and discussion groups, and award prizes, travel stipends, and other forms of recognition and support for outstanding work in our field.

In the past 15 years, AFS has taken leadership roles in a number of national and international folklore studies initiatives. In partnership with other institutions in our field and others, we maintain several scholarly communications resources and tools, including the AFS Ethnographic Thesaurus (made possible through the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), the online Folklore Collections Database for information about the holdings of archival repositories in our field (supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities), the H-Folk listserv for international folklore scholarship, the folklore entries in the MLA International Bibliography, and the Open Folklore portal to open-access folklore studies scholarship available online, part of our larger scholarly communications partnership with the Indiana University Bloomington Library.

Since 2007, supported by the Henry Luce Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and other government and private funders in China and the United States, we have engaged in a number of collaborative projects with the China Folklore Society and with Chinese and US university departments and research centers, museums, and libraries: an annual summer folklore institute, conferences, exchanges of early- and mid-career folklore scholars and public folklorists, publications, exhibitions, and professional development activities for museum professionals. We are in earlier stages of similar initiatives with institutions and people in Japan and Mexico, and we work regularly with sister folklore societies worldwide, such as the International Society for Ethnology and Folklore and the International Society for Folk Narrative Research. We also participate actively in the work of the American Council of Learned Societies and the National Humanities Alliance.

In 2002, we began coordinating a program for the Veterans History Project of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, through which folklorists and oral historians have offered more than 400 community-based workshops on documenting the wartime experiences of US veterans; we now share that work, which has reached some 10,000 people, with our ACLS sister society, the Oral History Association. Finally, using support from the National Endowment for the Arts, for the last nine years we have assisted organizations and individuals in public folklore by enabling them to take advantage of helpful consultancies and professional development opportunities, all of which produce best-practice and case-study reports that we share openly online.

Headquartered on the campus of Indiana University-Bloomington, AFS benefits greatly from the generous support of the IU College of Arts and Sciences.
Appendix B
Current Website Review
Overall Feedback

Homepage
- User Experience – Design looks old, fonts are too small, can’t be viewed on mobile devices very well. Menu is challenging to navigate. Not appealing or comprehensible to those outside of the field of folklore studies.
- Should make a striking impression on the first-time viewer and provide clear calls to action. Paths to any of the following should be clear and simple: 1) learning about folklore and folklore studies; 2) becoming a member of AFS; 3) accessing members-only pages; 4) finding content for sub-audiences, eg, Press Room
- Rotation of slides – no one watches for very long, later slides are not seen and therefore those calls to action aren’t effective.
- Photo Gallery – difficult to find, difficult for staff to manage, isn’t accessed.

Calendar of Events
- Often misunderstood to all be events that are hosted by AFS, when very few are actually AFS events.
- Not clear to users that these are events of interest to folklorists.
- Does not need to appear on every page – directs users away from AFS content.

News
- Categories/headers are not clear to all users and will be revised by AFS.
- Tagging in addition to categories would assist with search and navigation.

Search
- Results seem incomplete and are not organized in any meaningful/helpful way.
- Large number of results often means the most relevant/helpful pages get buried somewhere deep in the list.

Members Login
- Sign in prompt on every page takes up valuable real estate on the site
- After signing in, the My Profile menu includes many irrelevant links and continues to take up valuable real estate on the site.

Overall
- No key words used in site, SEO is weak.
- Look of the site seems outdated.
- Too many menus – types of content of top, sidebar, and bottom menus aren’t clearly delineated.