

# Technology in A.A. Online Community

Connecting A.A. members to discuss A.A. and technology

Started at 2015 NAATW —  
*Keeping the Conversation Going 24/7/365*

# Today's Presentation:

History of TIAA-forum.org

Demonstration

Status and plans for the future

Questions

# History

## NAATW:

- 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in St. Louis 8/8/2014
  - grew out of discussions/workshops at Regional Forums and around the fellowship...
- Has met annually, generally in person
  - 2 years online ('19, '20)
  - 3 years hybrid (in person and/or virtual)

## TIAA-forum:

- Came as a result of interest at the '14 and '15 workshops
  - Started initially as naatw-forum.org in ~10/2015
- First open to members ~3/2016
  - Now ~3,000 total members (~2-300 active members monthly)

## NAATW and TIAA-forum are not the Same

- Many people think NAATW and TIAA are the same organization. While there is integration and overlap, they are two different organizations, with different sets of volunteers, structure and, finances.

## NAATW and TIAA are Complementary

- Both focus on ways of sharing ideas, to leverage technology to support carrying the AA message of recovery
- While they are not part of the AA service structure per se, both follow the Traditions and Concepts to the extent possible
- NAATW is a once a year conference that usually spans a weekend
- TIAA is available every day of the year, seven days a week, twenty four hours a day

# NAATW Goals and Commitments (loomio.com)

The screenshot shows a Loomio interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: Dashboard, Unread threads (0), Direct threads, Tasks, TFAA (20), TFAA (13), RE: NAATW (1), Technology Solutions to AA probl..., User Experience working group (1), Websites (2), naatw.prt, + New group, Start a demo, Help docs, and Contact support. The main content area is a thread titled "Goal & Commitment Statements" by user "bb" on Feb 16, 2015. The thread text discusses the importance of formalizing goals and commitments, lists seven guiding questions, and expresses gratitude for community input.

## Goal & Commitment Statements

bb · 16 Feb 2015 · Seen by 34 · Notified 1

In the same way that "keep it simple" may suggest that we should not be all things to all people, and orient us towards our primary purpose, subordinating our other purposes, we may be encouraged to determine what our own targets are more formally, so that we can focus on them and find common ways to collaborate. These could become an acid test for when we take action, and for when to wait, instead, for direction or request.

Focusing on Answers, not on questions right now:

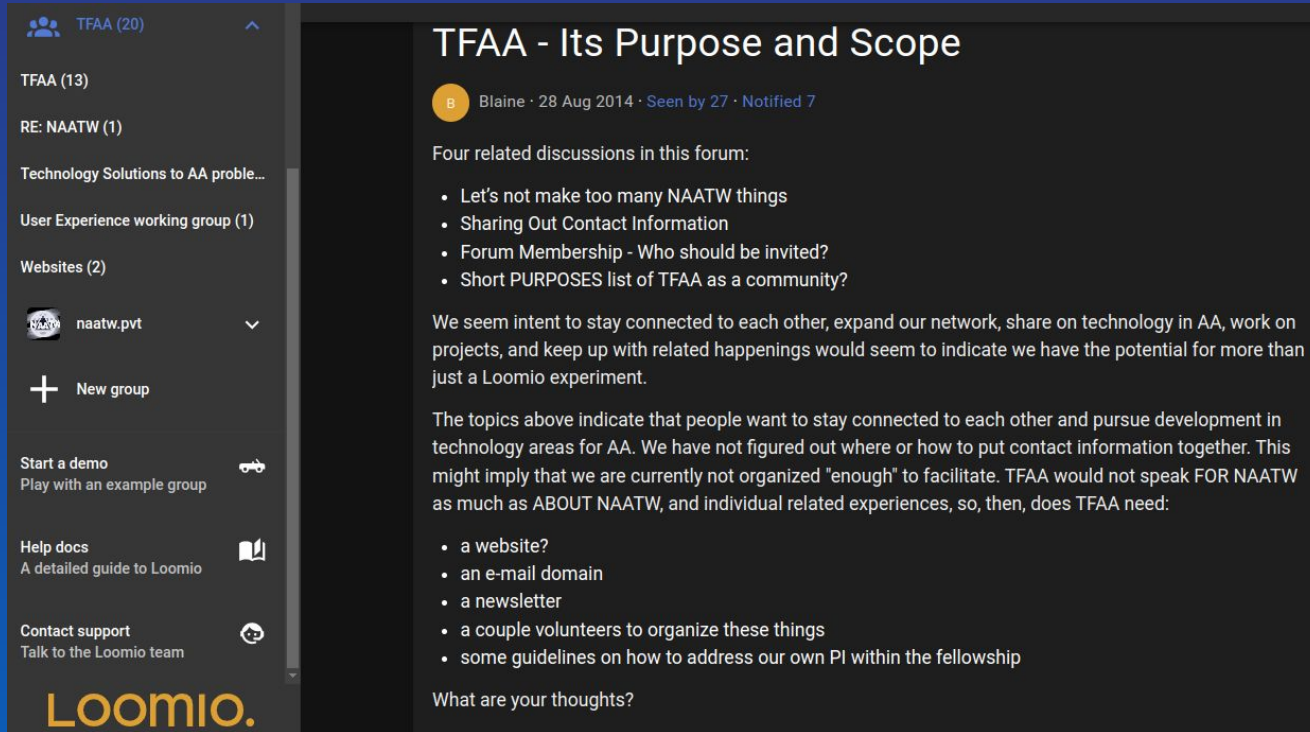
- Who are we?
- Are we serving?
- Who are we serving?
- Have they asked us to do what we are doing?
- How are we reporting what we are doing?
- How do we keep aware of our responsibilities?
- Are we honoring any commitments? How do we track them?
- Are we trying to build an organization?
- What principles should be our boundaries?

We have had a couple purpose topics, but this topic is really focused on TFAA in terms of accomplishing whatever we are set out to do. As we have started many projects in the prior months, it might be the right time to establish some commitment goals that we can learn from. I know I am beginning to set expectations to AA groups for some things I am working on in more detail. I could see some proposals to come out of this. I will also volunteer to compile this and the other threads into a statement document for your reaction and conscience when we get have more.

Thanks for all the insight you've provided and the work you've been doing to this point. It is amazing to watch this non-organization grow :) I can't wait to see what will be contributed back to be shared at the NAATW this year. It seems it might be our annual summit!

oldest first   subscribe   invite   [emojis]   [edit]   [more]

# Discussion Begins – TFAA Purpose and Scope...



The screenshot shows a Loomio forum interface. On the left is a sidebar with navigation options: 'TFAA (20)', 'TFAA (13)', 'RE: NAATW (1)', 'Technology Solutions to AA proble...', 'User Experience working group (1)', 'Websites (2)', 'naatw.pvt', 'New group', 'Start a demo', 'Help docs', and 'Contact support'. The main content area displays a forum post by 'Blaine' from August 28, 2014. The post title is 'TFAA - Its Purpose and Scope'. Below the title, it lists four related discussions: 'Let's not make too many NAATW things', 'Sharing Out Contact Information', 'Forum Membership - Who should be invited?', and 'Short PURPOSES list of TFAA as a community?'. The post text discusses the intent to stay connected, expand the network, and share technology in AA, while noting the current lack of organization. It asks for input on needs like a website, e-mail domain, newsletter, volunteers, and guidelines. The post ends with the question 'What are your thoughts?'.

TFAA (20)

TFAA (13)

RE: NAATW (1)

Technology Solutions to AA proble...

User Experience working group (1)

Websites (2)

naatw.pvt

New group

Start a demo  
Play with an example group

Help docs  
A detailed guide to Loomio

Contact support  
Talk to the Loomio team

**LOOMIO.**

## TFAA - Its Purpose and Scope

B Blaine · 28 Aug 2014 · Seen by 27 · Notified 7

Four related discussions in this forum:

- Let's not make too many NAATW things
- Sharing Out Contact Information
- Forum Membership - Who should be invited?
- Short PURPOSES list of TFAA as a community?

We seem intent to stay connected to each other, expand our network, share on technology in AA, work on projects, and keep up with related happenings would seem to indicate we have the potential for more than just a Loomio experiment.

The topics above indicate that people want to stay connected to each other and pursue development in technology areas for AA. We have not figured out where or how to put contact information together. This might imply that we are currently not organized "enough" to facilitate. TFAA would not speak FOR NAATW as much as ABOUT NAATW, and individual related experiences, so, then, does TFAA need:

- a website?
- an e-mail domain
- a newsletter
- a couple volunteers to organize these things
- some guidelines on how to address our own PI within the fellowship

What are your thoughts?

# ...more discussion on loomio.com ...

Lois L · 28 Aug 2014

TFAA needs either a collaboration platform or a few tools cobbled together to serve that need and PI guidelines and volunteers to organize and maybe some money to pay for that collab platform - I suppose we could be self-supporting.

Actually I think if we could be successful with a collab platform then that too could be a tech tool we could share with the fellowship....

Sam M · 16 Sep 2014

Are we not akin to Young People in AA (there are many groups; here's the international one: <http://www.icypaa.org/>)? We do not have to be in the Service Structure to be an organization and useful to people in AA. If we have something people operating in the Service Structure want for their group/district/area, then they can take it back to that and introduce it via the procedures used there.

Lew G · 15 Sep 2014

• • •

My only purpose in raising this experience here is that it points out that **HOW** we do things in AA is probably as important as **WHAT** we do. I think a full discussion of our purpose, scope, and processes is important - for both the NAATW and TFAA. Re-reading the discussion on this topic makes me proud for what we're thinking and the way we're thinking and expressing it. I think what could happen (and seems to be happening) here could be important. I'm excited to be a part of it. I think (hope) we're on our way to filling a real need in AA.

# Technology in AA Online Community (ttaa-forum.org)

- Purpose

- To share experience, strength, and hope in using technology to carry AA's message of recovery – not to focus on technology per se.
- AA may not be reaching alcoholics we can help
  - Number of US alcoholics increased 50% in the past 25 years
  - AA membership remains roughly the same

- Can technology help carry the message?

- We need non-technical folks to keep the nerds useful!
- Whenever literally anyone, literally anywhere, reaches out for help, the hand of AA can be there – virtually, if not physically.
- Participation as ttaa-forum.org members by everyone from AA members, web servants, treasurers, tech servants to Area Delegates, Trustees, GSO staff

- What is available?

- General discussions of how we do what we do in AA service
  - How do we stop reinventing the wheel?
  - Many of the needs of Groups, Districts, Intergroups, and Areas are similar
  - Experiences for meeting those needs can now be shared and stored for future reference

- Community currently has over ~3,000 members

- Growth has been steady, with a couple of increase “bumps” in '19 and '20

# Demonstration

# Homepage (public facing)

- WordPress “front end”
- Displays all the Hot Topics under discussion in the Forum
- Allows those who've never used the Forum to sample what it offers without logging in
- Also allows existing members to see at a glance what is trending
- It enables existing members to introduce other A.A. members to the Forum unobtrusively

Technology in A.A. Online Community

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We provide two ways of learning and sharing on this site:  
Option 1 is **Hot Topics** Option 2 is **The Forum**

### Hot Topics

- **Electronic Voting for A.A. Purposes**  
Discussion on how to use electronic voting systems for A.A. purposes. A.A. members of the forum discuss their experiences and the pros and cons of electronic voting systems. The discussion highlights the need for secure, affordable, and user-friendly systems for A.A. members, with a focus on the use of open-source software and the importance of having a backup plan in case of a system failure.
- **Newberry Convention**  
Discussion on the Newberry Convention and the importance of attending. A.A. members discuss their experiences and the benefits of attending the convention, including the opportunity to meet other members and learn from experts in the field.
- **Single Workshop for New guests**  
Discussion on the importance of having a single workshop for new guests. A.A. members discuss the benefits of having a single workshop, including the opportunity to learn from experienced members and receive support from the community.
- **Migrating a Website to New Web Hosting**  
Discussion on the importance of migrating a website to new web hosting. A.A. members discuss the benefits of migrating a website, including the opportunity to improve performance and security.
- **A.A. Activism Campaign**  
Discussion on the A.A. Activism Campaign and the importance of participating. A.A. members discuss their experiences and the benefits of participating in the campaign, including the opportunity to make a difference in the world.
- **Code for Humanity (C4H)**  
Discussion on the Code for Humanity (C4H) project and the importance of contributing. A.A. members discuss their experiences and the benefits of contributing to the project, including the opportunity to learn from experts and make a difference in the world.
- **Night Meetings**  
Discussion on the importance of having night meetings. A.A. members discuss the benefits of having night meetings, including the opportunity to learn from experienced members and receive support from the community.
- **Working Under 100k**  
Discussion on the importance of working under 100k. A.A. members discuss their experiences and the benefits of working under 100k, including the opportunity to learn from experts and make a difference in the world.
- **Phone Answering Services / Set-ups**  
Discussion on the importance of having phone answering services. A.A. members discuss the benefits of having phone answering services, including the opportunity to improve customer service and receive support from the community.
- **Legal for Teachers**  
Discussion on the importance of being legal for teachers. A.A. members discuss their experiences and the benefits of being legal for teachers, including the opportunity to learn from experts and make a difference in the world.

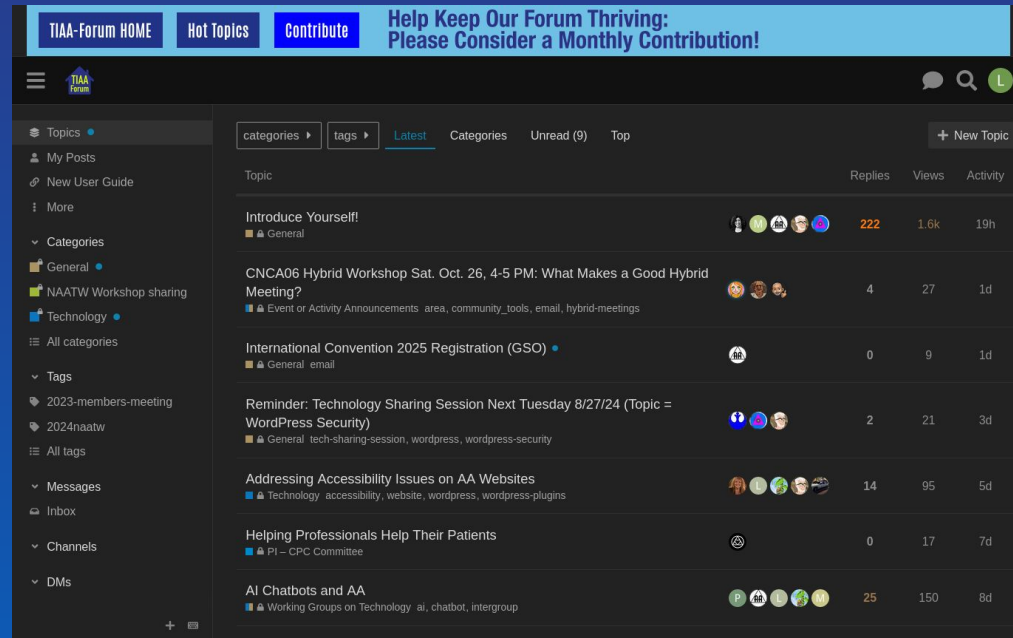
### The Forum

The Forum is for A.A. members to share ideas, ask questions, and learn from each other. It is a place where members can discuss their experiences and the benefits of using technology in A.A. The forum is a great way to learn from other members and receive support from the community.

- **What is a forum?**  
A place where you can ask questions and get answers from other members.
- **Why is this?**  
A place where you can learn from other members and receive support from the community.
- **Categories in the Forum**  
The forum is divided into categories to help you find what you are looking for.
- **List of monthly active topics**  
A list of the most popular topics in the forum, so you can see what is trending.

# Forum Landing Page

- Displays all the Categories in the Forum on a left-hand navigation sidebar
- Enables a quick, top to bottom scan of all available categories
- Allows a member to select All Categories (bottom of the navigator) if the 'classic' view is preferred
- Once a specific Category is entered, graphics and other behavior are as previously displayed



The screenshot displays the TIAA-Forum landing page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with buttons for "TIAA-Forum HOME", "Hot Topics", and "Contribute", along with a banner that reads "Help Keep Our Forum Thriving: Please Consider a Monthly Contribution!". Below this is a sidebar with navigation options: "Topics", "My Posts", "New User Guide", "More", "Categories" (with sub-options for "General", "NAATW Workshop sharing", and "Technology"), "All categories", "Tags" (with sub-options for "2023-members-meeting", "2024naatw", and "All tags"), "Messages", "Inbox", "Channels", and "DMs". The main content area shows a list of forum topics with columns for "Topic", "Replies", "Views", and "Activity". The topics listed are:

Topic	Replies	Views	Activity
Introduce Yourself! ■ General	222	1.6k	19h
CNCA06 Hybrid Workshop Sat. Oct. 26, 4-5 PM: What Makes a Good Hybrid Meeting? ■ Event or Activity Announcements area, community_tools, email, hybrid-meetings	4	27	1d
International Convention 2025 Registration (GSO) ■ General email	0	9	1d
Reminder: Technology Sharing Session Next Tuesday 8/27/24 (Topic = WordPress Security) ■ General tech-sharing-session, wordpress, wordpress-security	2	21	3d
Addressing Accessibility Issues on AA Websites ■ Technology accessibility, website, wordpress, wordpress-plugins	14	95	5d
Helping Professionals Help Their Patients ■ PI - CPC Committee	0	17	7d
AI Chatbots and AA ■ Working Groups on Technology ai, chatbot, intergroup	25	150	8d

# Archives Special Group Landing Page

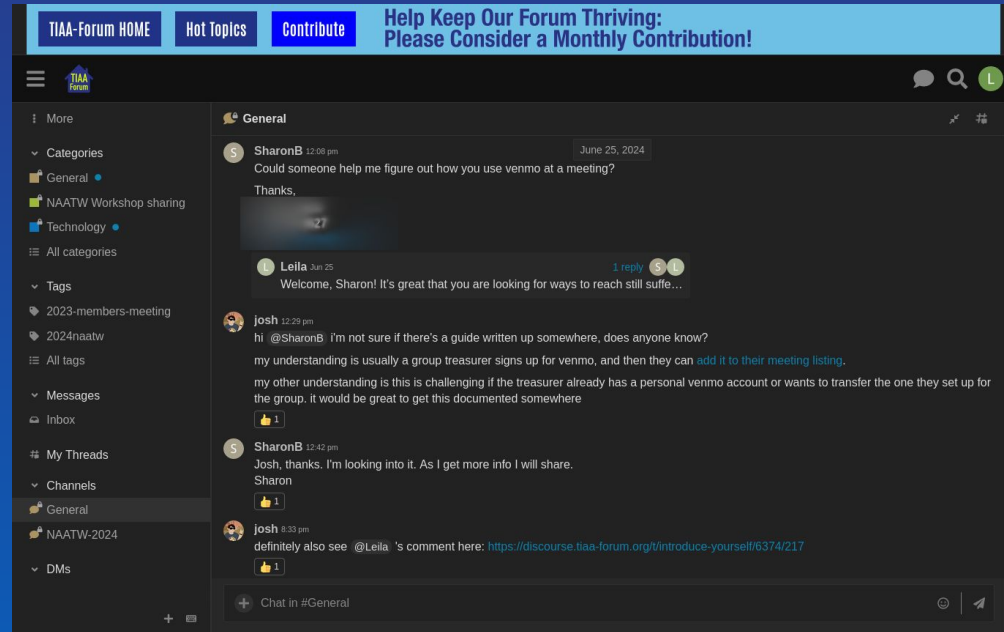
- Area Archives chairs from each of the 93 Areas invited to join the Forum during the 2023 National AA Archives yearly workshop
- Enables a central repository in which anyone interested in AA Archives can share their experience, or ask questions of others
- Members of the Forum who join the Archives Group as their primary group will land in the Archives Category upon logging in – they can also explore and search the rest of the Forum
- Demonstrates the potential for Categories dedicated to the common standing committees at the Area, District and Intergroup/Central Office levels. Public Information/CPC group/category has also been added, and Accessibility is in progress.

The screenshot displays the TIAA-Forum website interface. At the top, there are navigation links for 'TIAA-Forum HOME', 'Hot Topics', and 'Contribute', along with a banner encouraging a 'Monthly Contribution'. The main content area features a large image of a bookshelf with the text 'A.A. Archives' overlaid. Below this, a welcome message for the Archives category is displayed. A table lists recent topics in the Archives category, including 'About the Archives category', 'Welcome to the archives section of the TIAA-Forum', 'Archivist Forum Monthly & Weekly Zooms', and 'What to do with old cassettes once converted to digital'. The table columns are Topic, Replies, Views, and Activity.

Topic	Replies	Views	Activity
<b>About the Archives category</b> AA Archives? Yes! This category is for AA members that work with, are interested in, or curious about AA Archives. We welcome your questions and comments as you enter into the discussions and hope you'll find useful info... read more	4	65	Feb 2023
<b>Welcome to the archives section of the TIAA-Forum</b> This category (#archives) is for AA members that work with, are interested in, or curious about AA Archives and the preservation of our history. We welcome all to our discussions about AA Archives and hope you'll find u... read more	10	213	Dec 2022
<b>Archivist Forum Monthly &amp; Weekly Zooms</b> aa-history, archives, zoom, zoom-events	4	50	9d
<b>What to do with old cassettes once converted to digital</b>	18	172	May 22

# Chat...

- Chat feature can be used for temporal back channel communication for Assemblies, meetings, etc
- Enables security and anonymity
- Similar to Slack, Discord, et al, but without having to join elsewhere or use another tool
- General Channel can be used by any forum members for immediate, ad hoc communication
- Separate (public or private) Chat channels can be configured upon request



The screenshot displays the TIAA Forum chat interface. At the top, there are navigation buttons for 'TIAA-Forum HOME', 'Hot Topics', and 'Contribute', along with a banner that reads 'Help Keep Our Forum Thriving: Please Consider a Monthly Contribution!'. The chat window shows a conversation in the '#General' channel. The messages are as follows:

- SharonB** (12:08 pm, June 25, 2024): "Could someone help me figure out how you use venmo at a meeting?"
- Leila** (Jun 25): "Welcome, Sharon! It's great that you are looking for ways to reach still suffice..."
- josh** (12:29 pm): "hi @SharonB I'm not sure if there's a guide written up somewhere, does anyone know? my understanding is usually a group treasurer signs up for venmo, and then they can add it to their meeting listing. my other understanding is this is challenging if the treasurer already has a personal venmo account or wants to transfer the one they set up for the group, it would be great to get this documented somewhere"
- SharonB** (12:42 pm): "Josh, thanks. I'm looking into it. As I get more info I will share."
- josh** (8:33 pm): "definitely also see @Leila 's comment here: <https://discourse.tiaa-forum.org/t/introduce-yourself/6374/217>"

The interface includes a sidebar with navigation options like 'More', 'Categories', 'Tags', 'Messages', and 'Channels'. The chat input field at the bottom shows 'Chat in #General'.

# Kinds of discussions on TIAA-forum.org

## How do I ...

- set up a website for... ?
- run a hybrid District meeting?
- accept online payments for our...?

## Here's my experience...

- running a hybrid election assembly
- setting up a chat function on our Intergroup website

## Help! My \_\_\_\_\_ is down, broken, giving me an error I don't understand!

- ...website, virtual meeting software, donation page, etc.

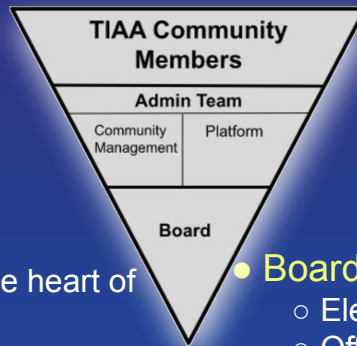
## Anyone with experience in ...

- chairing an online/hybrid group conscience?
- dealing with conflict between virtual and in-person meeting attendance?
- voting for a hybrid assembly?

# How TIAA-forum.org Works

- Members can post new topics (questions, information to share, etc.), or contribute to existing discussions by posting replies
- Member posts (conversations) are grouped under “Categories,” which cover a wide spectrum of AA and its service structure
- All content on the forum is searchable
- Any AA member or person doing work for an AA service entity can join [tiaa-forum.org](http://tiaa-forum.org)
- The forum was built on “Discourse,” one of the most powerful forum platforms available
- WordPress “front end”
  - Allows for useful exposure of information to the public
  - Support for forum signup and contributions
  - SEO

# Organization



## ● Community

- Poses the questions, share the answers – the heart of TIAA-forum.org
- “Private” – comprised of AA members and people who are working with AA service organizations

## ● Admin Team

- Responsible for the day-to-day administration of the forum
- Meets monthly
- Platform Sub-team:
  - Responsible for infrastructure management
- Community Management Sub-team:
  - Community Support and moderation of Forum following the principle: “...does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes...”
  - keep it simple
  - policies outlined in our FAQ

## ● Board

- Elected by membership to 3 year terms
- Officers: President (Chair), Treasurer, Secretary
- Meets Quarterly (+members’ meeting and conversations on the forum)
- Monitors by-laws, policies, budget, approval of expenditures, etc
- Any member can volunteer/stand for any job
  - Rotation is encouraged
- Legally and for tax purposes: TIAA-forum is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

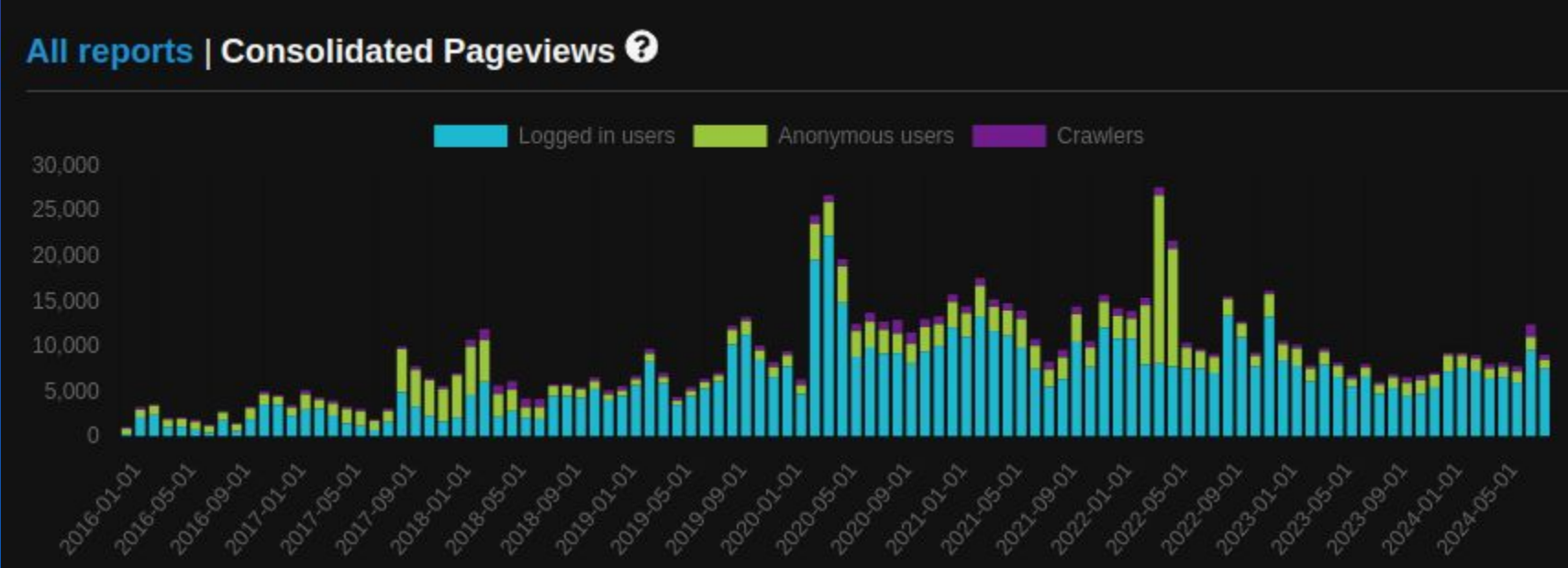
# Supported Through Our Own Contributions

- The forum leverages the same principles of financial governance as the AA program
  - there are no dues or fees, we are supported by member contributions
  - all support staff are volunteers, with regular rotation of responsibilities
- Our annual budget is developed in consultation with the Admin Team and our Board
  - presented at our Annual Members' Meeting
  - approved by the Board
- Members can contribute as they wish and can
  - there is no requirement
  - the major costs are software and hosting
  - there is no financial affiliation with GSO, or any other AA entity
- For tax purposes, the forum is registered as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit entity

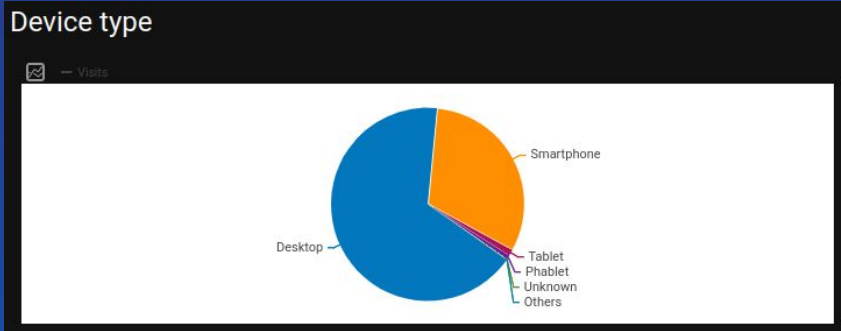
# Regular Reviews of Utilization Patterns

- **Community Management team monthly reviews Utilization trends**
  - Number of sign-ups, posts, pageviews, etc.
  - Monitors situations in which moderators need to take action
- **Platform team currently researching use of Matomo analytics**
  - Similar to Google Analytics but all data local to our server
  - Installed currently on a test system
  - Evaluating data provided via reports on usage patterns
  - Ensuring no anonymity concerns/impact on our community
- **Challenges (for which we need your help!)**
  - Need better data to determine what users want or would like to see in the Forum
  - Determine why people who might find utility in our forum do not use it
  - Data collection and evaluation efforts
  - Done to ensure that we are basing decisions about future direction, features, and budget on solid evidence, not speculation or guesswork
- **Continuous improvement of outreach efforts based on data about actual usage**
  - Surprisingly little known about tiaa-forum in AA

# Forum Consolidated Pageviews...



# Matomo Testing (WordPress data only...)



### Page titles

PAGE TITLE	PAGEVIEWS	UNIQUE PAGEVIEWS	BOUNCE RATE	AVG. TIME ON PAGE	EXIT RATE	AVG. PAGE LOAD TIME
tiaa-forum.org/TIAA-Forum – Connecting A.A. members to discuss A.A. and technology	1,097	883	59%	00:00:28	71%	3.2s
tiaa-forum.org/Logged in Landing Page – TIAA-Forum	253	228	88%	00:01:01	84%	0.96s
tiaa-forum.org/Hot Topics – TIAA-Forum	232	153	54%	00:01:47	66%	1.63s
tiaa-forum.org/Contribute – TIAA-Forum	140	134	95%	00:00:39	95%	1.06s
tiaa-forum.org/Join – TIAA-Forum	150	131	71%	00:00:31	70%	2.68s
tiaa-forum.org/The Forum – TIAA-Forum	35	30	50%	00:00:26	50%	5.14s
tiaa-forum.org/About Us – TIAA-Forum	28	27	100%	00:00:35	44%	1.58s
tiaa-forum.org/Contact Us – TIAA-Forum	25	22	100%	00:00:40	55%	3.05s
tiaa-forum.org/Join Suggestion – TIAA-Forum	15	14	100%	00:01:14	64%	0.97s
tiaa-forum.org/Presentations – TIAA-Forum	19	13	40%	00:02:03	69%	2.21s

# What's New and Upcoming...

- **Growth**
  - Building on the “interest group” for people supporting AA Archives work
    - added another group for PI/CPC
    - working on Accessibility group
  - Communicate more with people who might find utility in our forum
    - Intergroups, Districts, Areas, Groups, Workshops, Conventions, etc.
- **Continuous improvement**
  - Member Guide and documentation revisions
  - Improved security
- **Videos, new and improved features, and useful tools for Community Management and members**
- **Continued refresh of our WordPress front end**
  - Generate Hot Topics
    - using Discourse AI feature
  - Placing “Hot Topics” outside of our private forum
    - Information that could be useful to the fellowship about common items of discussion
  - Improved SEO
  - Updates to theme/UI
  - More utility for our community and AA as a whole
  - New plugin for signups and welcome messages

# (shameless?) Plug for Help...

- Admin Team - two sub-teams:
  - Community Management Team
    - Community development and support
    - Front-end design / UI experience
  - Platform team
    - WordPress experience
    - Rails/Ember/PHP/Javascript/Docker programming and support experience
- Board
  - 4 meetings a year + Members' Meeting is held virtually in December of each year
  - Online collaboration between meetings

- Join!!!
- Participate!!!
- Contribute
- Tell Your Friends
- Volunteer

# Thank You!!!

## Forum Board:

Mike (chair), Cheri, Joel, Lew, Ross, Sam (treasurer), Scott F. (secretary), Shap

## Forum Admin Team:

Lew (lead), Mike, Shap, Tim

## Platform Admin Sub-team

Tim (lead), Lew

## Community Management Admin Sub-team

Shap (lead), Amy, Brian, Hugh, Leila, Lois, Ross, Scott S, Tim C, Tom C,

Viv

**But, most of all, we  
want to thank our  
wonderful members –  
all of you!**

# Questions???

# Coming events...

- Deep dive into TIAA-forum.org infrastructure
  - Technology Sharing Session – 24.10.26
  - Details on the tiaa-forum.org or email [info@tiaa-forum.org](mailto:info@tiaa-forum.org)
- Advance member use presentations/tutorials
  - In progress – stay tuned...