

Volunteer Tracking Software – input received from APGA volunteer section members

Comments received on the following systems:

1. Microsoft Access Database/Excel
2. Volgistics
3. Raiser's Edge

Questions asked:

- What data was this software or system primarily designed to track? (volunteers; paid employees but it's also used for volunteer gathering; or donors but it's also used for volunteer tracking)
- What is the cost?
- Does it do what you need it to do?
- If not, what's missing?
- May volunteers input some or all of their own information directly into this software from their own computers?
- Does the system allow you or anyone at your organization to add and customize fields, input screens and reports in this software?
- Can the software be used to track volunteer hours, skills, volunteer availability and interests?
- Does the software come with a scheduling function?
- Can more than one person access this product at the same time?
- Do you receive internal support from your IT team or external support from the software provider?
- Can you provide a "screen shot" of a "Jane Doe" record? e.g., if you use Excel, what does that look like? What are the column headers? If you use Volgistics, what does a record look like?

VOLGISTICS RESPONSES (2):

1. The Huntington

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Comments: Volgistics is very user friendly and a great addition to our volunteer management. In addition to using it to track, recruit, schedule volunteers we also use this as our volunteer website, VicNet. Go to Volgistics.com for a tutorial and a free month's trial. I'm not a sale person for Volgistics nor do I get a sales commission – it meets all of our needs – we have 1150 volunteers.

2. Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center

Carrie McDonald
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Comments:

- This system is designed primarily to track volunteers but we have also used it to schedule staff for all-hands-on-deck events like plant sales. Our development office uses Razor's Edge – I looked at the volunteer component. It wasn't quite robust scheduling-wise for us, nor at the time did it allow our volunteers to log in and sign up for opportunities from home.
- The cost varies by number of volunteers. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is in the 500-1000 range and we pay around \$800/year. Volgistics has a good free trial and cost estimate page.
- It does about 95% of what we need it to do.
- I'd LIKE to be able to adjust the way weekly schedule prints out. I'd LOVE to have better integration with our website so the information that groups booking tours type in could flow into Volgistics and become a volunteer opportunity that Docents could sign up for – cutting does on re-entering.
- Volunteers are able to input information directly, on site and from home; online volunteer applications; and controlled self-signing up for opportunities, and honor system input of hours for tasks done off-site
- Myself plus one other supervisor user have all access, then any number of somewhat-more-limited access users referred to as Coordinators.
- The software can be used to track volunteer hours, skills, volunteer availability and interests.
- It does have a scheduling function.

RAISER'S EDGE RESPONSES (1):

1. The Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College

Rebecca Robert

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Comments:

- We use the education tab in our constituent profile.
- The software is primarily designed to track membership
- There is no cost because we are already paying for membership module.
- We have "jerrybuilt" the "educate" tab to track the information we need.
- What's missing? We have a volunteer use Excel to track volunteer hours and tracking volunteering for events is done through attributes. Thus if you pull up a volunteer profile you won't immediately see what they have volunteered for and what events they have just attended.
- Volunteers cannot input directly into this software from their own computers
- We use attributes to track "odds and ends" information, but it's not great for running reports.
- We have modified attributes to track skills and interests.
- There is no scheduling function available. Typically we handle by volunteer or staff via paper.
- We have four user licenses.
- We have support from Blackbaud, the parent company.
- We can provide a "screen shot" of a volunteer record upon request.

MICROSOFT ACCESS (and Excel) RESPONSES (3):

1. Lyon Arboretum

Jill Laughlin

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Comments:

- We use an MS Access database to gather info on all contacts (volunteers, PR contacts, students, instructors, donors, staff, interns, board, etc.). We use Excel to track volunteer hours
- MS Office Pro retrials for about \$350...the true cost is staff time.
- It does what we need it to do.
- The software is fine...we need IT expertise on our staff.
- Only staff are allowed access to input data; volunteers sign in/out or record their hours on a time sheet in each department.
- Only staff directly involved with the volunteer program add to or customize fields, design reports, etc., but the software is accessible to all staff, so theoretically anyone who has access can modify/design/use the system.
- We use Excel spreadsheets to track volunteer hours served, and the Access database to record skills, interests and other data.
- There is no scheduling function. We use Google Calendar for scheduling some but not all volunteers.
- Multiple users can access in a read-only format, but only one user at a time can make changes.
- I wish we received internal support from our IT staff. We have a very small staff and no IT support. I took an Access class and an Excel class several years ago...mostly learning from doing and trial and many errors. With some IT help, it could be much more efficient.
- In Access, I use multiple linked tables:
 - Contact Information (last name, first name, street address...the usual)
 - Zip Codes
 - Categories/codes that determine the multiple categories (volunteer, donor, board member, intern, etc.)
 - Coded tables for staff supervisors
 - A table that I use to track new volunteers before they are placed that contains information on each step of the process (date of initial contact, area of interest, all follow-up steps).
 - All tables are assigned and tied with a unique ID number that keeps all tables linked.
 - Reports are generated as needed off the linked tables.
- In Excel, I just set up a list of all current volunteers each year, in a file accessible to all garden staff, and ask supervising staff to input all service hours for each volunteer month. It's not a fail-safe system, but most of our staff are good about keeping it up-to-date...but it always could be better.
- We are a small garden, small staff, small budget, with only about 3,500 volunteer visits annually, and 10,000-14,000 volunteer hours recorded annually. The current system is manageable, but continued growth will require better solutions. The current system fills our needs, but as programs expand, we will need to find full-time position dedicated to our volunteer program, and software designed specifically to the needs of the volunteer program.

2. ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden

Tiffany Abbott

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Comments:

- Microsoft Access Application was created for us about 15 years ago.
- It was designed to track our volunteers: hours, years of service, recognition items received, contact information, and visitor interactions.
- I do not have knowledge of the initial cost; I know it was expensive but there are no continuous maintenance fees. It was donated to us by a volunteer.
- It is not the most helpful system, as volunteers retire or quit we cannot delete them from the database, we cannot change or update the program names as we change.
- Volunteers are not able to input directly into this software.
- We are not able to add or customize fields, input screens or reports.

- We are only able to track hours and visitor interactions.
- It does not have a scheduling function
- More than one person can access the software at the same time.
- We do receive intern support
- We can print out individual hours summaries or group summaries; it includes name, volunteer ID number, hours worked (can specify dates) and interactions with visitors.

3. The Missouri Botanical Garden

Jackie Juras

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Comments:

- The current Access database was created by one of our IT staff more than ten years ago. He was very proficient in Access and was able to include:
 - Name
 - Address, city, state, zip
 - Telephone
 - Emergency phone/contact
 - Sex
 - Racial group (if provided on optional demographic section of volunteer application)
 - Birth year (if provided on optional demographic section of volunteer application)
 - Garden member
 - Student/Intern/VISTA/Master Gardener
 - Start date
 - Status and status date
 - Email
 - Place of employment
 - Limitations
 - Special skills
 - Notes
 - Current area and supervisor
 - Hours
- I don't know the original cost; there are no continuous maintenance fees
- It does a lot, but...
- ...We need a system where volunteers and supervisors can input information directly, but still allows us to review their submissions and approve/disapprove before being accepted into the system. We also need a system that allows us to send email to all volunteers or particular groups of volunteers.
- Volunteers cannot input information directly
- We can add and customize fields, but the staff member who created the database is no longer at the Garden and no one else in our IT is as proficient as he was, so it's difficult to make any changes now.
- We can track volunteer hours, skills and interests. However, volunteer hours for more than 1,700 volunteers are collected twice each year from more than 80 volunteer supervisors and all those hours need to be input into the Access database by a volunteer who helps in the volunteer program office.
- It does not have a scheduling function.
- More than one person can access the database at the same time.
- I receive very limited support from our IT team.
- Here's a copy of the screen for a volunteer record.

MBG Volunteer Data - [MBG Volunteers]

File Edit Records Help

print screen

Volunteers Restrict To [] Add Save Delete Undo Print Close

Search Last Name: All Search Start Date: []

First & Last Names: Jackie [] Juras [] Spouse Name: []

Token: [15432] Address: [] Email: []

City/State/Zip: [] Place of Employment: []

Telephone 1 & 2: [] Limitations: []

Emergency Phone/Name: [] Special Skills: []

SSN: [] Sex: []

Racial Group: [] List Age Group: []

Birth Year: [] Notes: [] Zoom

Garden Member? Student? Intern? VISTA? **Master Gardener?**

Start Date: []

Areas Status: [] Status Date: []

Current Area	Department	Division	Supervisor	Start	End
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Time Period	Area	Department	Hours	Time Period	Department	Total Hours
[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]	[]

Record: [] of 12560

First and middle names of the volunteer.

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