It's time for new C++ leadership

Abstract

The Library Evolution Working Group chair (LEWG chair, or "chair" henceforth) must lead in a fashion that is fair, transparent, ethical, and above all, non-divisive. We believe there is an urgent need for a new chair with these qualities.

Discussion

Within the last eighteen months, several incidents have caused division within the community, reputational harm to the Committee, and an impairment to its mission. The common factor in these incidents is that they were instigated or amplified by the current chair of the Library Evolution Working Group.

C++ Subreddit

On October 6, 2020 a post [1] was made to the r/cpp [2] subreddit linking to a WG21 attendee's blog post containing a video [3] which effectively labels leaders in the C++ community as a group of unwelcoming racists. The chair used his moderator privileges in the subreddit to lock the thread with the message, "Now is the time to listen, not talk" and then promoted the message on social media. The post was soon unlocked due to overwhelming disapproval from users. As can be seen from the replies that followed, the amplification of the message coming from a chair caused significant division in the community. Eventually, an apology [4] was put forward, but still a permanent stain was left behind; many community members mistakenly believe that the Committee is staffed with bigots.

Networking TS

On June 15, 2021 a new [paper](#) [5] listing the chair as a co-author and sponsored by the chair's employer was published. This paper stands in direct opposition to Networking TS by presenting an opposing model of asynchrony and execution. Several individuals including the author of this paper observed significant ethical breaches. The chair exhibited bias in terms of who is allowed to interrupt and speak at length, when the meetings are scheduled (the author of Networking TS is in a distant time zone), the direction of discussion, and the wording of straw polls. In all cases, this bias favored the chair's paper.

To err on the safe side, a chair should recuse themselves when there is even the hint of a conflict of interest. Otherwise the reputation of the working group is harmed, and the committee as a whole suffers. In this case, the author of the Networking TS has decided never to participate in the committee again. We note that several complaints were filed with the convenor regarding the breach of ethics; however, the damage was done. A leading expert and two decades of established practice were thrown out and replaced with risky, inferior substitutes.

Conferences Incident

On March 8, 2022 a [post](#) [6] was made to the r/cpp subreddit by a prominent member of the C++ community, linking to a Twitter [thread](#) [7] and [personal statement](#) [8] accusing five active WG21 members (including the creator of C++ and the convenor of WG21) of "protecting a rapist." The accuser does not participate in the committee, but the chair used social media platforms to endorse, amplify, and broadcast the message (Exhibits A, B) to the entire C++ community.

In particular, we note that the chair endorsed and amplified the message that stewardship of C++ should be taken out of the International Standards Organization (Exhibit C). We find this to be at odds with the role of serving as a chair. The chair's participation in denouncing the committee is causing divisiveness; respected minds in WG21 are calling for reduced participation (Exhibits D, E).

Conclusion

An observable pattern of questionable behavior is visible from these ongoing incidents. These events have inflamed the community, making it more difficult for the committee to accomplish its mission and tarnishing its reputation. We believe individuals serving in Committee positions should exhibit dignity, unassailable ethics, and the ability to get along with everyone and bring them together.

References

[1] https://www.reddit.com/r/cpp/comments/j6oc4q/the_community/

[2] https://www.reddit.com/r/cpp/

[3] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vaLKm9FE8oo

[4] https://www.reddit.com/r/cpp/comments/j7wigk/why_is_an_rcpp_mod_collecting_feedback_about_rcpp/

[5] http://www.open-std.org/jtc1/sc22/wg21/docs/papers/2021/p2300r0.html

[6] https://www.reddit.com/r/cpp/comments/t9klju/this_is_troubling/

[7] https://twitter.com/pati_gallardo/status/1501211140310904841

[8] https://patricia.no/2022/03/08/cppcon.html

Exhibit A

⟲ **Bryce Adelstein Lelbach** 🇺🇦 Retweeted

Patricia Aas 🦎🇺🇦 @pati_gallardo · Apr 21 ...

I honestly don't see a future for me in C++ right now either. I was afraid to go to a C++ conference. I have to research and plan ahead to see if an event has folks that might be dangerous to me. I can't ever go to a standardization meeting. What's the point?

> 🖼 **Freyja Domville** 🏳️‍⚧️ @FreyjaDomville · Apr 21
>
> I don't think I want to use C++ any more. I would rather use C, C# and Rust than support a standards committee that chooses the professional reputation of Person X over the safety of vulnerable community members. @pati_gallardo you've done an amazing job. We are proud of you.

💬 3   ⟲ 4   ♡ 61   ⬆

Exhibit B

Bryce Adelstein Lelbach 🇺🇦 Retweeted

Freyja Domville 🏳️‍⚧️ @FreyjaDomville · Apr 21

I don't think I want to use C++ any more. I would rather use C, C# and Rust than support a standards committee that chooses the professional reputation of Person X over the safety of vulnerable community members. @pati_gallardo you've done an amazing job. We are proud of you.

💬 11   🔁 24   ♡ 318   ⬆️

Exhibit C

⮌ Bryce Adelstein Lelbach 🇺🇦 Retweeted

Patricia Aas 🐢🇺🇦 @pati_gallardo · Apr 21   …

X has joined the US national body so that they can continue to participate in C++ standardization. I could write more blogposts but honestly it's about time somebody else did. 🧵

> 🙂 **Patricia Aas** 🐢🇺🇦 @pati_gallardo · Apr 21
>
> C++ standardization should be taken out of ISO and handled by an entity with a real and enforced CoC that actually values inclusion and safety. It should be free to join and it should encourage and sponsor new folks to join and participate.
>
> Show this thread

💬 11   ⮌ 35   ♡ 150   ↑

Show this thread

Exhibit D

Dr Peter Brett
@PeterTBBrett

Replying to @pati_gallardo

Yet another good argument against having in-person C++ standardization meetings.

4:12 AM · Apr 21, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Exhibit E

https://twitter.com/BronekKozicki/status/1518230526305390592

Bronek Kozicki - ✝️ 🇵🇱 🇬🇧-✊ ⬜ ❤️ ⬜-🌻 ... @BronekK... · Apr 24 ...
Replying to @blelbach

I, for one, have declared and will declare again:

As a small solidarity gesture towards female members of the C++
committee, as long as X is allowed to attend the C++ meetings, I refuse to
attend such meetings in person.

💬 1   🔁   ♡ 5   ⬆️

Bronek Kozicki - ✝️ 🇵🇱 🇬🇧-✊ ⬜ ❤️ ⬜-🌻 ... @BronekK... · Apr 24 ...
I will continue to participate in the work of the C++ committee in the usual
online way, including online polling and NB (BSI in my case) work.

Should my lack of face-to-face participation result in an unexpected NB
vote at an unfortunate moment, so be it.

💬   🔁   ♡ 3   ⬆️