

Chapter 9 - An Organization in Transition: Webgrrls is Dead, Long Live DigitalEve

Introduction

In November of 2000, a message appeared on the Webgrrls mailing list. In part, it read, "We are thrilled to announce the launch of DigitalEve Toronto, DigitalEve Canada, and DigitalEve International." The Toronto Webgrrls had effectively been transformed into a new organization, Digital Eve Toronto, part of Digital Eve International (DEI). DEI was now a global women's organization and community which was avowedly committed to the advancement and promotion of women in the so-called "digital world".

The shift from Webgrrls to Digital Eve International (DEI) had multiple origins. Originally started by a single woman—Aliza Sherman—in New York, as an informal networking group for women in technology, Webgrrls International (WGI) had exploded over the years to include thousands of members worldwide. In a general sense the organization was at the point where its sheer size was becoming cumbersome to manage without a formal structure. But more specifically, issues of power, group relations and mandate were coming into conflict. WGI, while it used volunteer labour, was actually a for-profit organization with a centralized, hierarchical chain of command. When Sherman departed and director May Leong stepped down, control of the operation of WGI was allocated to Sherman's business partner and CEO of Cybergrrl.com, Kevin Kennedy. The resulting values of WGI combined with Kennedy's managerial style (and, some would say, his gender) resulted in rumblings of dissent in the WGI ranks. Chapters of WGI outside the United States were critical of the American-centric organization (which they perceived as a stark contrast to its avowedly international mandate), and observed that

they had essentially been left adrift in terms of support, despite being required to contribute dues to WGI. All chapters wanted more autonomy to manage their own finances, and meet the local needs of their members, and felt that Kennedy's centralized control was anathema to their healthy development and self-management. The official top-down management structure of WGI was in conflict with the reality of the ad hoc day-to-day workings of individual chapters, and there was little internal consistency besides WGI's control of finances. Chapter leaders were discouraged by WGI from communicating with one another; their only means of discussion was an email list moderated by Kennedy.

Eventually, the rumblings of dissent turned into open (and autonomously self-moderated) dialogue between a few individuals, and in a whirlwind of excited activity, long distance phone calls, and emails, the idea for Digital Eve International was born. The birth of a new organization is a time of great excitement and enthusiasm for those involved.¹ This first stage of developing a new group is distinguished by exuberance and creativity, as current and future leaders and participants envision the potential for change. While there is extensive work and often a loose structure (with the inherent possibilities for interpersonal conflict), differences in philosophy and approach tend to be viewed as unimportant in the face of such a significant project. As Evans recalls:

People are... they're very passionate about [DEI] in kind of a unique way, they don't really get bogged down in small things, I mean yeah we had some dissent, but once a decision had been reached, it was clear sailing. But it was really apparent to everyone that it was something we really needed to do so we weren't going to get bogged down in small

¹ Stephanie Riger, "Challenges of Success: Stages of Growth in Feminist Organizations," *Feminist Studies* 20, no.2 (Summer 1994): 275-300.

things like a name, a logo, a colour scheme, we were going to find something and if it wasn't perfect, we'd work with it, but it was going to get done.

The central concerns at this point in an organization's development are obtaining resources, legitimacy, and a niche for the organization's product or services.² Once chapter leaders decided to leave WGI, there was a whirlwind of activity. Evans remembers it thus:

The distance between what we were and what [WGI] were was just increasing. And so, in June of this year [2000], a whole bunch of us, about forty-seven chapter leaders from around the world... critical mass developed somehow, and we all got on this mailing list... and it evolved into what is now DigitalEve, and that was a really, it was just one of the most exciting things I've ever been involved in in my life, it was just amazing, y'know, people from all over the planet who've got these common objectives and obviously are involved in this organization because they believe that the organization upholds those objectives, and have been severely disillusioned by that, and decided to create something positive out of it, and it was just amazing.

Once the dust settled from the initial storm of activity, eight women were left to push the DigitalEve initiative through, and it was these women—May Chong, Diane Darling, Jennifer Evans, Anna Gonowon, Judy Hawkins, Dana Jones, Ann Baker, and May Leong—who developed and formalized the structure of DEI as it presently stands. Despite differences in theoretical stance, experience, interests, and strategic approaches, these DEI founders managed to build an enormous infrastructure swiftly and thoughtfully. This process of DEI's development will be explored further below.

Given the pre-existing structure which WGI provided, loose as it was, the collectivity and formalization stages which Riger cites ended up blurring into one another. Because there was some pre-existing infrastructure at the local level of chapters, DEI founders were able to utilize this to further formalize their operations, as well as

build new layers of structure on the existing foundations. Although, according to Riger, many women's groups lose their spontaneous, ad hoc feel as a result of this increased bureaucratization, many WGI (and eventually DEI) members had requested more transparent, accountable structures, particularly around things like leadership selection. The new, more extensively formalized DEI policies and procedural guidelines would, it was hoped, address these needs. The test of these guidelines in Toronto was to be the election of an Executive Director and Board of Directors, and I discuss this process below. On the other hand, as a result of the email list partitioning into special interest groups (SIGs) to address topics such as marketing, careers, and specific technical topics, and the somewhat rigid monitoring of this structure, many members felt that the group had strayed too far from its initial communally inclusive feel. As a result, some suggested, the group no longer had anything to offer them. These sentiments continued to circulate and periodically re-emerge. The latest instance of this type of discourse occurred in a list discussion of June 2001, and members posted emails such as:

This is not the list it was when I first joined, it's narrowed its scope of reference and a lot of the ladies who were the real gurus on the list have left. I'm not learning nearly as much as I used to from this list, nor am I contributing as much as I once did... this list no longer has the sense of community that it once did. [June 16, 2001]

Maybe we, as an organization, need to look at the list issue again. Perhaps we all don't feel entirely comfortable with the, in my opinion, somewhat patriarchal model of splitting all discussions by topic: tech-only here, career-only there, chit-chat over there. Perhaps our membership requires a more organic and inclusive approach? [June 17, 2001]

This formalization stage, then, would prove to be an ongoing challenge for the fledgling organization. One of DEI's central challenges was retaining the sense of community

² *Ibid.*, 279.

which was felt with the original WG, but managing the often cumbersome membership base.

Outside of the membership list, most media response to the shift from WGI to DEI was positive. However, some sources suggested that this change was representative of the fact that women's groups were unable to play nice and present a coherent, united front. The online magazine Salon suggested in its article "Who Are You Calling 'Sister'?" that Digital Eve was "poaching Webgrrls' members, chapter by chapter."³ Sherman was said to be personally hurt that Digital Eve "is literally being built on the Webgrrls membership, as opposed to people just coming from Webgrrls."⁴ The article continued on to ruminate over women workers and organization in general:

Women who have become savvy professionals in the high-tech world tend to be both ardently competitive and well-versed in marketing tactics—including the practice of promoting one's product by casting aspersions on others'... And yet, in the name of feminism and sisterly love and the betterment of womankind, these women still really want the other women to like them; they hold steadfast to the notion of common ground. So with the same voice they criticize the women they disagree with, they simultaneously reach out and ask for forgiveness and friendship.⁵

In another article which appeared in the Ottawa Citizen, the same theme was evident: "Sadly, the battles over Webgrrls are characteristic of the kind of in-fighting that has plagued women's movements—online and off—for years. For some reason, sisterhood is too often tempered with a destructive competitiveness."⁶ When the latter article was posted to the DigitalEve list, one member fired back a salvo:

³ Janelle Brown, "Who Are You Calling 'Sister'?", Salon December 21, 2000.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Janelle Brown and Paula McCooey, "A Split in the Sisterhood," Ottawa Citizen April 9, 2001.

...what it all boils down to, according to the writers, is a bitchy catfight. You'd think people would get tired of describing any dissent within women's groups as "destructive competitiveness". How 'bout "a re-evaluation of direction" or "a difference in goals"? How come when male-directed groups have a difference of opinion it's a difference of opinion, but when women-directed groups do, it's "in-fighting" with "chaos and bitter break-ups"? Grrr, it annoys me when writers load their stories with all that undercut-the-feminist-movement-because-those-silly-chicks-don't-know-what-they're-doing-anyway freight left over from the sixties. Seems to me that those kind of patronizing, insidious, and in this case, inaccurate, descriptions are far more harmful than the disagreements the writers purport to be reporting.[April 9, 2001]

From this exchange, we can see a number of the themes and issues discussed in the previous chapters emerging in the discourse around the shift from Webgrrls to Digital Eve. Gender factors significantly into much of the representation, as do economic, strategic, and structural concerns.

In this chapter I will explore the process of Webgrrls International (WGI) becoming Digital Eve International (DEI), and Toronto Webgrrls (TWG) becoming Digital Eve Toronto (DET). Often, it is precisely at a point of crisis and/or change when the values, structure, and strategy of an organization become clarified; the organization tends to either dissolve altogether, split off into various factions, or transform itself into a new organization. It remains to be seen which path DEI and DET will take in the long term, although the evidence is strong that given the choices of its founders in terms of focus and galvanization of mandate, development of structure, and careful choice of strategy, the organization will continue to grow and serve the many of the needs of its members.

The process of change

Unlike many other women's groups, DEI developed its values and structure in a unique way. Although its roots in a small band of New York women were ad hoc, grassroots, and informal, the explosion of membership which resulted in thousands of members scattered across the globe meant that this type of organization had to be swiftly re-evaluated. Since almost no grassroots women's groups could boast of this membership size and scope, they provided few useful models for the founders to use. However, the founders examined organizations with which they were familiar, such as the existing Toronto Webgrrls and Women in Trades and Technology (WITT), and then extracted the elements which they found useful. Armed with both industry and community research, DEI founders were ready to proceed to the development of their own organization. In a single marathon weekend in February 2001, the eight women created the DEI structure and mandate.

As a result of the process of formation, as well as the socioeconomic positioning of its founders, the development of DEI had a number of features which were somewhat unusual in the context of grassroots women's organizing. The first unique aspect of DEI's development relative to other women's groups was its relationship to corporate associations, especially funding bodies. As discussed in previous chapters, women's organizations often have a fraught relationship with funding bodies, tending to rely on them for survival, but also resenting their presence when the funding body sets the agenda for the group. In addition, the vast majority of grassroots women's groups relied on small amounts of state funding. DEI, in contrast, had bigger fish to fry, and in a

different pan altogether. Building on the experience of its founders as professional workers in the private sector, DEI decided to go after large-scale corporate sponsorship, often in the realm of tens of thousands of dollars, as part of its core funding. Armed with incisively accurate industry research, derived from years of working in the corporate sector, as well as a good dose of entrepreneurial chutzpah, they targeted large high-tech companies as major funding sources. This sort of funding model was largely unprecedented in grassroots women's organizing; traditionally many women's organizations either did not consider corporate sponsorship or actively resisted it. Erosion of opportunities for state funding combined with the ongoing challenge of service provision to meet diverse needs results in nonprofit organizations looking increasingly at private sector sponsorship.⁷ While there are many excellent reasons for avoiding corporate sponsorship (which I have mentioned in earlier chapters), DEI's choice to be funded by corporations resulted in a bigger budget than most women's organizations could ever dream of.

As an academic whose experience had been only in state- or self-funded, smaller women's groups, I was initially hesitant to view this style of funding as a positive development. My main concern was that DEI would be unable to be a critical voice for women's work and technology advocacy, and this hesitation continues to inform my theoretical stance. However, my reluctance has been tempered by the observation of potential advantages which this kind of funding choice allows. Moreover, I was

⁷ As Abramovitz notes, "With increased competition for resources (money, volunteers, contributions of goods and services, etc.) come inventions of sophisticated responses." Albert J. Abramovitz, "Key Trends in Nonprofit Management," Structure of Nonprofit Management: A Casebook ed. Pranab Chatterjee and Albert Abramovitz (Maryland: University Press of America, 1993), 266.

concerned that the choice of some chapters to charge membership dues as well as allowing corporate sponsorship would perhaps render participation inaccessible to some women with lower incomes, or from particular demographic groups (the Toronto chapter remains free). Finally, of particular interest to me (although somewhat tangential to this thesis which is focused on Toronto) was the fact that in the United States, incorporation as a non-profit meant that American DigitalEve chapters were legally required to allow men in their membership. I will discuss the results of this funding for DEI structure and labour below.

The second unique aspect of DEI's formation was its speed. Unlike many groups who developed their structure over a long period of debate and discussion, DEI's founders met and completed their work over three days. While the groundwork for this process had been laid over several months of email and long-distance phone discussion, the formalization of values and structure took place around a dining room table in Waterloo, over a long weekend in February 2001. This speed was necessary for a couple of reasons: the split from WGI meant that the founders of DEI needed to put something else in place swiftly; and the size of the membership meant that ad hoc structure would simply not work. The Toronto leaders had anticipated possible problems in 1998, and had begun initiating some backup plans such as domain name registration. A former SC member recalled the early anticipation of problems in TWG, a few years before the actual move to DET.

Certainly I think that [this issue] has been around, and the fact that the Toronto chapter of WebGrrls has been one of the most progressive of all of them, maybe that's why the problems have come to fore much more quickly... The director at that time, and others who were in touch with chapter heads, they could already see this happening... just

because of our position and some of the things we were trying to do, like find sponsorship for certain events and things like that, because we were trying to do these things and... we were running into this wall from WebGrrls Internationals, saying this is really not policy, you can't collect money for yourselves, it has to go through head office, we'll pay it out to you, and certainly I guess, as time went by it was getting harder and harder for people to deal with. I could totally see that this would happen.[S24]

However it was not until June of 2000 that over forty chapter leaders came together to discuss forming a new organization. In October 2000, DEI was officially launched with prepared media fanfare, and in February 2001, the entire infrastructure from mandate to budget to projected membership was established.

The third notable feature of DEI's development was the process of developing values. Instead of allowing the values to "fall out" informally, or situating the values in an ideological vision, DEI used a corporate "vision statement" model to narrow down its objectives. Using the expertise of professional public relations people, the founders approached their value development as market research, conceiving of DEI as a branded product rather than an undifferentiated organization. Inherent to this kind of conception was not only the necessity of producing a bounded, focused mandate, but also considering how to represent and promote it. This required delineation of audience demographics (both desired and actual), production of a media package, and a good deal of insider PR and marketing savvy. Moreover, it required an organizational self-conception which established DEI as a product (perhaps, the more cynical would suggest, a commodity, although this dire view has not yet been substantiated).

The fourth, and perhaps the most significant feature of DEI's emergence was the sheer scale of operations. As I have mentioned, DEI boasted thousands of members, scattered in local chapters worldwide, and membership continues to explode. The

Toronto chapter alone, at time of writing, had over four thousand members, and there were nine chapters across Canada in major urban centres. Email communication meant that a group of this size could be informed, co-ordinated, and managed with relative ease. The budget for DEI was in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. This scale of operation is unprecedented for a grassroots women's organization.

In the rest of the chapter, I will explore the development of DEI from its origins as WGI, and how this development provides a model that challenges conventional norms of women's organizing, raises difficult questions of ideology and practice, and suggests new directions for future work.

Developing values

As previously mentioned, DEI's formalization of its values was an unusual process compared to other women's organizations. The development of "vision", "mission statement", and "target market" was executed as if DEI was a branded product or corporation. While this might appear to be a cold, calculating, and above all a corporate approach, thus far, this has proven to be an extremely perceptive strategic choice. It is essential for a new group to consider what service it provides, what needs it would like to fill, and what niche it should occupy.⁸ DEI's mandate has been palatable and appealing to diverse groups of women, largely due to careful consideration by its founders, and its focus on "doing" rather than "being". DEI's values are predicated on activity and action, rather than identity and ideology. This allows them to be extremely

⁸ As Riger argues.

focused in their membership appeal, while easily incorporating diversity and substantial variation. As Evans states:

...it's like the circles where the centre meets, and the one thing that draws everyone together is technology, you can [get] academics to professionals to everyone in between... I think that that's the thing, you can get people who are as dissimilar as you can possibly imagine, and they're there, just because they want to know how to write HTML, or what they need to do to get their company's website improved... It's amazing.

The diverse women of DEI are united through affinity, not identity. This "interest/action-focused" model has thus far been successful in attracting and retaining disparate populations of women.

Keeping this in mind, the founders turned to establishing their target audience. While there was some debate about the details of who they wanted their membership to be, there was consensus that both diversity and access were fundamental values. Several of the women emphasized that the group should be appealing to women with varying levels of experience in the high-tech field, and that while technology workers would be the main focus, women need only have an interest in technology—personal, political, and/or professional—to be part of the organization. "Newbies" could be mentored by more experienced women, and outreach could involve girls who were thinking of technology careers or hobbies. Ultimately the organization would be a global one, united under a common mandate, with local needs served by individual chapters.

In keeping with DEI's preference for being action-based as opposed to identity-based, the DEI mission statement was couched in terms of what the organization hoped to accomplish. The DEI website states that the DEI mandate is to:

Empower members to become top-level leaders, professionals, role models and mentors in their fields

Build, on all levels, an effective networking resource including strong technology industry relationships

Include all women - of all races, ethnicities, economic levels, ages, abilities, and lifestyles - as participants in our community

Offer access to positive resources, valuable information, and a community-based network for women

Develop low-cost, readily accessible educational opportunities in digital technology

Encourage women and girls to pursue technology-related careers

Advocate that women have economic, social and cultural parity in the field of technology

Promote positive, balanced working conditions and lifestyles in the new media technology industry.⁹

This framing of the mandate in "to do" terms positions DEI's values strategically, and situates the organization as an entity geared towards activity. Each part of the mandate is accompanied by some kind of action-based commitment to ensure the realization of these values. For example, DEI builds effective networking resources in a few ways: through local e-mailing lists, through international e-mailing lists, through their local and international websites, and through local in-person meetings and events. Low-cost educational opportunities are provided through volunteer workshops and training sessions, such as HTML and computer networking courses, and facilitated with the participation of IT institutions, such as the Bell Centre for Creative Communication in Toronto.

⁹ <http://www.digitaleve.com/about/mission.html>

As part of a corporate-based approach to conceiving DEI as a branded product, founders also considered how to represent themselves, both to their staff and members and externally to sponsors, industry, media, and so forth. This anticipatory self-representation development process is another relatively unusual aspect of DEI, and it clearly derives from the corporate public relations expertise of many of the women. Consistent representation, they believed, "built the brand", and allowed them to assess their success, in part, by observing the degree of dispersal of their public identity. Conceiving of DEI in this fashion further allowed the founders to distill their mandate and simplify their self-representation to increase appeal, marketability, and recognition across diverse audiences. It also allowed the organization to pre-empt appropriation of their message and mandate by other bodies, since women's groups are often prone to suffering bad (or absent) coverage. In general terms, these kinds of media- and PR-savvy choices accorded DEI a measure of representational autonomy; in essence these actions indicated that they were in charge of their public persona and would manipulate it as they chose. While "branding" and "messaging" did not always result in member endorsement, as we will see (indeed, many members rejected Digital Eve outright) , it nevertheless produced an image of a cohesive, self-determined, self-managed entity which was both consistent and responsive to a variety of demands.

However, some of these choices, though strategically savvy, reflected some degree of ideological tension. Despite their avowed mandate of promoting women's contributions in tech work, and ensuring sponsors were supportive of women and DEI "core values", founders were concerned that the media not represent them as feminists, or

"bra burners". Accessibility was a key public value, as was diversity, but DEI also wished to be affiliated with "well-connected" parties and sponsors. Sponsors would be encouraged to "mine" or "leverage" the membership base for projects such as market research. The greatest thematic tension occurred between the outreach/mentorship mandate (grounded in an activist, community-oriented stance), and the career advancement/networking mandate (grounded in a corporate, industry-oriented stance). However this latter dyad appears to be reconciled in DEI's day-to-day operations. DEI, as an organization, appears to situate these two apparently competing goals along a continuum of involvement in women's IT work, and recognize their interconnections. The young women and girls who develop skills through the outreach program may go on to a higher-status, higher-paid job as a result of this earlier support, training, and encouragement. Or, women working in high-end IT jobs may find personal and political fulfillment in mentoring a variety of other women; they may also be able to include their nonprofit work in their resume. In practical terms, DEI has simply divided each focus into different "departments" of the Steering Committee.

Structurally, the founders emphasized their commitment to developing a comprehensive infrastructure (such as bylaws, chapter handbooks, an advisory board, and a board of directors), maintaining quality programs, and having a transparent (if hierarchical) process. The attention to infrastructure is of particular interest, as it is both anticipatory of future demands, and a comprehensive response to current concerns. In the next section, I will examine the often challenging process of developing a structure, both international and local.

Developing structure

The original Webgrrls structure, as previously discussed, had been a top-down, centralized management structure. Funds flowed through the central for-profit New York body, which was governed by a single executive director. There was minimal financial autonomy for chapters: chapters were required to give whatever funds they generated through sponsorships, events, et cetera, to WGI, and then request the money from WGI to cover their expenses. Local chapters were not permitted to have their own bank accounts; rather they wrote cheques to WGI and then petitioned to obtain necessary funds. While volunteer labour was used, WGI was for-profit, and prior to the shift to DEI, had distributed a licensing agreement requiring chapters to charge membership dues of sixty U.S. dollars. However, despite this centralized financial control, chapters were largely left adrift to generate their own infrastructure, programs, and services. Support and resources were absent. In essence, chapters were getting nothing for their money besides permission to use the WGI name. Shortly before the transition to DigitalEve, Evans noted about the Toronto Webgrrls:

It's hard to say what the original Webgrrls is, because every chapter is completely different... There's nothing saying that to be a chapter you have to do these things. Because we are so huge and we have so many events and programs and everything, we've kind of written our own blueprint, we've developed it as we've gone along... that's been part of our challenge. There is nothing—we're creating from scratch because there wasn't really anything else to do. All the programs we have were started in Toronto, all of them.

Despite its ostensible commitment to being an international organization, WGI provided no infrastructure for developing chapters besides a dictum of centralized management of finances. Indeed, little was international about WGI save the name, as chapters were not "officially" allowed to have autonomy (although they were forced to develop their own

structure and programs in the absence of support from the central WGI body). Evans recalls the growing concerns of many chapter leaders with meeting the needs of their members :

[Kennedy] was totally anti the idea of any national body in Canada. He said your members are not members of chapters, they're members of Webgrrls International, and there's no place for a national body in all of this, which was kind of strange for me, because I think the needs of Canadian women are going to be quite a bit different from the needs of Japanese women, and Austrian women, and American women, but he didn't seem to think that had any validity at all.

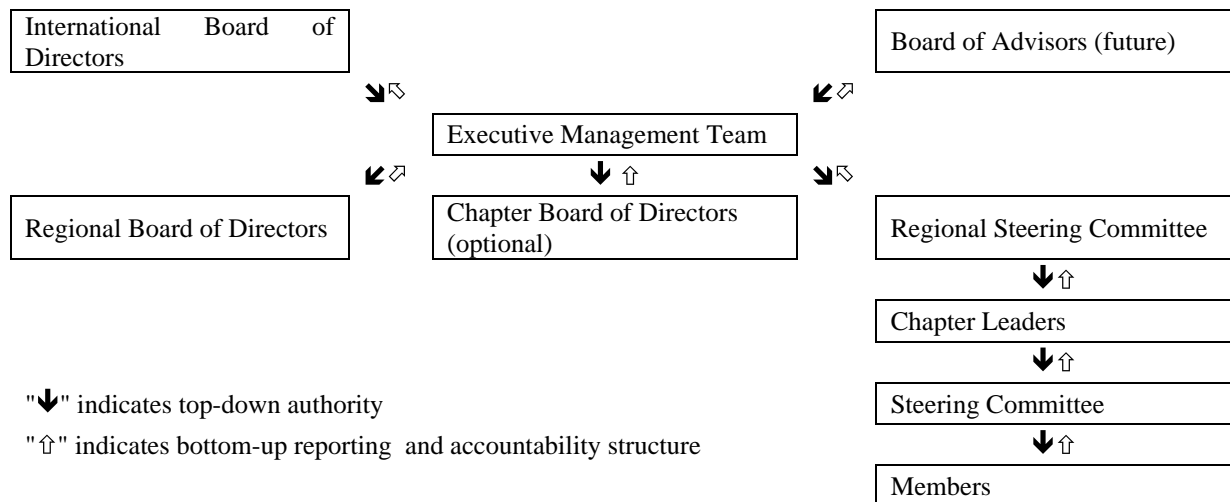
With the growing membership across North America and the beginnings of penetration into Europe, many chapter leaders became interested in developing a structure that would both meet local needs as well as provide support on a global level. Once the initial enthusiasm had faded, the banal and often difficult questions of structure challenged the founders to develop an organizational framework which addressed the concerns of WGI, and which laid a comprehensive groundwork for anticipating future initiatives, but which also allowed for change over time. As Evans recalls:

It wasn't all sunshine and roses... we had some really serious discussions around structure, because structure was one of the things that people felt had quote, unquote, fatally flawed Webgrrls, a lack of structure at the inception, so it was really important that we put something in place that was clear, was understood, and everyone knew how it worked, and agreed with it. So there were some... we were talking about sponsors, and people were like, you can't do that yet, you've got to make sure you have your structure in place, otherwise you're misrepresenting yourselves. And that's what we did, we took a step back in mid-July after the initial euphoria wore off. And took a really hard look at what we were doing and how we were going to do it, so I hope we anticipated some of these issues, I mean you can't anticipate everything but... I think that some of the issues we're going to confront down the road are just going to be the evolving nature of the industry itself, you can never really anticipate what's going to happen, I mean maybe the web's going to be obsolete in five years, and I hope that we're building an adaptive organization that's going to change with the times, but you can't always guarantee that, but I think there's some longevity here.

The new DEI structure, developed with the concerns about WGI in mind, was to be a combination of global focus and regional autonomy, top-down strategy combined with bottom-up communication and collaboration. It was both officially and pragmatically international, with limits on the number of U.S. leaders in positions of authority.

Figure 9.1 (below) illustrates the new DEI structure as established in February 2001 by the eight founders.

Fig. 9.1 Structure of DEI, February 2001



The top level, the International Board of Directors (IBOD), is composed of seven people, four of whom are outside the organization, and three of whom are leaders from within DEI. The IBOD was seen to be composed of "high profile" participants, who would be responsible for advising and approving initiatives, fundraising and fiscal responsibility, long-range strategy and planning, hiring upper-level staff, presenting the "public face" of the organization at the upper levels, and serving as a resource for professional service. The Board of Advisors, which does not exist as of yet, but which

will emerge when the organization expand substantially, will have no voting power but will advise on matters of policy. The Executive Management Team (EMT), which reports to the IBOD, is responsible for the execution of large-scale strategy, policy, and supervision of regional operations. The EMT would provide the liaison between regional and international governing bodies, and address the day-to-day concerns of the organization. Here would be found the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), Chief Operating Officer (COO), the Chief Technology Officer (CTO), and the VPs of communications and marketing, business development, sales, and human resources.

Each region (determined by size of membership as well as geographic location) has a Board of Directors (RBOD) as well as a Steering Committee (RSC). At time of inception in February 2001, regions were required to have a minimum of six chapters, approximately five thousand members, to qualify for regional status. There were seven regions established, with three sub-regions: Europe, Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Canada, South America, Africa, and the U.S. (which was subdivided into eastern, western, and central regions). RBODs and RSCs would be responsible for managing chapters and regional growth, dealing with regional legal and financial matters, recruiting chapters within their region, providing administrative communication between local chapters and the EMT, and ensuring that chapters complied with guidelines and regulations, as established by the EMT.

At the local chapter level, chapters are governed both by an optional chapter Board of Directors (CBOD), which reports to the RBOD, as well as individual chapter leaders (CLs), who report to the RSC. CLs work with local Steering Committees (SCs),

composed of volunteers from the chapter, to do local fundraising, execute local events, initiatives, and programs, ensure compliance with DEI policies, manage the local lists, and ensure fiscal responsibility. Originally in WGI, SC members had only a few tasks allocated, and a relatively loose structure as a result. At present, because of the size of the Toronto SC, it has been further broken down as follows in Figure 9.2 and 9.3 (p. 369).

Fig. 9.2 Structure of local chapters

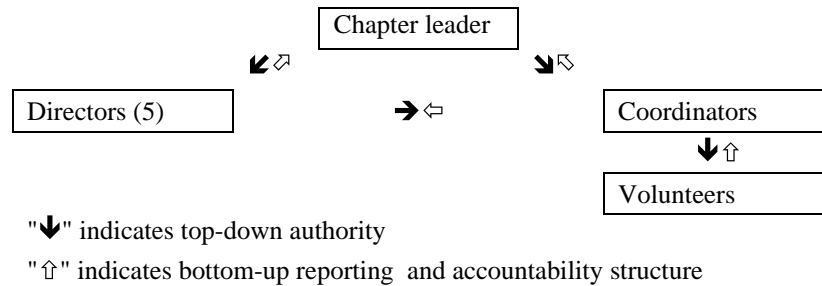
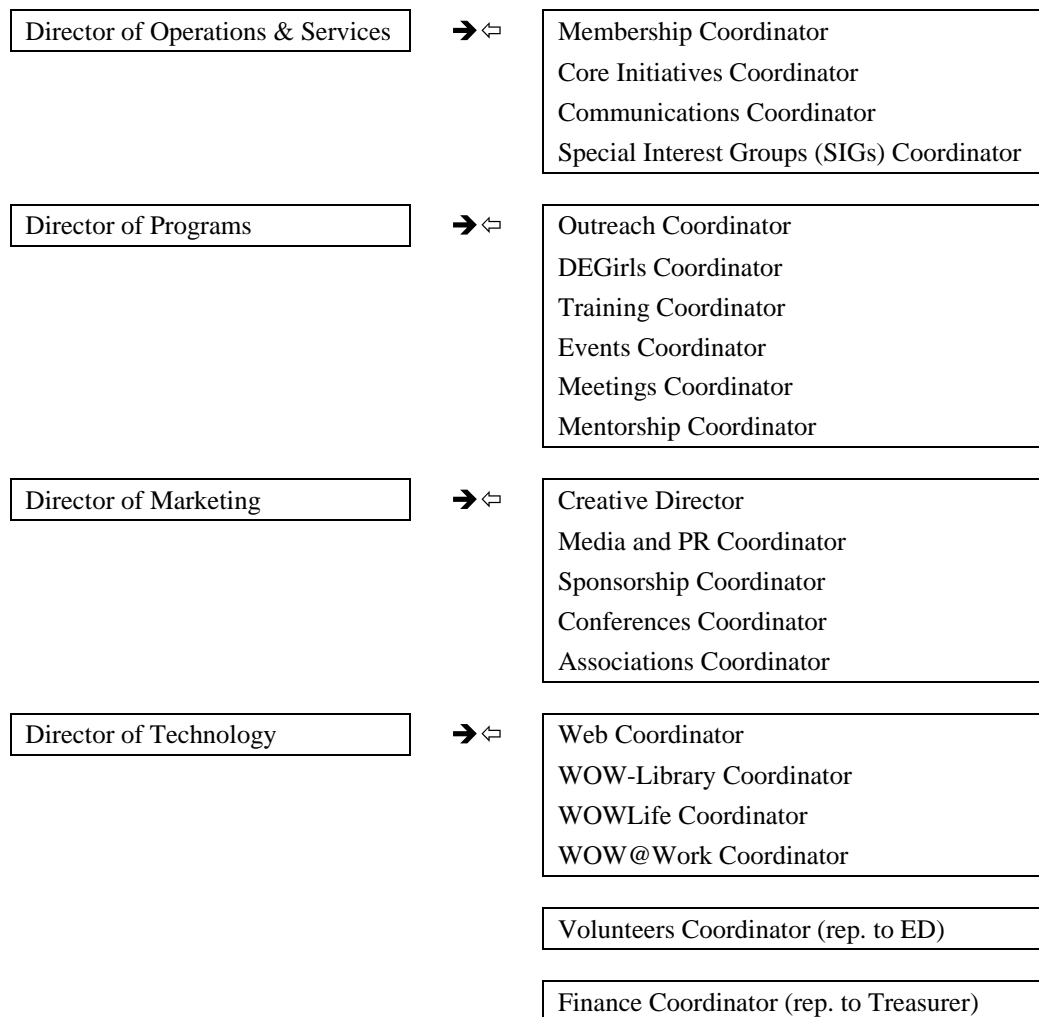


Fig. 9.3 Reporting structure and position allocation of Toronto SC as of June 2001



The debate around democracy

The shift in the Toronto chapter from TWG to DET provided material for member debate for several months. One of the primary member concerns was the accountability of the Toronto SC, and the ensuing debate revealed many of the central themes which I have already discussed around women's organizing.

The issue of DigitalEve's name was initially a surprising point of contention, but interviews and list postings revealed familiar tropes in the discourse. Again, women's organizations had to labour for legitimacy and a space of their own. Digitaleve.com was one of the few domains that was not already taken up by a pornography site (as, for example, had happened to webgirls.com). Many members did not feel that DigitalEve represented them or their concerns appropriately. They felt that the metaphor of "Eve", when interpreted in the Judeo-Christian Biblical sense (as opposed to "eve" as a shorthand for "evening"), ranged from inaccurate to offensive. "It's not an image of strength", said one woman. "If they'd picked Lillith I might change my mind", agreed another.¹⁰ [S28] A woman who had immigrated to Canada from India meditated on the symbolic associations of Judeo-Christian figures compared to those from Indian literature.

[In] Indian mythology, you do have many words which represent women or femininity, and in a very positive way. Like Durga evokes strength or the victory of good over evil. There are a couple of others, but I can't think of any words in the English language which say "woman" and then say it in a positive way.[S39]

¹⁰ Lillith, according to Jewish and Gnostic lore, was the first wife of Adam, who left Adam and was eventually punished by God for not submitting to Adam's authority. Eventually Lilith's name became synonymous with a demon or evil female entity.

And one respondent had a comment on the metaphoric associations of the word "digital" which is particularly interesting given the issues around women's technology use which I raised in previous chapters.

"Digital" annoys me because it implies one or zero, and all my work is in the gray area in between those two things. I don't like "digital" as a model; I think it's misleading and inaccurate. The binariness of things is not really the way it goes... My work is so analog. I work with technology, but I also work with people, and my job, essentially, is to make the technology work in a way that the people want, I don't want to be focused on the technology, it's a tool for the people. So the "digital", putting the emphasis on the cut and dried, on the ones and zeros, is something that I really don't like. [S28]

For this woman, the lack of representation was twofold: not only did she object to "Eve" but also the metaphoric implics of "Digital".

Other respondents were not worried as much about the symbolic connotations of the name as they were about the "brand recognition" of Toronto WebGrrls versus DigitalEve. The following quote is from a woman who worked in marketing.

I understand the business reasons of why they did it, or the political reasons. I think that thing that has hurt them the most, or could potentially hurt them, I'm not as close to them as I used to be. WebGrrls had a really strong brand name. Now with Digital Eve, is anyone going to make that association... [DET has to] relaunch themselves with this new brand name, and I think they've underestimated how much time, money, and education is gonna be involved to get people to start thinking that Webgrrls is now Digital Eve... and I've seen them change their colours and their fonts and all that, over the years, and maybe it's just cause of my background in [marketing], when you're a company, you have a set look, you have a certain brand, and that brand takes an identity. And you just don't change it because this colour is popular this year. I find that they've flipped all around. And your logo, and your colours and that is part of your identity, and people will recognize that in everything that you do. And if you start changing that, then you lose equity, you jeopardize the brand identity that you've built up in that name and that logo...[S25]

It was interesting to observe how each member filtered their evaluation of the DigitalEve name and organizational shift through their own experiential concerns. The above quote illustrates the central concerns and ideological stance of someone who is immersed in a

marketing career, while the preceding quote about the word "digital" reflected the stance of someone who was interested in improving the often messy relationship between IT and users, and who did not view her work in terms of binary categories. The needs, experiences, and workplace positioning of the respondents were often clearly evident in the perspective they expressed about the organization.

Evans also noted that some members did not feel that they were represented by the original Webgrrls name either: "It's not like Webgrrls was a name people were particularly happy with. People were saying 'I'm not a girl, that's not me, I'm forty, I have two kids, that sort of thing.'" Thus, deliberations around the name of the group were surprisingly significant and reflected many ongoing concerns, both about constituency and self-representation.

Despite grumblings about the name, the most significant member concern was the democratic process (and the perception of democracy) in the selection of the SC and most importantly, the Executive Director (ED). When Jennifer Evans departed from the post of Digital Eve/Webgrrls ED to lead DigitalEve Canada, she was replaced by an interim director, Christine Pilkington. This replacement in late 2000, coming as it did on the heels of the Webgrrls to DigitalEve transformation, generated some dissent in the membership ranks about the process.

One of the central intragroup challenges with this process was the relationship between the SC and DigitalEve members. As we saw in Chapter Four with the literature on power, authority, and leadership, there are often conflicts which arise from the negotiation of these dynamics. Some members felt that the initial DigitalEve move had

been implemented somewhat autocratically, and the resulting leadership structure would merely recapitulate this oligarchic control if members did not intervene. The discussion around DigitalEve exposed several of the concerns that some members (and former SC members) had had about the SC and leadership of the organization. One respondent proposed, somewhat warily, that although the members of the current SC were all "great people", the relatively loose and unaccountable structure of the SC made it possible for there to be corruption. As we saw in the literature on feminist organizing, wherein procedural issues could become personal issues, this respondent's wariness was derived from her apprehension of SC members taking offense at her critique, and perceiving her feedback as "saying the Steering Committee sucks [or] individual insults against them."

[S37]

Ruminating on member perception of the SC, one former SC member said that she could see how members might feel isolated from the governance of their organization. In future, she felt, the SC would benefit from increased self-reflexivity.

...We never sat and analyzed, what did we do great, what do we need to do better for next time, and that was always a [problem with] the Steering Committee, that we never wanted to do that. And I think that's how you make a better organization. I don't think they talk to the people enough, the members enough. The Steering Committee was always viewed as very cliquy. And whether it was meetings or events, they always sat together. And it's kinda like the untouchables. And they need to get over that. They need a stronger connection to their members. I think it's an us versus them type of thing right now, and they need a stronger connection. As much as the Steering Committee has the passion for, we do this for our members and blah blah blah, it doesn't come across that way, by the members. And one of the things we always talked about is we need like, membership needs their own person, to be concerned about the members...[S25]

Another respondent concurred with the negative perception that the SC was "an extremely political little environment".[S14]

A SC member countered this viewpoint with her own, more positive experience of being involved in the group.

I don't think there is a perfect organization... especially with such a large Steering Committee, it's interesting to see who are the ones who that control. But I have to say it's much more enjoyable to sit with a bunch of women in a room as opposed to a male-run, or a lot of men on the meeting, because there is still a lot of camaraderie, openness, oh, so-and-so wants to say something, there is that. It's just the same people are the ones who are always talking and the same ones who are quiet are the ones who are quiet...[S43]

For this respondent, many of the member concerns were explicitly linked to the sheer size of the organization. Although she was optimistic, she felt that it would indeed be an ongoing struggle for the organization to balance informal and formal structures of power.

Other members were less critical of the SC, and happy to allow the SC to make important decisions. Some respondents simply took a "wait and see" attitude, which was generally positive but also anticipatory. Either they hoped TWG's problems would be solved with the switch to DET, or they hoped DET would continue to offer the same benefits for them as TWG had. Many felt that the leadership of TWG and DET had acted in an appropriate capacity to make the best decision for the organization. As far as they were concerned, "If [the decision is] better for the organization, that's fine." [S29] For these members, pragmatic concerns outweighed ideological concerns, and they tended to be dismissive of other members' complaints around process. "Personally I think there's nothing more annoying than people squawking about it", said one woman, "What's done is done. I trusted the Steering Committee that they were doing what they needed to do on behalf of the women. How do you get a vote from twenty-five hundred people? It's impossible." [S26] Women who knew more about the internal process of shifting to DigitalEve understood the delicate legal issues behind the group's transformation. To

them, "it seemed like more of a name change than any real change in direction, motivation, or directive of the list, the ideology of the list." [S48] A few members even praised the process for its visionary potential.

I really applaud everyone, especially Jennifer Evans, who took things into their own hands to really get it going. It's a huge job just to be on the Steering Committee running stuff for the organization, to go above and beyond even that, to strategize and see the big picture, and have the courage and the time and the will to take it in a new direction is really amazing. I'm not saying it's *perfect*, but as far as its philosophy and its mandate, I think they're still right on.[S24]

The issue of democracy was a common theme in the respondents' answers. Many were concerned about an apparent lack of democracy in the process of switching to DE, although several were quite diplomatic about their recognition of the organization's procedural constraints. One respondent stressed that democracy, while an important goal, could often prevent an organization from engaging in positive, fruitful action. She compared the shift from Webgrrls to DigitalEve to another group with which she had been involved.

It's a perfectly normal stage for groups to go through... What happened to [another group I was involved in] was it ran up with well, who's a member, and who's not, and how do you vote, and how do you not, how do you make decisions, and you need to have this long process every time you do something. You stop doing things, and you become very internally focused. It all becomes sort of navel gazing... they ended up with such a lot of committee structures and voting and concerns about democratic process that very little got done. And last I checked you can't even find their website any more. Democracy is great, but sometimes you just need a group to say this is where we should go. As long as it keeps on going. If you end up with just democracy and no action, that's less effective than disagreeing with some of the steering committee's decisions. I don't have to do anything they tell me to, so I don't need much say...[S28]

Evans concurred with this statement about democracy: "Opening these issues to the entire membership at the start would have mired this particular process, thus halting the entire organization."

SC volunteers, while receptive to member feedback, often felt personally affronted by the insinuation that they were being less than professional about their motives and operations. They felt frustrated by members who produced negative feedback without suggesting strategies and/or concrete actions to address the problems. One woman noted: "I heard a lot of complaints, talking to people who won't say them to the Steering Committee... people bitch and complain but nobody volunteers." [S37] Another member of the SC expressed her annoyance with complaints that were not grounded in action:

A lot of people who have strong opinions don't participate on any level... [Complaining is] harder to swallow than someone who wants to pitch in... [If] you don't like it, okay, come in and help us fix it. Because just criticizing isn't really enough. Come and help us find a solution...[S12]

After extensive (if delayed) member criticism of the move to DE on the email list, Evans, wrote a lengthy post to the DE list, in an attempt to assuage some member concerns:

Based on our collective experience within this community, with one another, and through our experiences as members, the Steering Committee made a decision based on the knowledge of how we, as a community, exist. Yes, the Steering Committee chose a course, but that course was chosen based on information, our community's objectives, and our community's ideals. The course was not chosen based on a desire for personal gain or hubris. The priority here is, and always will be, our community and the needs of the members. Leadership involves two things: guidance, when appropriate, and making difficult decisions when major issues are at stake, such as identity and future of the organization.[October 28, 2000]

Evans' articulation of the tensions inherent to leadership is evocative of the issues around power which I have raised in previous sections. The SC continues to struggle with member perceptions of informal power dynamics which may or may not be accurate, and to navigate a course between effective governance and member engagement.

SC members also felt frustrated at the apparent lack of feedback to the initial announcement to the shift in the organization. As Evans wrote:

We sent the original posts [about DET] so that there would be some discussion on the lists. To our surprise, there was none. Not one post! This on a list where posting around—oh, let's say fairly minute issues have gone on for weeks and weeks. And on such a major issue in our organization's history, nothing. We were pretty taken aback. [October 22, 2000]

Members of the SC conveyed their confusion about the lack of reaction, particularly given the feedback from other chapters who had also converted to DE; however they also acknowledged that the SC was often working with a difficult audience. In an interview, a member said that the reason for her own silence around the matter was simply her assumption that fundamental organizational changes would not take place despite the name change. Many respondents expressed similar sentiments. While lack of member participation may have mildly irked them, and they would like to have increased opportunities to participate in running the organization, they were mainly concerned with DET remaining the same as TWG. Most were also pleased that the organization had rejected a for-profit mandate in favour of free membership and non profit status.

Despite the perception of some members that the SC was a common voting bloc, a few SC members expressed their own hesitation with the shift to DE. While in general they supported the objectives of the change, they were a bit hesitant about the process of its execution. Familiar concerns and tensions about governance, power, and leadership are evident in their quotes. "I didn't feel it was the most democratic way to go and change our entire organization," said one SC member, "[but] it was probably the only alternative... It was the quickest and easiest way for us to transfer without losing time,

[or] losing our members..."[S43] Another SC member pointed out what she felt was a peculiarly contradictory process of public debate.

The decision got made somewhere at such a global level, local people didn't have much of an input into it. But when we disclosed it to the membership, we were pretending to ask for input and then we didn't take it. So we got a lot of criticism for that. Like, why are you pretending to ask us for our input, when you've already gone and done it, sort of thing... All these decisions get made, and there's this big public forum where they ask for input and don't take it...[S39]

This respondent indicated the tension between *actual* input and *perceived* input which she felt was part of the process. This perspective also highlights the problem of developing meaningful and useful forms of debate and member participation in an organization. In this respondent's view, members were less outraged at the autocratic workings of the SC and more perturbed by what they saw as a façade of member input. A third SC member concurred with this tension.

I'm not a troublemaker, it's just that if I've been brought into the position for people to ask my opinion, then why is my opinion not going to be asked? What is the point of not asking me? And I do believe there's quite a few Steering Committee members who do sit there quietly, for whatever reason, they're very nice people, but they won't come out and say things, and I figure that's not right... It isn't a mob mentality, but a follow the leader mentality... [S43]

The above respondent was clear that—the reader will pardon my parody of a pop cultural expression—bad governance can happen to good people. In other words, despite the probable good intentions of the SC members (which she was careful to point out), informal structures of power and/or the desire to go along with the majority (or not to be a "troublemaker") could present obstacles to truly democratic debate and decision making.

Some of the more vocal DET members, in conjunction with some members of the SC, initiated an ad hoc committee to explore the issues raised, address concerns around democratic process, transparency, and accountability of leadership, and make policy recommendations to the SC. Calling themselves the DEVotees, after the central concern of the vote for ED and Board of Directors, they organized several meetings, and identified their primary objectives as the establishment of an election process, as well as determining membership needs around such things as bylaws and SC hiring. The voice of the membership was seen as very important to DEVotees, who felt that the structure and operation of DigitalEve should reflect this voice. The choice of the members was viewed as being more significant than a given structure per se. As one woman said, "If [the members] all got together and said we choose an organization based on dictatorship, then hallelujah. As long as they get to say what structure they want to be governed by." [S37] Another woman stated, "[We need] transparency, so we can see what they're doing... it's good if people who want to can go to the meetings, and see how the decisions were made..."[S28]

To investigate this membership perspective, the DEVotees drafted and distributed an online survey (see Appendix B for full survey data). The results were relatively positive. Overall, almost half indicated that they were generally happy with the organization as it stood, with only 18% of respondents expressing a distinct displeasure with the current state of affairs. More than half agreed that they had a good understanding of how the organization was run, and that if they had concerns, they would know where to direct those concerns (54% and 61% respectively). Members did express a desire to

know more about the organization, with three-quarters of respondents indicating that they agreed with the statement, "I would like to learn more about the decisions made by DigitalEve's Steering Committee." And half of the respondents said that they would like to participate in developing the DigitalEve charter and bylaws.

However, there was some equivocation about whether or not initiating elections would help or hinder DigitalEve as an organization. In response to the statement, "I feel that initiating elections would improve the DigitalEve organization", one-third of respondents agreed while the same amount disagreed (40% had no opinion). In response to the converse statement, "I feel that initiating elections would harm the DigitalEve organization", one-fifth of respondents agreed while over a third disagreed (here again 42% had no opinion). The more significant the level of power, the more likely respondents were to feel that a particular position should be voted in. The ED position was seen as most important to vote on, followed by SC executive, and finally the various SC members.

This last point was taken up by the SC, who suggested that members participate in the SC hiring process to increase transparency and accountability. As a result of this recommendation, in the spring of 2001, DET members were part of the hiring committee for new SC positions. Respondents indicated that this involvement would be a positive development for the organization in various ways. It would provide transparency and accountability, as well as increased possibilities for member involvement and participation.

They do have to set up committees, it sounds like there isn't the committee structure that should be [there]... so I would like to see it more spread out. It involves more grrls, to sit

here and say, I'm a new member, to go from posting to being on the Steering Committee, that's a drastic step. And you don't necessarily get to go from being where you are to the Steering Committee by just volunteering at a few trade shows or something like that. You really don't know the inner workings. And by having the committees and seeing how things work, and the dynamics of the people, you would get to know that better... It sounds like they do have job descriptions written, and that's a good idea, when they post they can have an idea of what they want. a lot of places lack that. but it needs to be expanded so that, okay, I can't be a webmaster but I know how to do something. As little as it is, I can be part of the big picture and just do that little thing.[S9]

Bearing out this perspective, the members who participated in the SC hiring process of spring 2001 felt that the experience had been a positive one, and they felt more empowered within the organization as a result of their involvement. They felt that the process had made the members of the SC more approachable, and put them on a peer-to-peer level with the other women.

I got to learn a lot more than I had expected. The [Executive] Director took the time to explain things... I got a clearer picture of the Steering Committee; they're just real people. I did get the feeling that they were taking me seriously when I was giving my comments. They were pretty friendly. I would feel comfortable enough to approach them in another meeting.[S3]

[The structure is] quite a bit more concrete now. It was very vague to me. I had no idea, I can now put names to faces, and I know that there's this body of women who meet, and it's much clearer to me what goes on. I didn't have much of a sense of what it was doing before, it was rather anonymous... Now I know who some of these people are.[S34]

This member involvement on a hiring committee appeared to be an effective compromise between direct election of SC members (which would be time-consuming and possibly ineffective due to lack of member interest in such a process) and "in-house" recruitment hiring done entirely by SC members. Moreover, this initiative had benefits for the members who participated as well as for general member perception of equity in organizational process.

The first AGM

On June 19, 2001, the first Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the history of the Toronto organization (either for DigitalEve or Webgrrls) was held. This represented, as many speakers that night emphasized, a turning point in the organization: no longer was the group an informally organized, ad hoc collection of female techies, but rather a formally structured, possibly financially viable, distinct legal entity. DET now had bylaws, formal job descriptions for each member of the SC, a clear chain of command, an official budget, a member-elected Board of Directors, and member input into SC hiring. The four newly elected Directors on the Board were a mix of activist and corporate-oriented women with experiences and interests that ranged from grassroots social justice organizing with a variety of non-profit and marginalized groups, to career-oriented networking and strategic alliances with private corporations. The women on the SC, some of whom were self-identifying as SC members in a public meeting for the first time, were diverse, with a range of experiences, age, backgrounds, and ideological perspectives. One-fifth of the SC were women of colour, with three of those women in significant leadership positions (Executive Director, Director of Operations and Services, and Director of Technology). The mood that night was one of subdued jubilation and vague relief. At last DET was building a solid foundation, with both accountability and visionary potential.

The voting process was executed swiftly and smoothly, by secret ballot. Roughly ten members participated in organizing the election process that evening and there was evident concern for proper procedure. While the ED position for Pilkington was

acclaimed, five candidates were on the ballot for four positions on the chapter Board of Directors (CBOD).

However, despite the flurry of activity around the governance process, few members besides those on the SC and BOD, and those volunteering to supervise the process, actually attended the AGM. This was an ironic footnote to the debate which had raged for nine months prior to this event. Member Nancy Frey wrote an annoyed letter to DET's online zine, WOWLife.

For me, the AGM was a real let-down. Of the 4000 reported members of the DE Toronto Chapter, only 48 showed up. Of these, 27 were members of the Steering Committee... and the five candidates for Director... That meant there were only 15 other members interested in the future of the Toronto chapter. Sad, isn't it? Like the SC, I had expected at least 10% of the membership, i.e. 400 people, to show. There were four volunteers doing registration, another four collecting ballots (I was one of them) and eight to tally the ballots. When I do the math on that, I realize that there were no members at large there at all!¹¹ And, in the end, it appears to me that while we have elected an Executive to approve what the Steering Committee is doing, on a day-to-day basis, we will still have the organization run by the same 27 people without much input from the members. Not because the members haven't been consulted, but because when a forum was given for them to be heard, they were silent.¹²

In the end, it seems, efforts around accountable structure have yet to have demonstrable effects on member participation. Given what has been discussed in this and previous chapters, the poor AGM turnout could have numerous causes.

First, most significantly for this study, could the lack of turnout be a result of the primarily virtual structure of the organization, which privileges online interaction at (possibly) the expense of face-to-face (F2F) meetings? Online member surveys tended to have a response which reflected approximately 10% of the membership base. In contrast,

¹¹ I was actually there and not volunteering, so perhaps Frey missed me in the count! I may have had the dubious distinction of being the only member present who did not volunteer.

many in-person meetings, including the AGM, were poorly attended (although others had very healthy turnouts). While it is tempting to consider this as a possibility, other forms of in-person interaction such as outreach, Career Days, and training sessions are usually completely full with waiting lists. Thus attributing the problem to a virtual organizational structure alone is too limited.

Second, in the sections on women's work, I discussed women's multiple commitments to paid and unpaid work. Several respondents, in interviews, indicated that they would have liked to attend meetings but could not because of domestic or paid labour responsibilities. Could DigitalEve improve this situation by, for example, offering childcare at meetings, or using the technology (such as online chat, webcast, etc.) to provide several ways of "attending"?

Third, many respondents also indicated their concern with economic accessibility. Quite a few member meetings required some kind of entry fee. This might have discouraged economically disadvantaged women from attending. However, as with training and Career Days, price appeared to be no object for the women who filled the classrooms. In addition, most member meetings operated with a sliding scale of fees, either pay-what-you-can or with a different rate for employed versus unemployed/senior/student.

Fourth, larger issues of the IT industry. Jennifer Evans, discussing the proposed structure of DET, noted that because DET drew its members from this population, in upcoming years the organization would have to reflect the changing needs of the IT

¹² Nancy Frey, letter, WOWLife, July/August 2001. <http://www.digitalevetoronto.com/wowlife/index.htm>

industry in general and women IT workers in particular. How far does Franklin's definition of technology as a "way of doing things" extend into the experiences and ideologies of women forming an organization?¹³ Do the grounding assumptions and practices of the IT industry form the blueprint for female IT workers' involvement in this organization? If so, to what extent? Many of the opinions expressed by respondents did not reflect their actual practice. Most of those who felt concern over governance did not attend the AGM. Are these women, most of whom work in the private sector in workplaces with clear hierarchical structure and no pretense of collective input, simply not interested in issues of organizational governance as it is commonly understood in feminist organizations? Is "concern over governance" too narrowly defined?

At the moment, these remain hypotheses with little substantiating proof, and questions without clear answers. The first year of DET's existence appears to have met with success, both in terms of building infrastructure and attracting members. Thus, it would require further research over the coming years to determine whether or not this apparent lack of concrete interest in governance presents a threat to DET's survival.

Developing strategy

In her speech to the AGM of June 2001, Executive Director Christine Pilkington told assembled members that it had been a memorable year. Toronto was the largest chapter of DigitalEve worldwide, experiencing "phenomenal" growth, and had developed from a "club" to a full-fledged organization with an infrastructure. So where did DET want to go from here?

¹³ As I discussed in Chapter Two. Ursula Franklin, The Real World of Technology (Toronto: Anansi Press,

DET's proposed strategy had several components which operated at various levels of the organization. The general objective in all cases would be twofold: to improve existing programs and services, and to build new initiatives that both drew on existing success and branched into untried areas.

The first level, of organizational microdynamics, would focus on facilitating member relationships with one another. The email lists would be streamlined and divided further into interest groups. Member interaction would be further developed through the initiatives of the Membership Coordinator. The Special Interest Group (SIG) Coordinator would assist in this process by developing guidelines and a master document on running SIGs.

The second level, that of group structure, would focus on further developing member involvement in all aspects of group operation, from hiring to volunteering. Volunteer opportunities, for example, would be increased so that "middle-level" volunteer positions—positions which were important but not overly time-consuming—were expanded. This would allow and encourage more people to participate. Training programs for members would also be expanded and accorded regularity.

The third level, that of inter-group relations, would focus on both alliances with corporations and other non-profit associations. Various forms of sponsorship and support would be sought from corporations, while volunteers with the WOW@Work program would continue to do free technical work such as web design for grassroots non-profit and charitable groups. As of June 2001, the WOW@Work had completed sites for St.

Christopher House's Woman Abuse Program, and St. Andrew's Out Of The Cold Program (a program to help feed and shelter homeless people), and was working on sites for the Canadian Association for Girls in Science (CAGIS) and the Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (ISARC). Outreach programs, currently in existence for girls and young women, would be expanded and diversified, reaching out not only to privileged groups but also women in crisis and low-income women.