R Conference Management System
Avoiding the reinvention of the wheel
We wanted an open source solution to help run conferences.
How will we get one?
We considered a range of pre-existing OSS solutions
Desk review

- OCS
- Indico
- Frab
- OSEM
- Odoo
- OCW
We tested a shortlist in-depth
Open Source Event Manager (OSEM)

- Osem.io
- Ruby based
OpenConferenceWare (OCW)

- Openconferenceware.org
- Ruby based
Design

- Drag & drop editor
  - Structure your event pages with our intuitive building tools. Create lightning pages, agendas, speakers deck, calls-to-action, images, links and much more – in just a few clicks.

- Building blocks system
  - Build your events by adding your text and graphics directly within the editable context of your building blocks.

- Themes
  - Pick one of Odoo’s 34 themes and change the layout according to your taste without losing the fine-tuning from scratch.

- Edit menu
  - Create a menu with several pages for advanced events.

Organize

- Talk proposal management
  - Allow visitors to submit talk and speaker ideas on your event website. Organize the validation process of every talk.

- Tracks management
  - Follow every step from issuing the call for speakers to managing submissions, content and speakers.

- Weekend to frontend integration
  - Directly translate information about speakers into visually appealing speaker biographies and descriptions of the talks and presentations.

- Attendees management
  - Manage classes and resources, create group of attendees, add custom questions at registration, per attendee or per class.
  - Generate registration badges and analyze attendees profile.

- Event organization
  - Manage calendar of events, multiple locations and organizers.

- Event budget
  - Administrate of resources allocation and automated purchases.

- Event collaborations management
  - Gather accurate attendees list and print ready-made door passes.

- Follow-up
  - Send automatic follow-up emails or satisfaction surveys and after review.

Promote & sell

- Events
  - Drag and drop building blocks into place, and share your speakers and agenda information with attendees and prospects.

- Email marketing
  - Schedule automatic communications, save the date, enrollment confirmation, reminders, know before you go, thank you for attending, etc.

- Social Media Integration
  - Send a Twitter Hashtag for each of your events.

- SEO integration
  - Set keywords and descriptions according to Google’s most searched terms and improve your SEO.

- Google analytics integration
  - Track all kind of events related to visits, shopping carts, calls-to-action and more by default.

- Link Tracker integration
  - Add a tracking code to your links and access each of your campaigns return on investment (ROI).

- Sell tickets online
  - Sell registrations to your event with the main ticketing feature. Register several people at once. During the subscription process, the participant will be able to detail each attendee in a new screen.

- Online or offline sales
  - Allow attendees to pay online with a credit card or with the invoice, based on your configuration.

- Manage sales & increase revenues
  - Configure customized invoicing, cancel failures, and you'll get e-mail notifications and sale conditions like easy list for your event.

- Dashboards & reporting
  - Read fine information and data on your event.
We installed three solutions
Installation experience

• Odoo was easy and used docker containers
• OSEM and OCW were Ruby installs on Heroku
  • These took a day of an experienced Ruby infrastructure person’s time
  • There were outdated dependency issues on OCW which can also cause security concerns
We got individuals to test the systems
Methodology

• Get R people to try to perform conference activities
• Use existing knowledge, documentation, and Google to achieve tasks
• If motivated R people can’t work out how to do the task, it’s considered a fail
• Fails upstream can cause task downstream to be considered a fail
Task chains

Create template ➔ Create new conference ➔ Customise conference

Manage sponsors

Setup tickets

Register ➔ Manage registration ➔ Manage attendees

Manage team

Setup speaker submission

Submit a talk

Manage submissions ➔ Build agenda

Manage sponsors

Manage submissions
After some time...
How’d they all do?
Task chains - odoo

Create template
Create new conference
Customise conference

Setup tickets
Register
Manage registration
Manage attendees

Manage team

Setup speaker submission
Submit a talk

Manage sponsor
Manage submissions
Build agenda
Task chains - osem

Create template → Create new conference → Customise conference

Setup tickets:
- Register
  - Manage registration
  - Manage attendees

Manage team

Setup speaker submission:
- Submit a talk
- Manage submissions
  - Build agenda

Manage sponsors

Manage registration

Manage submissions

Manage attendees

Build agenda
Task chains - oconf

Create template
Customise conference
Create new conference
Manage sponsors

Setup tickets
Register
Manage registration
Manage attendees

Manage team

Setup speaker submission
Submit a talk

Manage submissions
Build agenda

Register
Manage registration
Manage attendees
Manage sponsors

Build agenda
Scores

Odoo

OSEM 2

OC W 3
None of the solutions were good with academic workflows
We could extend Odoo
But then other CFP systems probably can’t be used
We could build our own solution
What might a new solution look like?
We could use Hugo!!!
Hugo

• Hugo is a static site generator
• It’s used heavily in the R Community for blog sites
• Knowledge required to build is mostly HTML, JS, CSS
• Templates can consume data files
We could build templates and some initial integrations
Deliverables

- SatRdays site template
- `UseR! site template`
- 3 ticket sale app integrations
- 3 CFP app integrations
- 1 agenda app integration

Freedom to choose and to add new integrations
So what do we want to do?