



Will Urbanski (NSS 59221), Montana

The mission of the NSS is to explore, study and protect caves and karst resources, and I believe that data is critical to these endeavors. The NSS' digital presence—caves.org—is increasingly the face of our organization to the general public. Our web presence and underlying IT infrastructure are essential to our ability to promote conservation and safe caving practices as well as recruit and retain NSS members. I also believe that the NSS organization plays a role in guiding internal organizations (IOs) by promoting best practices within surveys and IOs who maintain their own systems and datasets to ensure that our history and the culmination of our efforts—trip

reports, photos, videos, and survey data, are appropriately managed for future generations. If elected, I will work to modernize our web presence and IT infrastructure as well as support and consult IOs on information technology and data projects.

My first caving experience was in 2002 when I visited Island Ford Cave in Covington, VA. Since then I've had the opportunity to explore caves in nine states and six countries. A graduate of the University of Georgia, much of my early caving career took place in the TAG area where I enjoyed ridge walking, surveying, and recreational caving as well as the camaraderie that comes with living in an active caving community. While I thoroughly enjoy recreational caving, I am an explorer at heart. I've participated in multi-year survey projects in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia and Virginia. I've dug on leads, set stations, read instruments, and ran the book. I've also scanned notes, entered survey data, and stared at line plots and overlays late into the night—wondering where the passage is headed to next.

My professional background is in information security and software development. In 2008, I assisted the Alabama Cave Survey with the creation of a secure, private website that made ACS data available to registered and vetted survey members. Since then I have worked with other volunteers to support, enhance and maintain the ACS website. The website has been a colossal success for the ACS. It has increased our membership and dramatically improved member retention, as well as reduced our environmental footprint by largely eliminating the paper-and-CDROM distribution method that we were previously using. Most importantly, the site helps ensure that information is accessible to those who need it but protected from illegitimate distribution. The site has also served as a collection point for narratives and other written content, allowing survey members to share and record historical information, trip reports and survey information in a single, digital archive. I would like for other surveys and internal organizations to be able to share in the success of the ACS if they choose.

With that in mind, if elected, I will:

- Lead efforts to modernize our web presence and IT infrastructure, including our public website, publications, and membership areas, with a focus on increasing outreach, education, membership engagement, and retention.
- Establish a new NSS committee on Data, with a charter to consult and provide support to IOs on digitization, storage, and retrieval efforts that they choose to undertake. This committee will also develop, adopt and maintain official guidelines (or best practices) for the digitization and long-term preservation of NSS and IO datasets.
- Continue to strongly support cave research, surveys and expeditions by providing logistical support for IT and data needs.

Thank you for your consideration!

Will Urbanski

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