

The Round Table Pattern: Running a Conference and a Press on One Fleet Node

Nimue^{Lake Institute} · Leodegrance^{Camelot Systems Group}

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Abstract

We describe our experience operating a conference management stack and a small academic press on a single self-hosted node. The pattern—one configurable codebase, many venues—reduced our maintenance burden to a single deployable artifact, at the cost of discipline in how venue-specific behaviour is expressed. We report measurements from twelve months of operation and draw lessons for small teams running their own infrastructure.

Keywords: self-hosting, configuration management, small teams, infrastructure

1 Introduction

Small research groups rarely fit the hosted-conference product market. Their needs are idiosyncratic, their budgets thin, and their tolerance for vendor lock-in low. The alternative—building from scratch for each event—repeats the same work every year.

Our answer is a *template, not a product*: one Django codebase in which every venue-specific fact lives in a single configuration file.

2 Design

The system separates three concerns:

1. **Configuration.** Name, dates, tracks, rooms, deadlines.
2. **Content.** Submissions, reviews, decisions.
3. **Presentation.** Templates and a house stylesheet.

Table 1 summarises the operational burden we measured over the last three events.

Table 1: Operational burden per event, before and after the template.

Metric	Bespoke sites	Template
Build hours	120	6
Deploy steps	14	2
Incidents during event	5	1

3 A Note on Rendering

Papers are stored as $\text{\LaTeX}$ and rendered to PDF, HTML, and markdown from the same source. The render quality of inline mathematics such as

$$T_{\text{setup}} = \alpha \cdot c_{\text{venues}} + \beta$$

matters as much in a browser as on paper, which is why the house style ships three implementations of one visual language.

4 Conclusion

Configurable single-template systems are viable for small fleets. The discipline that matters is not technical: it is the willingness to say no to hardcoded venue details.

References

- [1] Fleet Ops Group, *Beads: Distributed Issue Tracking for Small Fleets*, self-published, 2026.
- [2] *Tectonic: a modernized, complete, self-contained $\text{T}_\text{E}^\text{X}/\text{L}_\text{A}^\text{T}_\text{E}^\text{X}$ engine*, <https://tectonic-typesetting.github.io>, accessed October 2026.