



Annual Report to Members – October 2013

1. President's Report – Deborah S Bosley

Greetings members of PLAIN. This report brings you up to date on PLAIN's activities over the past year in preparation for our upcoming Annual General Meeting, which will be held Sunday morning, October 13, 2013 at the PLAIN 2013 Conference in Vancouver, Canada.

Where We Are

PLAIN's 20th Anniversary Conference 2013

The theme of our conference is ***Plain Language Advances: New skills, knowledge, research, and best practices.***

At the conference, we will be celebrating PLAIN's 20th anniversary! We are looking forward to welcoming plain language advocates from around the world as speakers and participants. We anticipate 150 registrants with speakers from more than a dozen countries. We will also announce the site of the 2015 PLAIN conference.

Join us for the gala dinner on October 12 to celebrate PLAIN's 20th anniversary. If you have registered for the conference but not the dinner, you can still get a ticket. At the dinner, PLAIN will present the Christine Mowat Plain Language Achievement Award to an outstanding member of our profession. And we'll be entertained by Canada's Word Lady – Katherine Barber – and music by Julie and Rush Clement.

On October 13, we will host our Annual General Meeting and participate in International Plain Language Day activities.

This is the first conference that PLAIN has co-sponsored. Community Plain Language Services Corp., a Vancouver-based group created by PLAIN's founder Cheryl Stephens, has done a wonderful job putting this conference together.

We met our goal of raising \$35,000 in sponsorships for this conference. Thanks to all of our sponsors! We plan to make future conferences a significant source of income for PLAIN.

Website Redesign

Thanks to Michelle Black and the work of her committee, our new website is up and running at <http://www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/>

International Plain Language Working Group (IPLWG)

Dr. Neil James, IPLWG chair, is Vice-President of the PLAIN board. He recently reported that their work has been delayed but they are still moving forward.

International Consortium for Clear Communication (IC-Clear)

PLAIN continues to be involved with IC-Clear's efforts to develop, pilot and implement a postgraduate course in clear communication. President Deborah Bosley and Board member Robert Linsky sit on the IC-Clear Advisory Committee. We will have an update on the project at PLAIN's 2013 conference but you can also get more information on IC-Clear at - <http://icclear.net/project/>

Where We Are Going

Strategic Plan

Although a majority of our time has been taken up with the conference (sharing program responsibilities, finding sponsors, and many other tasks), in the past year, we have

- established a governance committee to revise our by-laws to meet new Canadian government requirements
- created a membership committee to develop plans for increasing membership

Board Elections

Miriam Vincent is leaving the board this year after 4 years of moderating the PLAIN email forum. Thanks to Miriam for managing this task efficiently and with good humour. We will be electing two new members to the board this year. Information on the 2013 elections is included in this report.

What You Can Do

Although we have a board devoted to PLAIN, we also recognize how important our membership is to the health and well-being of PLAIN! We know our members have great ideas to share. Contact me if you'd like to get more involved in the only international organization that focuses on all areas of plain language.

Consider, for example, getting involved in a committee for strategic planning, or planning the 2015 conference.

You can contact me at - deborah@theplainlanguagegroup.com

As we grow and change, we remain ever mindful that we exist to serve the needs of our members and to advocate for the use of plain language internationally. Please join us and encourage other plain language practitioners to become members.

By collaborating internationally, we all create a better world.

2. Treasurer's Report – Ruth Baldwin

Financial Report 2012

PLAIN's financial report for January 1–December 31, 2012 accompanies this report. The financial review was conducted by George Thomson, of the firm MFGT, based in Ottawa, Canada. The members approved using this firm for 2012 at the last AGM, although its name at the time was KBFP.

As explained in previous years, the accountant is able to do a financial review instead of a complete audit because PLAIN's annual budget is small. A financial review fulfills our legal obligations and it costs significantly less than a full audit.

The Disbursements section of the report shows expenses for the year:

a) Advertising and promotion

This includes costs for the design of PLAIN's new logo.

b) Business taxes

PLAIN pays an annual fee of Cad \$30 to the Canadian federal government.

c) Insurance

PLAIN purchased Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance for the first time in September 2012. The amount shown is prorated to the end of December 2012.

d) Interest and bank charges

This category includes charges made by PayPal for managing on-line payments and currency conversion, and the annual cost for PLAIN's business VISA card.

e) Membership

This category includes the prorated costs for PLAIN's Wild Apricot subscription, the web site server, and the domain name.

f) **Office**

This category includes expenses for postage, shipping, and office supplies.

g) **Professional Services**

This category includes the financial review for 2011, and expenses related to the Christine Mowat award.

h) **Telephone** (*Board conference calls*)

The Board meets approximately every two months by conference call. We have chosen this option rather than a computer-based meeting system because computer service in some international countries is not reliable. While the cost for teleconferencing is not insignificant, it is far less expensive than travel or video conferencing.

You will note under **Receipts** that income from membership fees increased compared to 2011. We are very pleased to welcome new members and look forward to adding even more as a result of PLAIN's 20th Anniversary conference in October 2013.

Appointment of Auditor

The Treasurer recommends that we appoint the firm MFGT, licensed public accountants and certified general accountants, Ottawa, Canada as the auditor for 2013.

3. Report on PLAIN Membership – Ruth Baldwin

Membership Summary

As of September 18, 2013, PLAIN has **226** active members (an increase of 50 since last year), including 201 individuals, 5 students, and 20 organizations.

Members come from 22 countries, with Canada and the U.S. leading in number of members. The table below shows the distribution of memberships.

Distribution of PLAIN membership Sept 18, 2013	
Country	Members
Canada	88
U.S.A	57
Australia	26
Sweden	10
Brazil	7
New Zealand	7
U.K.	5
Finland	4
Norway	4
South Africa	4
Estonia	2
Denmark	2
Argentina	1
Belgium	1
Colombia	1
Ireland	1
Italy	1
Malaysia	1
Netherlands	1
Portugal	1
Scotland	1
Trinidad & Tobago	1
TOTAL	226

4. Web Manager's Report – Michelle Black

This year was an important one for the PLAIN site. As with all websites, ours had begun to show its age. With ever-growing interest in plain language—and a membership that's growing quickly—we needed an updated look and feel for the face we present to our international community.

Thanks to the volunteers from across the globe who contributed to the site update:

- the professionals who got together to write and edit new pages and refine existing ones;
- the web designer and administrator from Educaloï (Montreal, Canada) who refreshed the site's look and feel and designed its contents and navigation; and,
- the PLAIN board members who have kept this work on-track.

In the coming year, we look forward to continuing to improve the site's usability. We will also add current, relevant information and resources that will keep people coming back to learn more about how they can use and promote plain language. We are always interested in hearing your comments on the website or suggestions to improve it.

5. PLAIN Yahoo Forum Report – Miriam Vincent, Forum Moderator

We currently have about 160 active forum members. The number of forum members has increased since last year although there are still some PLAIN members who have not joined the forum. We have 13 new forum members since October 1, 2012 with 8 still in the 3-month trial period (6 expiring this month and 2 who have just started). Another 11 tried the forum for 3 months but didn't join PLAIN. We had at least 1 person rejoin PLAIN after an extended absence.

In cleaning up the forum membership and sending reminders to those who were members (or who fell through the cracks and kept forum access after 3 months), I sent reminder emails to everyone whose membership I couldn't verify. Seven email addresses were bad and they have been removed. Three more have indicated they will join PLAIN by the end of this month to continue their access. Another 2 forgot to renew earlier this year and will do so now. I am waiting for a response from another 45 people. Because I have to reconcile several different lists (and because people use different email addresses for the forum and for PLAIN membership), it's likely that at least some of the remaining 45 are current members that I've flagged in error, so I expect to remove fewer than that number at the end of September. As of October 1, the list will be current and correct in time for the hand off to the next moderator.

We had very few off-topic issues that needed moderation and only a handful of spam issues. The spam issues we did have were related to established email accounts being hacked. While the relative lack of spam is attributable to our process of manually approving new members, the lack of other issues is directly attributable to the self-moderating nature of this forum.

Between October 1, 2012 and September 5, 2013, we had over 1000 member posts. (And as a matter of correction to last year's report, between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012, we had just over 1200 member posts, not the 11000+ figure that was a typographical error.)

We still have a number of people not registered as Yahoo users, which means they are unable to search the archives, which date back to November 2001 and contain over 19,000 messages. The archive is a wonderful resource and available to everyone who is a member of the forum.

Looking forward, I think the board should think again about moving the forum out of Yahoo. The issue, of course, is that we can't move the posts, so the archive would have to remain in Yahoo and then there would be an issue of continuing membership there to access the archive and membership in the new forum. But since most people (that I am aware) don't access the archive now, that may be less of an issue. The reason to move the forum would be to tie it in with the Wild Apricot system and automate access. It's not terribly time-consuming to moderate the current Yahoo forum, but Yahoo is making changes to the Groups interface. I didn't find those changes particularly helpful, but if the next moderator doesn't have trouble, then that might not be an issue either.

6. Board Nominations 2013

We received one nomination for the two positions available. The board is recommending that fill the second position by appointing the 2015 conference coordinator to the board to ensure close and effective communications with PLAIN's conference committee.

The current composition of the board fulfills the requirement for representation from a minimum of 4 countries.

Nominee for election 2013 (three-year position 2013-2016)

Kim McCutcheon (Canada)

Kim has been a plain-language editor for 20 years, the past 13 with Canadian non-profit Community Legal Education Ontario (CLEO).

Building on her passion for making legal rights information accessible, Kim has developed articles—including one for the *Clarity* journal—promotional materials and a media outreach strategy for the Yourlegalrights.on.ca website.

Kim was lead for *The Better Legal Information Handbook* and has delivered clear language training to students at three Ontario law schools.

As an active member of Toronto region's plain-language network, Kim helped organize Toronto's 2012 International Plain Language Day.

7. Governance Committee – Robert Linsky

The main task of the Governance committee this year has been to make sure PLAIN is in compliance with the new rules enacted by the government of Canada for non-profit organizations.

For us, this is a two-stage process:

The committee prepared the Articles of Continuance as required, and the board approved them at its July 2013 meeting. Next, we will submit these articles to the membership for approval at the Annual General Meeting on October 13, 2013. Once approved by the membership, the Articles of Continuance will be submitted to the Canadian government. By submitting these articles, PLAIN is indicating that it intends to continue as a non-profit organization.

Next steps for the committee will be:

- A review of PLAIN's bylaws to ensure they meet the mandatory government requirements. In addition, PLAIN may make changes to suit the needs of the organization.
- Presenting the revised bylaws to the PLAIN board and membership for approval.
- Filing the approved bylaws with the Canadian government.

The committee expects to finish the review and revision of the bylaws within the next six months. Then we will seek approval from the board and the membership.

We will be presenting a special resolution to the members at the October 2013 AGM. Please see the following pages for:

- The special resolution
- The Articles of Continuance

Please note that the wording for these documents is set by the Canadian government. We have not edited them for plain language.

Special Resolution of Members (to be presented to the Annual General Meeting)

continuing the Corporation under the provisions of the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* and authorizing the directors to apply for a Certificate of Continuance.

WHEREAS the Corporation was incorporated under Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act* by Letters Patent dated the 30th of July, 2009, and

WHEREAS it is considered to be in the best interests of the Corporation that it be continued under the *Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act* (NFP Act), pursuant to section 297 of the NFP Act:

BE IT RESOLVED AS A SPECIAL RESOLUTION THAT:

1. The directors of the Corporation are authorized and directed to make an application under section 297 of the NFP Act to the Director appointed under the NFP Act for a Certificate of Continuance of the Corporation;
2. The Articles of Continuance (transition) of the Corporation, **which have been submitted to this meeting**, and are annexed to these minutes as Schedule A, are approved;
3. The general operating by-law of the Corporation (as amended) is repealed effective on the date that the corporation continues under the NFP Act **and the new general operating by-law No. 1, which has been submitted to this meeting** and is annexed to these minutes as Schedule B, is approved and will be effective on the same date.
4. Any one of the officers and directors of the Corporation is authorized to take all such actions and execute and deliver all such documentation, included the annexed Articles of Continuance (transition), the notice of registered office and of directors in the formed by the Director, which are necessary or desirable for the implementation of this resolution.

The undersigned, being the duly appointed (Secretary) of the Corporation, certifies that the above is a true and correct copy of a special resolution of _____, passed at a meeting of members held on the _____ day of _____, by a majority of **not less than two-thirds** of the votes cast by the members of the Corporation who voted in respect of the resolution, and the resolution is in full force and effect, unamended as of the date below.

Date

Secretary

Information for Form 4031 – Articles of Continuance

Current name of the corporation: Plain Language Association InterNational (PLAIN)

1. **If a change of name is requested, indicate proposed corporate name:** *Left blank because no change.*
2. **Corporation Number:** 448892-0
3. **The province or territory in Canada where the registered office is situated:** Ontario
4. **Minimum and maximum number of directors:** Minimum – 3 Maximum – 12
5. **Statement of purpose of the corporation:** *(taken from current by-laws)*

PLAIN is an international non-profit association of plain-language advocates and professionals that exists to:

- a) increase public awareness of plain language as a means of making communications from government, business, industry, the professions (including the medical, legal, information management, education and communications professions), and community organizations accessible internally and to a broad, public audience;
 - b) help people understand and use plain-language principles;
 - c) promote the use of plain language within Canada and internationally;
 - d) promote research and development in plain language;
 - e) promote the interests of plain-language specialists;
 - f) develop standards and practices for the plain-language field;
 - g) provide services for members, including marketing, networking, conferences and communications;
 - h) sponsor an international e-mail forum through which members and others can exchange ideas about plain language;
 - i) collaborate with organizations that have complementary objectives; and
 - j) fulfill other purposes that complement these objectives.
6. **Restrictions on the activities that the corporation may carry on, if any:** None

7. **The classes, or regional or other groups, of members that the corporation is authorized to establish:**

The Corporation is authorized to establish one class of members. Each member shall be entitled to receive notice of, attend, and vote at all meetings of the members of the Corporation.

8. **Statement regarding the distribution of property remaining on liquidation:** (*wording required by the Act*)

Any property remaining on liquidation of the Corporation after discharge of liabilities, shall be distributed to one or more qualified donees within the meaning of subsection 248(1) of the *Income Tax Act*.

9. **Additional provisions, if any:**

The directors may appoint one or more additional directors who will hold office for a term expiring not later than the close of the next annual general meeting of members. The total number of members appointed in this way may not exceed one-third (1/3) of the number of directors elected at the previous annual general meeting of members.

Declaration: I hereby certify that I am a director or an authorized officer of the corporation continuing into the NFP Act.

Signature

Phone Number