

**Plain Language Association InterNational (PLAIN)  
Annual General Meeting of Members**

October 18, 2009 - Sydney, Australia - 9 am to 12 noon

**1. Introductions:**

**Members** - 20 - Noushad Ali Naseem Ameer Ali, Michele Asprey, Ruth Baldwin, Amy Bunk, Angela Coulter, Martin Cutts, Helena Englund Halmarsson, Neil James, Joe Kimble, Caroline Lindberg, Bill Lutz, Anki Mattson, Sally McBeth, Christine Mowat, Laura Murto-Lindén, Audrey Riffenburgh, Marcia Riley, Nad, Rosenberg, Leigh-Ann Topfer, Howard Warner

**Proxy votes** - 2 - Christine Mowat for Lola Mehlenbacher, Ruth Baldwin for Diane MacGregor

**Guests** - 6 - Christopher Balmford, Sandy Carciofi, Mae Hurley, Peta Spear, Carlos Valdovinos, Wessel Visser

**2. Agenda for the meeting:**

Mover/ Secunder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Michele Asprey Neil James	That the agenda circulated by email to members be approved.	Passed	None

**3. Minutes from Amsterdam business meeting, 14 October 2007**

Mover/ Secunder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Ruth Baldwin Christine Mowat	That the minutes from the Amsterdam business meeting, October 14, 2007, circulated by email to members be approved.	Passed	See below

**4. Business arising from the 2007 meeting**

- a) Ruth Baldwin reported that PLAIN was officially incorporated in Canada on July 31, 2008. The Board has received some suggestions for changing the bylaw and will consider them during the next year.
- b) Ruth Baldwin reported that changes to individual membership fees proposed at the Amsterdam meeting have not been implemented. The Board wanted feedback from members on their needs and expectations of PLAIN before changing the fees. The change proposed for organizational membership was implemented. Organizational members now pay an annual fee of \$100 Cdn or \$90 US. The organization and one contact person are listed in the PLAIN membership directory.
- c) Bill Lutz reported that access to the E-mail forum was still open to all. The Board deferred a decision on making the forum open only to members until it received the results of the membership survey.
- d) Neil James tabled the preliminary draft options paper on Professionalizing Plain Language, developed by the International Plain Language Working Group and presented at the PLAIN conference on October 16/09. The Working Group is asking each of the groups involved (PLAIN, Clarity, Center for Plain Language) for comments. It will also

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seek feedback from individuals, including conference participants. The Working Group will consider the feedback, revise the options paper, publish it, and circulate it for wider discussion. Neil asked that PLAIN receive the draft options paper.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Neil James Sally McBeth	That the Board receive the draft options paper and circulate it to members for comments. Comments should be sent to Neil James by end of the business day November 16/09, Australian time.	Passed	PLAIN Board to circulate paper, collect comments and send them to Neil.

**5. Executive Reports**

- a) **President** Bill Lutz reported on PLAIN’s progress in setting up a new governance structure. He thanked Board members for their active participation in improving the PLAIN web site, carrying out a survey of members, developing a standardized approach to reviewing conference proposals, and developing a formal contract to manage conferences. He thanked Neil James and Christine Mowat for representing PLAIN on the International Plain Language Working Group. He congratulated Neil James and Peta Spear for organizing an exceptional conference in Sydney. He also acknowledged the following people who are leaving the PLAIN Board this year and the important contribution they have made: Mark Adler, Gary Larson, Ginny Redish, and Neil James.
- b) **Treasurer** Ruth Baldwin presented the audited financial statements for 2008 (attached Appendix A). She noted that becoming incorporated was a significant one-time cost, primarily for lawyer’s fees. However, incorporation also means that PLAIN must have an audit each year and this will increase future operating costs. The Board is considering ways to reduce the costs for communications and managing the web site.
- c) **Membership** - Ruth Baldwin also reported on PLAIN’s current membership (see attached Appendix B). Membership has remained relatively stable since the last meeting but the number of organizational memberships has increased. The Board is looking at options for paying membership fees electronically but has not yet found one at a reasonable cost.
- d) **Web manager** Nad Rosenberg reported on the recent update of the PLAIN web site and plans for the future, including the possibility of a members’ only section and new policies and procedures for posting material (see attached Appendix B). She also noted that the Board wants to update the PLAIN logo in the near future.
- e) **E-mail forum moderator** Gary Larson reported on the current membership and use of the e-mail forum (see attached Appendix B). He noted that the forum has covered a wide variety of interesting, useful and provocative topics over the years. He has dealt with minor difficulties by an initial screening of subscriber requests and by direct e-mail correspondence when necessary.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Audrey Riffenburgh Michele Asprey	That PLAIN accept the Executive reports as presented.	Passed	

**6. Committee Reports**

a) **Conference 2009** - Neil James reported that more than 300 people had participated in the conference, including approximately 100 in the pre-conference industry seminars. Media coverage of the event was much higher than anticipated; the Plain English Foundation was able to arrange more than 40 media interviews. One of the highlights of the conference was the announcement by The Hon. Nathan Rees, Premier of New South Wales, of his government’s intention to promote plain language and train staff in its use. The Plain English Foundation intends to send evaluation forms to participants and post the presentations on its web site. It will also prepare a formal report for PLAIN as agreed in the contract. Neil thanked his co-convenor, Peta Spear, for her excellent work in managing the conference logistics.

Naseem Ali Ameer suggested sending out a contact list to all conference participants. Neil agreed to follow up on his suggestion.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Christine Mowat Michele Asprey	That the PLAIN Board draft a press release about the conference based on Neil’s report and circulate it to the e-mail forum listserv for distribution around the world.	Passed	Board to draft the press release and circulate it.
Michele Asprey Christine Mowat	That PLAIN thank the Plain English Foundation, and especially co-convenors, Neil James and Peta Spear, for organizing an exceptional conference on behalf of the organization.	Passed	President Bill Lutz to draft a letter of thanks on PLAIN’s behalf

b) **Membership survey** -Bill Lutz reported for Ron Wohl who chaired the committee that designed and carried out the survey. The survey report is attached as Appendix C.

Highlights of the survey:

- Response rate from members was 72%
- Respondents indicated that participation in PLAIN provided support for their work and increased credibility for advocacy. They appreciated being able to participate in an international network.
- Respondents indicated that they were willing to pay more for membership.
- Suggestions for new areas included - increased resources on the web site, on-line training, student membership

The Board will review the survey results and develop an action plan based on an analysis of needs/ benefits and costs.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Martin Cutts Neil James	That PLAIN receive the report and thank Ron Wohl and the Membership Committee for their work on the membership survey.	Passed	Bill Lutz to draft a letter of thanks to Ron Wohl and the Membership Committee.

Discussion of the survey results identified the following issues for the Board’s consideration:

- Need for increased membership to cover potential costs of new services:
  - Board should consider promotion of PLAIN to conference participants, universities with English and journalism faculties
  - Ask members to display PLAIN banner on their web sites or link to the PLAIN site
  - Possibility of building on energy from the conference
- Potential conflict between on-line training and draft proposals of the International Plain Language Working Group
- Potential for creating a discussion group for experienced practitioners
- Increase in membership fees based on analysis of cost for services provided

**7. New Business**

a) **Election of board members** - Slate of proposed board members is attached as Appendix D.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Christine Mowat Naseem Ameer Ali	That PLAIN accept the slate of Board candidates as proposed.	Passed	Bill Lutz will convene meeting of the new Board.

While the proposed slate fulfills the geographic requirements in PLAIN’s by-law, discussion focused on: (1) the number of candidates from North America, (2) the fact that there are still several vacancies, and (3) the benefits of having the conference organizer on the Board.

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Neil James Ruth Baldwin	That PLAIN’s incoming Board, as a priority, increase its membership to the maximum number allowed by inviting the 2011 conference convenor, Anki Mattson, to become a member, and recruiting for the other positions from outside North America.	Passed	Incoming Board to find additional members as directed.

b) **Appointment of auditor**

Mover/ Seconder	Motion	Status	Follow-up
Ruth Baldwin Nad Rosenberg	That PLAIN appoint Sam Goldmaker, CA, CGA, Ottawa, Canada as the auditor for 2009.	Passed	Treasurer will arrange for audit.

**c) PLAIN Conference 2011**

Bill Lutz announced that the next PLAIN conference will be held in Stockholm, Sweden on June 9-11, 2011. Sprakkonsulterna - Plain Language Consultants will host the conference and the theme will be "Establishing the framework for plain language".

PLAIN will post a notice of the conference on its web site immediately. We will encourage members to begin planning for the event and to participate in promoting it.

**d) Priority actions for the coming year**

Bill Lutz identified a number of priorities for the coming year, based on Board discussions and suggestions raised at this meeting:

- Review membership survey - decide on recommendations for services to members, implementation and costs
- Revise PLAIN's logo, continue to improve web site, establish policy and procedures for posting information
- Recruit 3 additional members to the Board - establish committees as needed
- Identify organizations that PLAIN should connect with formally or informally, including the Society for Technical Writing
- Determine how PLAIN will convene a general meeting of members between conferences

**8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 am.