PLAIN LANGUAGE
ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL

Annual Report 2016

Table of contents

President's message

As this annual report details, this has been a very successful year for PLAIN.

Strategic plan

Last year's AGM followed our Dublin conference, at which we released a consultation draft of our strategic plan, *PLAIN 2020*. This provides a roadmap for the next five years, but we first needed to hear member feedback on what the Board proposed.

Around one-third of members completed an online survey, with some 14,000 words of comments! There was a very high level of support, with more than 70% responding 'agree completely' on average to the goals we proposed.

This means that members have given the Board a clear mandate, but also the feedback we need to prioritise our actions. As the final plan outlines, in the coming years we will:
• increase and diversify membership in tiered categories, and raise fees only in line with benefits
• grow our conference steadily so we do not lose the character that members value
• prioritize the website and a newsletter to communicate more regularly with members
• operate four social media channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
• retain our Yahoo forum as a functioning archive, but run a larger group on LinkedIn
• establish an e-journal rather than a hard copy publication, and publish occasional e-papers
• expand our member directory, logo use and awards program
• develop professional training for members
• investigate certification cautiously without an up-front commitment
• move toward paid contractors and increased income but without setting up a physical office.

This report outlines the progress we made toward these goals in 2016, in the six areas that the plan outlines, which also align with the Board committees. Here are a few highlights.

Membership

Our major focus in membership is to grow and diversify to become a more truly international organisation.

We have drafted a membership strategy to better define the benefits of joining PLAIN, with carefully tailored levels to meet the needs of different members. This area will be very active in the year ahead.

Conference

Our year started with the fantastic success of the Dublin conference in September 2015. The registrations were at capacity and the program was excellent. The event also generated €30,420 for PLAIN—a great boost for our future activities. Claire O'Riordan, the host organisation NALA, and everyone on the organising committee merit our thanks.

You can access the presentations from the conference from our website:

http://plainlanguagenetwork.org/conferences/2015-conference-in-ireland/#.V8khr4-cFaQ

Or through the conference website: www.plain2015.ie.

In 2016, our focus turned to selecting the country and host for the 2017 conference. After negotiations with several countries, we were delighted to confirm Austria and Klarsprache.at-Gesellschaft fur lesbare Texte (the Society for Readable Texts) in Graz, Austria as our partner. They will host PLAIN 2017 at the University of Graz.

The organising committee will shortly publish the conference website in the lead up to our major biennial event, which will run from 21-24 September, 2017. Put the date in your diaries!

Communications

Communications has arguably been our busiest area this year. We completed a major update of our website just ahead of the Dublin conference.

We greatly strengthened our social media, setting up a Facebook page to join our much-strengthened Twitter presence. You can participate in these outlets at:
- www.facebook.com/plainlanguageassociationinternational/
- @PLAIN_Lang_Int.

We then negotiated to take over managing Cheryl Stephens' Plain Language Supporters group on LinkedIn, which now has in excess of 18,500 members. We appointed Deanna Lorianni of Zuula Consulting as our administrator of the site.

Many members are keen to maintain our existing Yahoo Groups forum, so that also continues.

We responded to member feedback by establishing the first quarterly email newsletters, which were published in March, June and September 2016. Members wanted a more regular newsletter, and the Communications committee made it happen despite many other tasks.

Publications

Our Publications committee began work in earnest on a model for publishing a PLAIN journal in line with member feedback about an e-publication. This will be a major new benefit for PLAIN members, so watch out for further announcements in the months ahead.

Professional development

Our major activity in professional development was to explore opportunities with IC Clear, a consortium of educational and industry partners, to develop an e-learning 'ecology' for clear communication. PLAIN participated in a joint application to the EU, which narrowly missed out on funding.

We will review our direction next year for providing training for members and turn our focus to other goals in our strategic plan. In particular, we will boost our awards program in time for the 2017 conference and boost our membership directory and logo use.

Award highlights were the recognition of New Zealand's Lynda Harris with the Christine Mowat Award, and our first life membership to Cheryl Stephens, the co-founder of our organisation.

Governance and finance

As the Treasurer's report outlines, PLAIN's finances have never been stronger, both in annual turnover and total assets. This means we are well on our way toward our goal to increase our annual turnover, which in turn will mean a wider range of benefits for members.

This year was also our first full year under the revised financial reporting period. We are gradually standardising and updating our documentation and will start work on a policy manual and annual plan in the year ahead.

Acknowledging our Board members

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to Board members who are leaving us at the 2016 AGM.

In particular, I must heartily praise past President Deborah Bosley on behalf of all members. Deborah has been a tireless worker on behalf of PLAIN over many years. Much of our future success rests on the foundations she built as President.

I'd also like to acknowledge Kim McCutcheon, who has contributed greatly to our progress in communications, driving initiatives such as our new website. And Ingrid Sapona has ably filled the gap left by Ruth Baldwin, who served for many years as PLAIN's Treasurer.

But all Board members deserve our thanks. We are in a growth phase for the organisation and that has meant a busy agenda for everyone. Without their dedicated efforts, we would have only a fraction of the achievements in this report.

I hope you enjoy reading our annual report and can participate in the AGM in October.

Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Neil.James@plainenglishfoundation.com if you have any suggestions or would like to contribute to PLAIN.

Report card

Following is a brief report card on the 25 major goals in our strategic plan. This will be an excellent way to track how we are progressing in the years to 2020, and I propose to include a report card in each annual report. Already two-thirds of our goals are either in progress or completed.

Dr Neil James

President

2016 report card on PLAIN 2020 goals

1. Membership	
1. Double membership over the next three years and work toward 1,000 members by 2020.	In progress
2. Double membership from non-English speaking countries from 15% to 30% of members to become more truly international.	In progress
3. Create a tiered membership to better target benefits for professional practitioners and public supporters.	In progress
4. Collaborate with other plain language organizations by offering mutual membership benefits.	In progress
5. Increase membership fees in line with increasing member benefits.	In progress
2. Conference	
6. Take increasing ownership of our biennial conference and standardize the processes for organising the location, promotion and sponsorship.	In progress
7. Double the number of participants from 200-300 to 400-600 per event by 2020.	In progress
8. Increase conference activities such as webinars and run smaller events in the years between conferences.	Not started
9. Make some conference papers public, but offer extra information to members as part of their membership benefits.	
3. Communications	
10. Continue to upgrade the PLAIN website.	In progress
11. Prioritise the website and a newsletter to communicate with members.	Ongoing
12. Provide information through four social media channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.	In progress
13. Retain the Yahoo email forum as a functioning archive but run the major discussion group on LinkedIn.	Completed
4. Publications	
14. Publish PLAIN's own online journal.	In progress
15. Develop a series of 'occasional papers' to promote debate and research about plain language.	Not started
16. Consider funding books or e-books through sponsorship or crowd sourcing.	Not started
5. Professional development	
17. Develop and promote our website membership listing and use of our logo.	Not started
18. Extend our awards program to increase the peer-based recognition of plain language practitioners and organizations.	In progress
19. Develop a training program to provide professional development for members.	Not started
20. Develop an advocacy program supporting plain language in member countries.	Not started
21. Continue to collaborate internationally in developing plain language as a profession.	In progress
22. Explore the feasibility of a certification program for professional members.	Not started
6. Governance and finance	
23. Increase the Board's policy focus and reduce operational responsibilities.	In progress
24. Professionalize operations, with paid contractors working to standard procedures and an annual plan and budget.	In progress
25. Greatly increase annual budget to at least $100,000 through increased membership, sponsorship and income generated by our activities.	In progress

1. Membership

1.1 Increasing our membership

Greg Moriarty (Australia) Secretary and Membership co-chair

Darlene Shura (Canada) Membership co-chair

We are increasing the benefits of PLAIN membership

The focus of the Membership Committee this year has been on:
- finalizing our membership goals based on member feedback to PLAIN's draft strategic plan
- taking the first steps to close the gap between where we are now and where we want to be by 2020.

Our major goal is to increase our membership to 1,000 by 2020. While more than 80% of our current members agree, they are also aware this is an ambitious goal.

To succeed, we are looking to increase the benefits that members receive from joining PLAIN.

As a first step, we reviewed member benefits offered by comparable associations and developed a target list of the major benefits exclusive to PLAIN members:

Item	Members can	Compared to existing benefits
1	Choose a preferred membership tier	Better targeted membership options
2	Receive a discount on conference fee	Extends existing benefit
3	Receive our quarterly newsletter	**New benefit (2016)**
4	Take part in our closed forum	Continues existing benefit
5	Receive a copy of our journal	**New benefit**
6	Access exclusive website material	**New benefit**
7	Appear in our directory listing	Extends existing benefit
8	Use PLAIN's logo to promote yourself	**New benefit**
9	Attend webinars and training events	**New benefit**
10	Access the webinar archive	**New benefit**

Our direction means that PLAIN members will receive a wider and more exclusive range of benefits. Of course, these are on top of activities that are open to a wider range of people, such as our conferences and social media activities.

We will create tiered membership categories

Members generally support creating membership categories targeting different benefits to different members, such as:
- professional memberships for plain language practitioners
- advocate membership for other interested professionals or members of the public
- organizational memberships including corporations, non-profits and government agencies.

PLAIN currently offers individual, student and organizational memberships. Under our constitution, all members have equal voting rights and this will not change.

We will review our membership model to tailor membership benefits to different groups and refine our services.

We are updating our membership systems

With the departure of our long-term Secretary, Ruth Baldwin, we had to rebuild knowledge of our membership database, which runs through the Wild Apricot platform.

We also started to assess whether Wild Apricot will provide the best platform in the future, particularly given that we will be communicating with members through a wider range of channels.

As a result, we are engaging a consultant to help us identify the best platforms and applications to manage our memberships and deliver the intended future benefits.

We need to lift our membership fees

The membership fee for joining the plain language network in 1993 was $50. This has never since been increased. This means that membership fees for PLAIN are actually considerably lower in real terms than they were over 20 years ago—by about 40%!

As PLAIN delivers increasing benefits for members, it will be hard to avoid raising this fee to restore at least some of its value in real terms. We foreshadowed this in our strategic plan. Perhaps not surprisingly, this goal drew the strongest reservations from members. Yet even then, only 14% were completely opposed to an increase and more than half support it outright.

While it would be hard to lift the rate by 40%, the Board has approved lifting the membership fee by $10 CAD to $60 CAD, starting after the AGM in October 2016. However, we will maintain concessional rates such as for students.

We also want to signal to members that as we continue boosting our member benefits through 2017, further fee increases may be necessary. We will keep you posted on these changes and the options we will offer to help you find the right level of membership for you. We will tailor any increase carefully to each level of membership in line with the benefits members receive.

1.2 Becoming more truly international

Increasing membership also means increasing members in a wider range of countries and language groups. Many of our members passionately agree with this goal.

We have started by recruiting more Board members from non-English speaking countries. We will also consider models such as appointing country representatives so that a local member becomes responsible for promoting membership and activities in their own country.

As part of our annual plan, we will develop a communications campaign in 2017 to attract more international nominations and members.

We will collaborate with other organizations

There is overlap between the memberships of closely related plain language organizations such as PLAIN and Clarity (the association promoting plain legal language). Some members belong to both organizations.

Others also belong to editing, information design, technical writing or usability organizations such as the International Institute of Information Design (IIID), the Usability Experience Professionals Association (UXPA) and the Society for Technical Communication (STC). Our members strongly support collaborating with these groups.

While formal joint memberships may not be feasible under our bylaws, PLAIN will explore mutual benefits, such as providing mutual discounts to members of other organizations for our conferences.

Membership has increased by 10%

On September 18, 2016, we had **230** active members: 200 individuals, 26 organizations and 4 students.

Our members come from 24 countries, with Canada and the U.S. leading in number of members. As noted previously, most members come from English-speaking countries. The good news is our membership has grown by about 10% this year. And we have a broader spread of countries now, up from 21 countries this time last year.

The next table shows the distribution of PLAIN memberships.

Country	Members
Canada	81
United States	56
Australia	33
Ireland	11
Sweden	9
New Zealand	6
Brazil	4
United Kingdom	4
Finland	3
Norway	3
South Africa	3
Argentina	2
Chile	2
Italy	2
Netherlands	2
Cayman Islands	1
Denmark	1
Germany	1
Hong Kong	1
Hungary	1
Malaysia	1
Portugal	1
South Korea	1
Spain	1
24	**230**

2. Conference

Robert Linsky (United States) Conference chair

Claire O'Riordan (Ireland) 2015 Conference coordinator

2.1   Holding PLAIN 2017 in Graz, Austria from 21-23 September 2017

At our last AGM in September 2015, members spoke about their desire to hold PLAIN's 2017 conference in a non-English speaking country. We are delighted to report that our hard work over the last 12 months will make this happen.

We explored several potential host countries. In March 2016, we were delighted to come to an agreement with Klarsprache.at-Gesellschaft fur lesbare Texte (Society for Readable Texts) in beautiful Graz, Austria. They will host PLAIN 2017 at the University of Graz. This is the first international plain language conference we are aware of in a German speaking country.

Since then, the PLAIN Conference committee has held almost monthly meetings with the team at Klarsprache to plan the conference and agree on an initial working budget.

We announced the conference to our members in June 2016. The reaction was very positive. And, by the time you are reading this report, you will be able to see the further work done by the conference committee including the conference website.

The agreed theme of the conference is 'Improving Customer Relationships'. This will work well for both national and international audiences, as it will connect with all plain language advocates and those who aim for clear communications.

In line with our strategic plan and member feedback, we are working to increase the size, scope and revenue of the conference while maintaining its unique atmosphere.

Because the conference date is very close to the Jewish New Year, we are also making arrangements with the Grand Synagogue in Graz so that international delegates can attend the temple during their visit.

As we move into the coming year, you can look forward to many announcements along the way including the program committee, speakers, social program, and many other aspects that will make this conference one not to be missed.

For more information: http://plainlanguagenetwork.org/plain-2017-in-austria-2/#.V8jRq2PYhTc

2.2   Celebrating PLAIN 2015 in Dublin

We are delighted to report that our last conference in Dublin in 2015 was our most successful ever financially. The conference – Clearer language, greater efficiency and effectiveness – attracted 259 delegates. There were 71 program contributors. Conference hosts, the National Adult Literacy Agency in Ireland, provided the final financial result on the conference after our last AGM. PLAIN made a profit of CAD$44,666.65 from the conference.

You might like to look at the links to the Dublin conference materials and presentations. You can access them from our website (http://plainlanguagenetwork.org/conferences/2015-conference-in-ireland/#.V8khr4-cFaQ) or from the conference website (www.plain2015.ie).

3.   Communications

Kim McCutcheon (Canada) Communications co-chair and Website manager

Joanna Richardson (Argentina) Communications co-chair, Forum moderator and Twitter manager

Robert Linsky (United States) Website advisor

Jana Goldman (United States) Communications advisor, Facebook page manager

3.1   Ongoing improvements to our website

To coincide with the conference in Dublin, PLAIN launched its newly designed and mobile responsive website on September 17, 2015.

The new site allows us to collect usage statistics and better promote our social media accounts. Designed using WordPress, PLAIN board members can now add content and keep the site up to date.

Changes over the past year included:
- adding our Facebook feed
- posting several news items
- adding a link to the new LinkedIn forum
- promoting the upcoming 2017 conference in Austria
- improving the experience of members trying to renew their membership.

Since we couldn't collect statistics before launching the new site, we've monitored usage this year. We saw a higher number of visits around the time of the launch and right after the Dublin conference and these numbers have levelled off to between 5,000 to 6,000 visits a month.

We hope to see a growth in usage over the coming year as we use the site to promote the 2017 conference and continue to add content and news items, and possibly include a members' only section.

Many thanks to Kim McCutcheon for her work as website manager over three years as her term serving on PLAIN Board comes to an end at the 2016 AGM. Kim's work ethic, knowledge and attention to detail have been invaluable in getting the new website up and running smoothly.

We hope that one of the new Board members elected at the 2016 AGM will come with WordPress experience to ensure a smooth transition down the line.

3.2   Developing a new logo for PLAIN

Even before the launch of the new PLAIN website in 2015, it was clear that PLAIN's logo was not aligned with the new website's look and more importantly, it did not adapt to diverse social media needs. In 2015, the Communications committee was fully occupied with the new website and decided to postpone work on the new logo until 2016.

In January 2016, with the expertise of PLAIN's Board member Robert Linsky, information designer, and Joanna Richardson from the Communications committee, we presented a bid for tender for an updated logo. Accessibility expert and PLAIN member, David Berman, also provided valuable advice.

An initial open bid was sent out to eight graphic designers. Of those, five responded. Our budget was then set at CAD $2,000 and sent out again to three finalists. The winner was Art Kilgour of

WriteDesign, who is currently putting the finishing touches on PLAIN's new logo, and creating versions that will work for a wide range of applications for current and future social media profiles.

The logo speaks to PLAIN's story but is accessible, and has a modern look and feel as well as the necessary adaptability.

3.3   Communicating with our members

Our 2015 member survey identified a key concern: members wanted more communication from us.

The Communications Committee has responded in the following ways:
- **Newsletter:** The newsletter **PLAIN Matters** is a quarterly publication for members featuring news from PLAIN and a blog from a guest editor who is a member of PLAIN. In 2016, guest editors were Lynda Harris, Christine Mowat, and David Berman.
- **Occasional email updates:** When PLAIN has important news to tell members, we sent out an email message. For example, on June 30, we informed members about the change in management of the LinkedIn group.
- **Facebook:** Since January 2016, PLAIN has a Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/plainlanguageassociationinternational/ that has accumulated 112 likes. The Community Manager for the FB page is Jana Goldman.
- **Twitter:** The PLAIN Twitter account is very lively with 1,067 followers as of August 2016 (up from 615 when we reported last year) and these numbers are growing steadily each month. Joanna Richardson is the Community Manager.
- **LinkedIn PLAIN group:** The biggest news for PLAIN in 2016 was the acquisition of the LinkedIn Plain Language Supporters Forum which was kindly entrusted by Cheryl Stephens. With 18,500 members and rising, PLAIN contracted with Deanna Lorianni to handle the day-to-day work of the group. While you do not need to be a member of PLAIN to participate, we hope that many participants will decide to become PLAIN members.
- **The Yahoo PLAIN forum:** The forum currently has 157 members but is relatively quiet. We believe that this is due to the growth in more mobile-friendly platforms such as LinkedIn. But we plan to keep the Yahoo forum going and its archives have historic value. Joanna Richardson continues to be Forum Moderator.
- **YouTube:** Use of this is pending, but we will need more volunteers to manage that media.

The 2015 Survey identified a need for Communications to work together with Membership to define and implement goals. One of the first tasks was to prepare a tender for a technical consultant to determine a software program that would address communications, membership, and financial needs. The tender was approved by the Board and went out in August 2016.

Deanna Lorianni, who manages the LinkedIn group, is working with the Communications committee to develop style guidelines and governance for posts and policy on content in the LinkedIn group.

We have made huge strides in 2016 updating and adding new content to the website, supporting the LinkedIn PLAIN group, creating a more vital Facebook presence, producing the newsletter PLAIN Matters and promoting a very active Twitter presence.

In 2017, much of our efforts will be working hand-in-hand with Membership to define the benefits of membership and whether and how to develop the website with a members' only section.

4.   Publications

Deborah Bosley (United States) Vice President and Publications co-chair

Sylviane Duval (Canada) Publications co-chair

4.1   Developing a PLAIN journal

The committee explored possible options for shorter, electronic publications from PLAIN in response to this desire from members (from the PLAIN 2020 online survey). We assessed the:
- reasons for launching a publication
- what it should achieve
- types of content to publish
- various types of publications.

Journal to be an e-publication in an academic light format

We recommended to the Board that PLAIN adopt a 12-20-page "academic-light" journal in PDF format with one or two feature articles, five or six short articles and advertising.

Content will be sourced from and include:
- conference papers
- recent trends in plain language
- book reviews
- member contributions
- plain language in various contexts (law, websites, instructions, education)
- hot topics or themes.

The journal will be published twice a year or more. Rotating guest journal editors will be responsible for each issue, under the committee's supervision. The journal will be free to members, accessible by password through PLAIN's website.

We are currently waiting for PLAIN's new logo to be finalized before issuing an RFP to design the journal's look.

5.   Professional development

Jana Goldman (United States) Professional development co-chair

Neil James (Australia) Professional development co-chair

5.1   Developing training for members

Our major activity in professional development this year was to explore funding to develop a major training program for PLAIN members and plain language more broadly.

At the Dublin conference, we began negotiations with IC Clear, a consortium of educational and industry partners, which was seeking to revive a curriculum developed in 2012-2014 into an expanded e-learning 'ecology' for clear communication.

PLAIN participated in a joint application to the EU, which would have provided considerable resources for PLAIN to leverage the expertise of our members and provide training through an innovative e-learning platform.

Competition for such funding is intense, with just 18 out of 188 applications receiving funding. The cut-off score for applications was 80% and the IC Clear proposal fell just short at 77%.

While continuing to explore other options with IC Clear, PLAIN will continue to work on its own training program for members, as this is a clear area of interest. We will also continue looking for funding avenues and partnerships with other organisations in doing so.

5.2   Extending our awards program

Another area of professional development we will strengthen is the recognition of PLAIN practitioners through our awards program.

Christine Mowat Award went to Lynda Harris

Over the last decade, PLAIN has recognised major figures in our field through the international achievement award, which since 2011 has been named the Christine Mowat Award in honour of our former President.

In 2015, the Christine Mowat Award was presented to Lynda Harris from New Zealand at the conference dinner of the Dublin conference. As the nomination document outlined:

> Lynda Harris founded Write Limited over 25 years ago. It is now a leading plain language consultancy and a successful business employing 29 people. Lynda is an inspiring and visionary leader to her employees and clients. She has shown organisations that real change is possible through plain language culture projects. Another major accomplishment is fostering the general public's demand for plain language so that people in the community expect clarity— and organisations are compelled to produce clear information.

At the Dublin conference, we also recognised the longstanding contribution of PLAIN Board member Ruth Baldwin, who worked tirelessly over many years as our Secretary and Treasurer.

PLAIN honoured Cheryl Stephens in our first life membership

Another major recognition during the year was that of our co-founder Cheryl Stephens with our first life membership. Cheryl's tireless 30-year contribution to plain language has been vital not just to our own organization, but to the development of plain language as a profession.

Always an innovator, Cheryl co-founded the network that became PLAIN, published a first newsletter, ran the first conferences, established the first discussion group and our first website. In more recent years, she established a successful social media presence and the International Plain Language Day.

Our acknowledgement of Cheryl's considerable achievements is on our website at:

http://plainlanguagenetwork.org/plains-first-life-member-cheryl-stephens/#.V-B5RVesNEc

New awards to be presented at 2017 conference

PLAIN will continue to develop its awards program in the year ahead, with some new awards to be developed in time for the 2017 conference in Austria.

5.3   Improving our membership listing

One of the major benefits that PLAIN has offered to members has been inclusion on a membership listing through our website. This helps to promote members and lets them keep in touch.

In the year ahead, we will improve this directory but also look at adding benefits such as providing the PLAIN logo for members to use on their own websites and other professional contexts. This will be through a simple licensing agreement that is common with other professional associations.

6. Governance and finance

Ingrid Sapona (Canada) Treasurer, Governance and finance adviser

Neil James (Australia) Governance and finance chair

6.1   Presenting the Treasurer's report

PLAIN is financially healthy

Thanks to the success of the Dublin Conference, PLAIN is in very good financial health. Once we settled the bills from the conference, PLAIN received a net profit of CAD $44,667.

Thanks and great praise go to Claire O'Riordan and the folks involved in the Dublin Conference for all their hard work!

Another thanks are due to Plain English Foundation for their generous sponsorship donation of AUD $5,000 (CAD $4,835).

PLAIN's financial statements are for the period from July 1, 2015-June 30, 2016. These are the first financial statements representing a full 12-month period because PLAIN changed its financial year-end to a June 30 year-end.

This change was made in 2015 to comply with Canada's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. That law requires PLAIN to present financial statements to members within three months of the organization's year-end.

We had a few expenses during the year that were out of the ordinary:
- We hired Turnbull + Co. to redesign our website and to do periodic updates ($4,000).
- We hired WriteDesign, a graphic design firm, to revise our logo ($2,500, half of which was paid in the 2015/2016 fiscal year, the balance will be in next year's financial statements).
- We entered into a 1-year contract with Zuula Consulting to moderate the LinkedIn Group ($5,000, which will impact next year's financial statements).

The Board approved all of these expenses.

MFGT carried out our financial review

The financial review was conducted by MFGT, Chartered Professional Accountants in Ottawa, Ontario. The members approved hiring this firm at the 2015 AGM. A copy of the financial review is attached to the Annual Report.

The financial review was not a complete audit. A financial review fulfills our legal obligations and it costs significantly less than a full audit.

All amounts are in Canadian dollars.

Notes on our financial statements

Following are some notes to help members interpret our financial statements.

Statement 1: assets

Cash – included in this is the Sponsorship we received from the Plain English Foundation as the Foundation Sponsor of the forthcoming journal (AUD $5000).

Prepaid expenses – these are pro-rated amounts for insurance, web hosting, communications (CITRIX, which we use for conference calls), and Wild Apricot.

Statement 1: liabilities and net assets

Accounts payable – included in this are the following:
- the cost of the 2015/2016 financial review by the auditor
- fees paid (in early July 2016, so after year end) for work on the website
- fee paid to the government of Canada for our annual registration.

Statement 2: receipts

Achievement Award – C. Mowat did not make a donation for this financial period.

Conference 2015 – this is the final payment to PLAIN from the 2015 Dublin conference.

Statement 2: disbursements

Business tax – the annual fee PLAIN pays to the government

Conference 2015 – included fee for use of facilities in Dublin

Communications – Citrix

Insurance – we have directors and officer's liability insurance

Interest and bank charges – Our bank doesn't charge a monthly fee because we keep all funds in a single account. But, on occasion they charge for some services, for example to make or receive electronic payments. The main cost in this category is PayPal fees. We are charged a per payment fee for every transaction. The fee varies by currency and amount. (The more you take in, the more the fee is for that transaction.)

Internet expenses – costs for website re-design and web hosting

Memberships – this is for use of Wild Apricot. We have a contract with WA through March 2017. The amount in the financial review is the prorated amount for this financial period.

Office – this includes postage and miscellaneous expenses. The cost is significantly higher this financial period because of costs related to shipping things to Dublin for the conference.

Professional fees – the fee for the auditor's review and the first half of the fee paid to the graphic designer for the logo refresh.

6.2   Understanding our governance structure

The Board has been operating with 11 directors out of the maximum of 12. Since the 2015 AGM, we held seven Board meetings and many other committee meetings.

Every director participates in one or more of the following committees:
- Executive (President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary)
- Membership
- Conference
- Communications
- Publications
- Professional development
- Governance and finance.

Each committee has at least two directors, including the chair. We can also add further members from the membership to participate in all except the Executive committee.

This table lists the full Board and which committees they work on.

Role	Name	Country	Committees
Vice President	Deborah S. Bosley	United States	Executive, Publications
Director	Sylviane Duval	Canada	Publications
Director	Jana Goldman	United States	Communications, Professional development
President	Neil James	Australia	Executive, Governance and finance, Professional development
Director	Robert Linsky	United States	Conference, Communications
Director	Kim McCutcheon	Canada	Communications
Secretary	Greg Moriarty	Australia	Executive, Membership, Communications
Director	Claire O'Riordan	Ireland	Conference
Director	Joanna Richardson	Argentina	Communications
Treasurer	Ingrid Sapona	Canada	Executive, Governance and finance
Director	Darlene Shura	Canada	Membership

2016 AGM will elect five Board members

Three Board members are retiring this year after serving their terms – Deborah Bosley, Ingrid Sapona and Kim McKutcheon. We thank them for their valuable contributions and wish them the best for the future. Greg Moriarty's term as Secretary ends this year, but he is standing again for the Board. We also have one unfilled position to take us to a full complement of 12 Board members

This means that five positions are available this year and they are all for 3-year terms. Members will receive with this report the voting details, proxy form, and short bios of each person nominating.