



PLAIN

**Plain Language
Association
International**

turns

30

in 2023!

Celebrate with us our first 30 years in 30 pages.

This historical review was prepared by
Romina Marazzato Sparano and James Fisher Martins.

Visit PLAIN at plainlanguagenetwork.org

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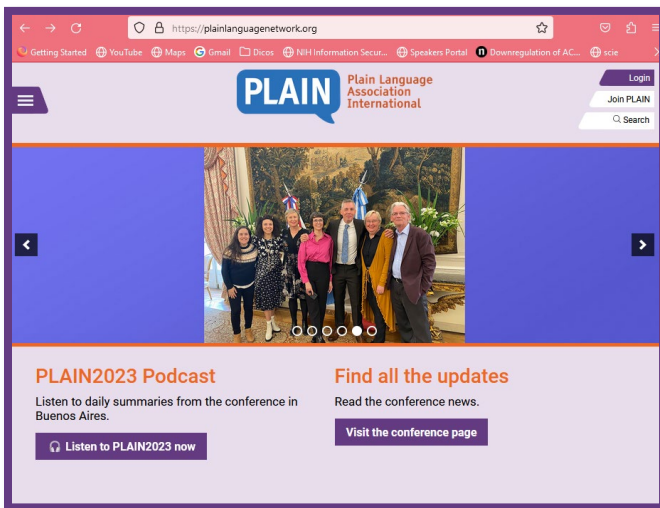


About PLAIN

The Plain Language Association InterNational (PLAIN) is an international association that promotes clear communication in all languages.

We are a growing, non-profit organization of plain-language advocates, consultants and organizations committed to helping audiences find, understand and use relevant information.

The PLAIN2023 conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina marked our 30th anniversary. This is a historic milestone that we want to celebrate with all our members and supporters. Here's a brief account of our history and activities of 30 years in 30 pages. Let's celebrate together!



A Bit of History

Cheryl Stephens and Kate Harrison Whiteside launched our founding organization in Vancouver, Canada, in November, 1993. They called it ***Plain Language Consultants Network***. Soon, this network became fully international and the name changed to our current name.



Cheryl Stephens (left) and Kate Harrison Whiteside (right) in 1993

PLAIN originally united plain language consultants to pursue mutual interests, exchange of ideas, collaborate on joint projects and find referrals. The only obligation on members was to promote high standards of professionalism.

PLAIN incorporated in Canada in 2008. Today, our bylaws welcome members from around the world, with the only restriction that our treasurer be a resident of Canada.



PLAIN has always valued networking and open communication. Our founders launched the publication of “Rapport: News about plain language” for communications and recruitment.



Cheryl also set up and maintained our website and our first online forum. Today, we have a rich website and a growing social platform. Our Linked-in Group, for example, has over 21,000 members!

As far as costs are concerned, membership fees in 1997 were CA\$50 and individual membership fees remains at a similar level today! And we offer five levels of membership and adjusted membership fees to respond to the needs of diverse economic realities. This simply shows our commitment to accessibility.

Find out more about member benefits and how to join on our website:

plainlanguagenetwork.org/membership/joining-plain/

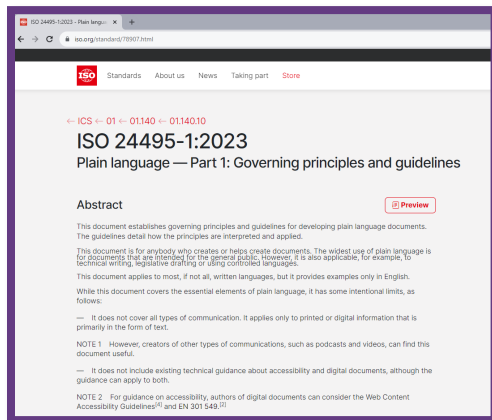


International Context

Since our last retrospective in 2013, plain language has grown exponentially around the world. We continue to see local, regional and international initiatives move forward.

A big milestone this year has been the publication in June 2023 of **ISO 24495-1:2023 Plain language — Part 1: Governing principles and guidelines**.

This achievement has been possible thanks to a dedicated group of experts coming together at ISO, under the auspices of the International Plain Language Federation (IPLF). IPLF was established in 2007 as a joint project of three organizations: the Center for Plain Language, Clarity International and the Plain Language Association International (PLAIN).



PLAIN's Activities

Over the past 30 years, PLAIN held conferences, published resources and fostered enriching discussions. Here's a brief overview of what we have been up to:

Conferences

PLAIN has held 13 international in-person conferences and one virtual conference, supported by conference websites and, in our PLAIN2023 edition, a conference podcast and simultaneous interpreting between English and Spanish (the language in our host country)!

Our in-person conferences are a partnership with local organizations to whom we are immensely grateful.



Our online conference during the COVID-19 pandemic was a collaboration with the Center for Plain Language and Clarity International.

Our founders, Cheryl Stephens and Kate Harrison Whiteside, managed the network for 7 years, organized the conferences at Winnipeg and Calgary (1995 and 1997), oversaw the one at Houston (2000), and helped ever since!

Read ahead for an overview of our conferences over the years.

Conference Podcast

In 2023, our Conference committee, integrated by Natalia Torro, Irene Stotko and Lodewijk van Noort, launched a podcast series, with an episode released at the end of each conference day.

The goal is to share daily news about the conference with attendees and those who could not join in person.



Awards

Our awards recognize members' contributions to the field of plain language. Awards are presented at PLAIN's biannual conference.

PLAIN International Award

This awards recognized members' contributions to the plain language field before launching our current awards program in 2011.

Christine Mowat Plain Language Achievement Award

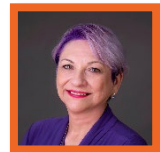
This Award recognizes an outstanding contribution to advancing plain language at the local or international level.



*Christine Mowat,
former PLAIN
President*

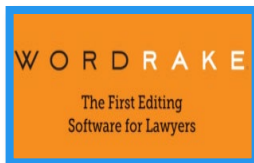
Cheryl Stephens Innovation Award

This award recognizes innovations in plain language in technology, advocacy, research and professional development.



*Cheryl Stephens,
Co-founder of PLAIN*

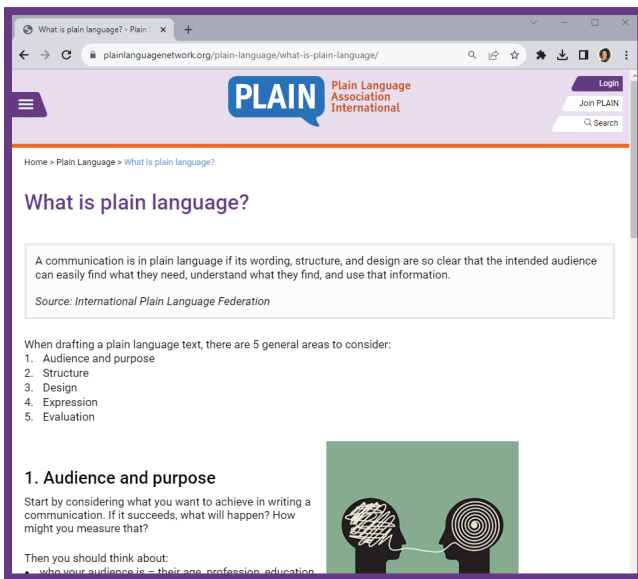
This award is sponsored by a corporate member. We heartwarmingly thank our current sponsor WordRake Holdings, LLC. and thank past sponsor Skritswap for their generosity.



Website

PLAIN has enriched its website to serve as referent for readers, writers, providers and clients alike with explanations, resources and a professional directory.

Our current address is plainlanguagenetwork.org. We have acquired plainlanguage.com, plainlanguage.net and plainlanguage.org to serve our members better with easy-access URLs. Our Communications team is working to make this happen in the coming year.

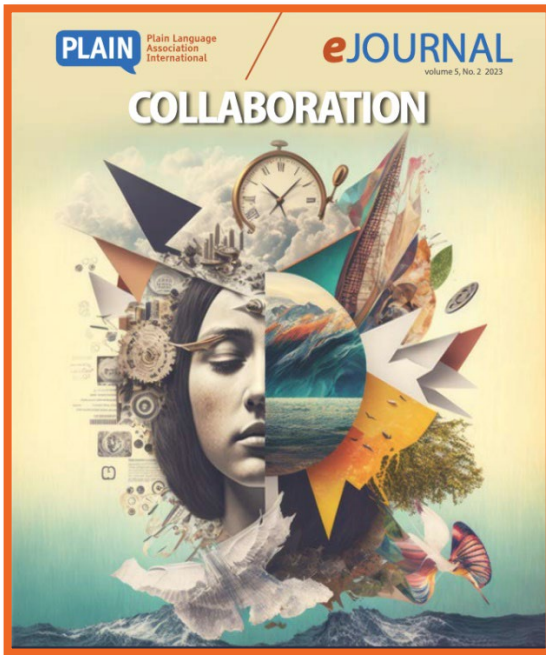


eJournal

PLAIN publishes a biannual e-journal with contributions from researchers, practitioners and advocates from around the world.

Our eJournal is currently under the brilliant stewardship of Hanna Sapunor-Davis as staff Managing Editor.

We especially thank the authors who generously contribute their knowledge and experience to make our journal such a valuable resource.



PLAIN Matters Newsletter

PLAIN publishes a quarterly newsletter called PLAIN Matters, currently coordinated by Romina Marazzato Sparano and James Fisher Martin.

After a brief editorial introducing the news by one of our Board Members or an invited guest editor, our newsletter shares useful information for members about activities and events by PLAIN and related organizations.

PLAIN Plain Language Association International

PLAIN MATTERS | July 2023

Connecting Cultures: Building Bridges with Clear Communication

We are so excited to share updates about our 2023 International Conference in Buenos Aires! As you know we are partnering with Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro, a thinktank launched by the School of Law at the University of Buenos Aires to promote transparency and clarity in legal communication. This year's conference expands well-beyond the legal world and promises to be an exceptional event centered around the theme "Connecting Cultures: Clear Communication to Build Bridges." #PLAIN2023 brings together experts and practitioners from across the globe, all united by their dedication to plain language and its power to enhance user experiences and improve outcomes.

In this issue...

- Conference registration
- Speaker deadline August 4
- Speaker lineup
- Practical tips for Buenos Aires



PLAIN Matters Live

PLAIN hosts a quarterly live event on social media in conversation with experts, where members and the public can ask questions and share ideas.

These sessions are broadcast live on LinkedIn and YouTube. The goal is to promote a candid exchange of ideas to help foster the practice of and the theory on plain language.

Currently, this initiative is led by our Professional Development committee, currently integrated by Romina Marazzato Sparano and Bede Sunter, with support by staff members James Fisher-Martins and Hannah Sapunor-Davis.



Join us!
Thursday, October 13th,
at 12:00 pm PDT

PLAIN Matters Live

invites you to a conversation about
**Learning and the Future
of Plain Language**
with PLAs instructors

PLAIN Plain Language Association International

#IPlainDay
edition

PLAIN LANGUAGE ACADEMIES

The poster features a blue background with white and red text. It includes a red audio waveform icon, a group of nine circular portraits of women, and logos for the Plain Language Association International, #IPlainDay edition, and Plain Language Academies.



Webinars

PLAIN offers regular webinars with renowned presenters so participants can learn about trends, current projects and research.

This initiative is currently led by our Conference committee integrated by Irene Stotko, Natalia Torro, Lodewijk van Noort.

Our first webinar of 2023



Celebrating plain language in New Zealand

Kate Thompson, Tatiana Mes and Lynda Harris

April 19, 2023 BST / April 20, 2023 NZST

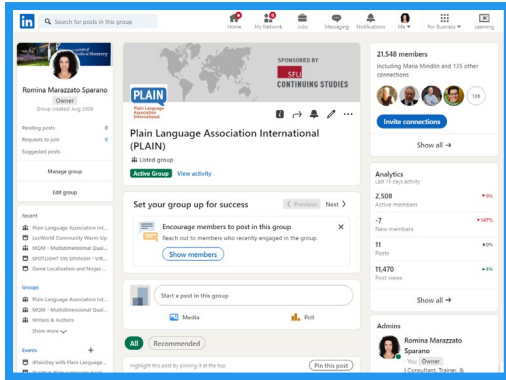
Our first webinar this year

From the Netherlands and Argentina last year to Aotearoa New Zealand in April ... let's start our first webinar of the year on a high note on the eve that the Plain Language Act is introduced. We'll hear from our dear friend [Lynda Harris](#), visionary founder of Write Limited, the largest plain language consultancy in the world, and award-winners [Kate Thompson](#) and [Tatiana Mes](#).



Social Media & Forums

PLAIN has run the first and continuing plain language online discussion group, now on LinkedIn. We have a company page where we share PLAIN's activities and groups for exchange and discussion. Our main group has over 22,000 members and our language-specific groups are growing rapidly. We are grateful to Simon Fraser University for their past sponsorship. We also have X and Facebook channels. We invite our followers on social media channels to consider membership.



Find us on social:

- LinkedIn: [company/plain-language-association-international](https://www.linkedin.com/company/plain-language-association-international)
- LinkedIn English language group: [groups/158634/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/158634/)
- LinkedIn Portuguese language group: [groups/12044281](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12044281)
- LinkedIn Spanish language group: [groups/12054117](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/12054117)
- LinkedIn German language group: [groups/9095601](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/9095601)
- X (formerly Twitter): [@PLAIN_Lang_Intl](https://twitter.com/PLAIN_Lang_Intl)
- Facebook: [plainlanguageassociationinternational](https://www.facebook.com/plainlanguageassociationinternational)



Research Interest Group

PLAIN has launched the **Plain Language Research Special Interest Group** called PRSI (pronounced “persi”). The goal is to advance research in clear, accessible and effective communication by providing researchers a collaborative environment for the exchange of ideas, methodologies and results.

The project is led by Romina Marazzato Sparano (independent research and University at Buffalo) and Chiara Fioravanti (Institute of Legal Information Theory and Techniques). Whether the focus is on linguistic, user-centered, legal, ethical, or cognitive aspects of plain language communication, PLAIN welcomes all researchers to contribute and gain insights invaluable to our collective goal of making information understandable to all.



**PLAIN
Research
Special
Interest
Group**

Calling all
Plain Language
Researchers

JOIN US!

Contact us at
research@plainlanguagenetwork.org



PLAIN Conferences

1995 Winnipeg, Canada

More than just language



1997 Calgary, Canada

Language that works!



2000 Houston, United States

Plain Language in Progress



2002 Toronto, Canada

At the heart of clear writing



2005 Washington, United States

Adding up benefits



2007 Amsterdam, Netherlands

It's not what you write. It's what they understand!



2009 Sydney, Australia

Raising the standard



2011 Stockholm, Sweden

Establishing the framework



2013 Vancouver, Canada

Plain Language in Progress



2015 Dublin, Ireland

Clearer language, greater efficiency and effectiveness



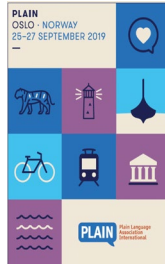
2017 Graz, Austria

Improving customer relationships



2019 Oslo, Norway

Clear communication – clear results



Online Joint Conference

with Clarity International & the Center for Plain Language

Access for All: Plain Language is a Civil Right



2023 Buenos Aires, Argentina

Connecting cultures:
creating bridges with clear communication



Our Conference Partners

We want to thank our conference partners over the years. Their hard work and dedication to plain language has made our conferences not only possible but a great success!

- ❖ 2009: **Plain English Foundation**, Australia
Find out more at: plainenglishfoundation.com
- ❖ 2015: **National Adult Literacy Agency** (NALA) of Ireland. Find out more at nala.ie
- ❖ 2017: **International Institute for Information Design** (IIID). Find out more at: iiid.net/2019
- ❖ 2019: **Norwegian Agency for Public Management and e-Government** (Difi) and the **Language Council of Norway** (Språkrådet).
Find out more at: sprakradet.no
- ❖ 2023: **Observatorio de Lenguaje Claro**, Facultad de Derecho, Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina.
Find out more at:
derecho.uba.ar/institucional/observatorio-lenguaje-claro



Our People

First, we want to thank our members with whom and for whom our association works.

We also want to honor and thank those who have served our members by volunteering for the association on the Board of Directors, on committees and those who have become ambassadors of PLAIN in their country to advocate for plain language around the world.

In addition to Board Members, we thank those who have joined our dedicated staff, supporting the work of our Communications Committee and Professional Development Committee.

And we also want to share our congratulations and special recognition to members who have won one of our awards.

Special recognition also goes to the many presenters who have shared their knowledge and experience at our conferences over the years. Many presenters are some of the best-known names in the plain language field, many are enthusiastic newcomers to the field full of ideas. Increasingly, experts join us in multiple languages. We truly appreciate their generosity.

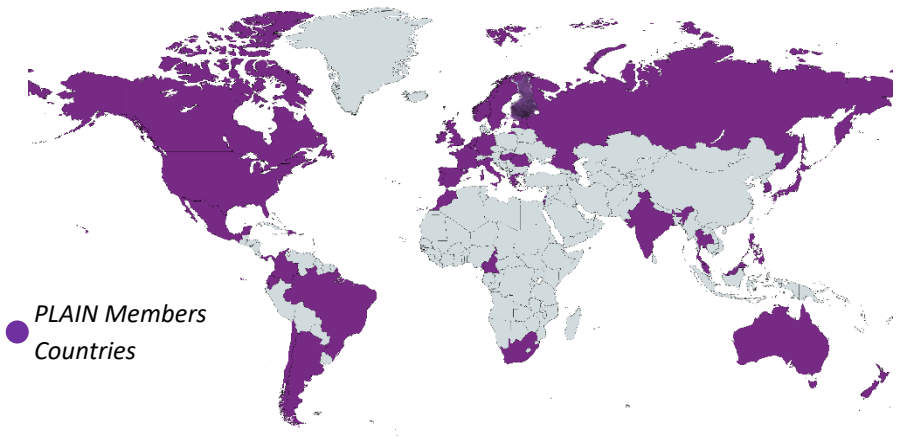


Members

PLAIN members come from all corners of the world and represent diverse industries and specializations. Our members are practitioners and advocates of plain language working in government, commercial enterprises and non-profit organizations. We have individual members and organizational members.

Our membership directory offers clients looking for plain language services access to a network of dedicated professionals.

We thank our members for their dedication and enthusiasm about plain language. PLAIN is here to serve you! If you are not yet a member, find out more about membership types and benefits on our website.



Board of Directors (1/2)



Joanna Richardson
(Argentina, United Kingdom)
*President,
Conference*



Torunn Reksten
(Norway)
Vice President



Bede Sunter
(Australia)
*Secretary,
Professional Development,
Finance and Governance*



Nicole Watkins
(Canada)
*Treasurer,
Finance and Governance*



Heloisa Fischer
(Brazil)
*Membership,
Regional Development*



Board of Directors (2/2)



Romina Marazzato Sparano
(United States, Argentina, Italy)
Communications,
Professional Development



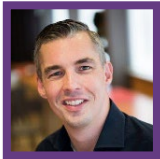
Ingrid Olsson
(Sweden)
Membership



Irene Stotko
(South Africa)
Conference



Natalia Torro
(Argentina, The Netherlands)
Conference,
Regional Development



Lodewijk Van Noort
(The Netherlands)
Conference,
Communications



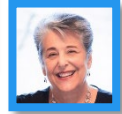
Past Board Members

People who have served as directors over the years, in alphabetical order by last name:

Marie Antaya, Canada

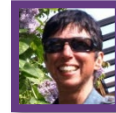


Neil James, Australia



Deborah Bosley, United States

Dominiek Braet, Belgium



Sylviane Duval, Canada

Vera Gergely, Hungary

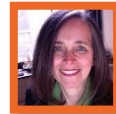
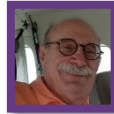
Jana Goldman, United States



Kate Harrison Whiteside, Canada

Margrethe Kvarenes, Norway

Robert Linsky, United States



Diane Macgregor, Canada

Miguel Martinho, Portugal

Anki Mattson, Sweden



Melinda Melcher, Switzerland

Greg Moriarty, Australia

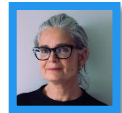
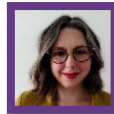
Christine Mowat, Canada



Claudia Poblete Olmedo, Chile

Claire O'Riordan, Ireland

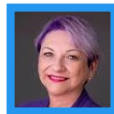
Hannah Sapunor-Davis Germany



Darlene Shura, Canada

Christine Smith, New Zealand

Cheryl Stephens, Canada



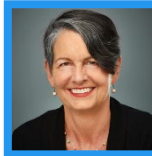
Staff & Volunteers



James Fisher Martins
United Kingdom, Sweden
Communications Secretary (Staff)



Hannah Sapunor-Davis
United States, Germany
Journal Editor (Staff)



Catherine Buckie
Canada
Recording Secretary



Margrethe Kvarenes
Norway
Conference Fundraising



Jana Goldman
United States
Awards



Virginia Vazquez Vaccaro
United States
Archives



2023 Ambassadors



Claudia Mont'Alvão

Brazil

Portuguese



Brigitte Quintero

Colombia

Spanish



Mónica Yopez

Ecuador

Spanish



Antonio Martín

Spain

Spanish



Award Winners

PLAIN International Award



Mark Adler, United Kingdom
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2007



Joe Kimble, United States
Amsterdam, The Netherlands, 2007



Christine Mowat, Canada
Sydney, Australia, 2009



Peter Butt, Australia
Sydney, Australia, 2009



Robert Eagleson, Australia
Sydney, Australia, 2009



Christine Mowat

Plain Language Achievement Award



Barbro Ehrenberg Sundin, Sweden
Stockholm, Sweden, 2011



Martin Cutts, United Kingdom
Vancouver, Canada, 2013



Lynda Harris, Australia,
Dublin, Ireland, 2015



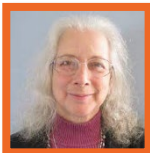
Annetta Cheek, United States
Graz, Austria, 2017



Neil James, Australia
Oslo, Norway, 2019



Enliven Victoria,* Australia
Online, 2021



Ginny Redish, United States
Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2023

*See team members at the end of this section.



Cheryl Stephens Innovation Award



Katherine McManus and **Simon Fraser University**, Canada
Oslo, Norway, 2019



Kate Harrison Whiteside and **Plain Language Academies**,* International
Online, 2021



IRISLAB,* Brazil
Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2023

Above and Beyond Award



Christopher Balmford, Australia
Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2023
(Special award by PLAIN, Clarity International and the Center for Plain Language)

Team members from organizations that have received awards:

Enliven Victoria: Cinzia Theobald, Claire Dimsey, Genevieve Chen, Heather Lawson, Janneke Port, Natalie Ward, Natasha Jose, Silva Nazaretian, Zoe Nikakis.

Plain Language Academies: Kate Harrison Whiteside, Cheryl Stephens, Nicole Watkins, Romina Marazzato Sparano, Chantale Audet, Amélie Bourret, Sarah Slabbert, Nadja Green, Annie Burger and Liezl van Zyl.

Iris Lab Ceara: Karine Gurgel, Daniel Gomes, Filipe Costa, Cristina Cunha, Rafael Braga, Amélia Gomes, Letícia Bernado, Isac Bernardo, Mônica Saraiva, André Morel, Cinthia Andrade, Daniel Lima, Lucas Silva, Gustavo Moura, André Filipe, Daniel Amaral, Ícaro de Lima, Vinicius Secundino, Sabrina Sousa, Ronald Araújo, Mariana Castro, Murcio Filho, Victor Lage Pessoa, Gabriel Soares.



Thank you!

We thank all of you for your dedication to plain language. Written communication surpasses time and distance and when its writing, structure and design foster accessibility, comprehensibility, transparency and accountability, all parties benefit and can act towards better results.

We invite you to raise a glass in celebration of PLAIN's 30 years and in wish for another 30 years of learning and working together for plain language.

