

June 2016

PLAIN news

- As you may know, some people were having difficulty renewing their membership. To help fix this problem, we've added a new [page](#) to the website where members can renew and update all their membership information.
- PLAIN recently awarded Cheryl Stephens a [life membership](#) in recognition of over 30 years of tireless work in the plain language field.
- We're excited to be working on a new logo for PLAIN. We hope it will not only refresh our image but also be more adaptable to a variety of platforms, including the website, Twitter, and Facebook. We'll send you a preview soon.
- At the AGM in September, we elect 3 new [Board members](#). Please start thinking about candidates for nomination. We're looking for:
 - someone with financial skills, who's from Canada as our bylaws require a Canadian treasurer
 - someone with experience managing websites, in particular using [WordPress](#)
 - candidates from non-English speaking countries.
- The dates and location for the 2017 PLAIN Conference will be announced soon. We'll let you know before we announce to the public.

Naming the newsletter competition

Thanks to those of you who sent in your suggestions for a name for the PLAIN Newsletter. Some of the submissions so far are: PLAIN-Matters, exPLAIN, PLAIN Talk, and the Daily PLAINet.

The deadline has been extended until **July 15**, and the winner gets mentioned in the next newsletter and free membership of PLAIN for a year.

Please send your suggestion to: info@plainlanguagenetwork.org.

Guest editor's blog: Christine Mowat

Hello PLAINers!

I am honored to be the guest editor of this PLAIN newsletter. Without doubt, PLAIN has been the most significant organization in my life. If you want to discover friends and colleagues who share your values and tenacity for democratizing professional and bureaucratic second languages, then dig in and contribute your interests and time to PLAIN. You will never regret it.

PLAIN asked me to write about the new, December 2015, second edition of my book. I am deeply in debt to the many international contributors to [*A Plain-Language Handbook for Legal Writers*](#), many of whom I met either through PLAIN or Clarity.

The *Handbook* is now a two-volume, 700-page edition—the result of 4 years of work—and 100% longer than the first edition with extensive updating and new text. Phew! And so goes retirement.

Why is the *Handbook* for non-lawyers, plain-language specialists, and the general public, as well as for lawyers, law students, and judges?

The reasons are these:

- We are all accountable to our communities and we can influence, or are subject to, massive amounts of legal text in our lives.
- We all bow under the authority of ceaseless contracts, whether they be leases, car or house rental forms, online or surgery consent forms, legislation, wills, mortgages, court orders or decisions, or jury instructions, etc.
- As citizens, we have a sense of entitlement to understand all documents we work or live with, or sign.
- As leaders in our plain language field, we need to set examples, pose questions, and write models with subject-specialist lawyer writers to bring change.

Yes, we **are** all activists, as well as good writers.

What's new?

This book provides a comprehensive context for plain language. It covers plain language's history, its diversity of views, ethical foundations, and its future.

Of the 13 areas of law covered discussing international initiatives and presenting rewrites, 6 are new: documents related to the Courts, Contracts, Briefs, Securities Commissions and Auditors, Health Law, and Aboriginal Law. I worked with legal specialists as chapter consultants. (Is it because I'm a twin that I love teamwork?)

Volume 2 includes a Toolbox for workshops and model rewrites paralleling Volume 1's differing areas of law chapters. Other new items are:

- a plain language will with a permission-to-use (and tailor)
- segments from a judge's decision written directly to the accused person, written with clarity and empathy
- many international initiatives reflecting how plain language has grown in Canada and other English-speaking countries
- reviews of 6 current plain language texts by law professors, judges, and lawyers who are plain language specialists.

The extensive bibliography also covers 2 pages of online resources.

I want my book's extensive research to give courage to writers and instructors in legal, government, and other work environments to bring plain language changes to legal writing.

About Christine

Christine is not a lawyer, although she did study some law. She was Founder and President of Wordsmith Associates Communications Consultants for 30 years with up to 12 instructors, teaching plain language writing to lawyers and other professionals across Canada. Wordsmith continues today under its new owner, Chari Smith.

Christine was Chair and Vice Chair of PLAIN for over 7 years. She helped move the conferences from North America to Amsterdam, the Netherlands and Sydney, Australia.

She has been a designer, developer, and instructor of plain language writing programs for lawyers and other professionals. Christine has numerous publications (including for [the Clarity journal](#)) and has spoken at many legal organizations and international conferences. At the 2009 PLAIN conference in Australia, Christine received a lifetime achievement award and in 2011 PLAIN renamed this award in her name: [the Mowat Award](#).