



Plain Language
Association
International

Annual Report 2019

Contents

Contents	2
President's message	3
2019 report card on PLAIN 2020 goals	5
1. Membership	6
1.1 Increasing our membership	6
1.2 Internationalizing our membership and our Board	7
2. Conference	8
2.1 Managing our biennial conference	8
2.2 Supporting future conference bids	8
3. Communications	9
3.1 Ongoing improvements to our website	9
3.2 Communicating with our members	10
4. Publications	11
4.1 Publishing our e-journal	11
4.2 Developing papers and funding reference books	11
5. Professional development	12
5.1 Supporting members and recognizing achievements	12
5.2 Establishing standards for plain language	12
6. Governance and finance	13
6.1 Presenting the Treasurer's report	13
6.2 Understanding our governance structure	15

President's message

As this annual report details, this has been another good year for PLAIN.

Membership

Our focus for membership is to grow and diversify to become a more truly international organization. More value for members is key to our growth. We are pleased with the increases in membership we have seen this year, particularly in non-English speaking countries. And we are optimistic about future growth thanks to our new member benefits and this year's conference.

Membership co-chairs Kate Harrison Whiteside and Anki Mattson are leaving the Board at the AGM, and I thank them for their good service to PLAIN. Together with our membership committee, they have tackled the task of revising our membership levels. We will be able to launch a new and simplified membership level system later in the year.

Conference

This year's focus was preparing the 2019 biennial conference in Oslo, Norway. We worked very closely with our local hosts. The theme for the 2019 Conference is "Clear communication – clear results".

I would like to thank Marie Antaya for her substantial contribution to the conference program, Irene Stotko for sharing her experience and good judgement, and volunteer Hannah Sapunor-Davies for her proofreading and administrative work. A special thanks to conference co-chair Claire O'Riordan, who retires at the AGM after having served the maximum six years. Claire's skills and contributions have helped PLAIN greatly during her terms.

We also worked on possible national hosts for the 2021 conference. I would like to thank Bede Sunter and Miguel Martinho for helping interested bidders with information and advice.

On a personal note, I am particularly pleased that we are hosting the 2019 conference in Norway, my home country. We have learned so much from the international plain language community, and it feels great to give something back.

Communications

Communications are key to connect to our members. The biggest communication achievement this year was launching the members-only section of the website to provide unique benefits to our members. Only paying members can access this section and download exclusive materials, our newsletters and our brand new PLAIN eJournal. I would like to thank Board member Vera Gergely for bringing this about.

Our newsletter is still on temporary hold, but we are working to find a system that fits our needs. In the meantime, we hope members enjoy the eJournal.

Thanks to Communications co-chair Jana Goldman's steady work, we continue to increase our outreach in social media, namely Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The committee acknowledges the work of Deanna Lorianni of Zuula, who is managing the LinkedIn forum for us. Response from members is positive, and our followers continue to increase.

Publications

Our main publication activity this year was publishing volume 1 of our e-journal with a selection of bilingual papers reporting on developing plain language in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, and Japan. The e-journal is a major new benefit, which brings new knowledge about our members, to our members, in line with PLAIN's strong commitment to internationalize.

The first edition of the e-journal was co-edited by two former PLAIN presidents, Joanna Richardson and Dr. Neil James, and prefaced by Margrethe Kvarenes, PLAIN's current president.

I am truly grateful to Joanna Richardson and Dr. Neil James for their excellent work. I also acknowledge Paul Silva, who designed the e-journal, and volunteer Hannah Sapunor-Davies, who proofread it.

Professional development

This year's main task has been to introduce PLAIN's new award, the Cheryl Stephens Innovation Award, which recognizes innovation in plain language. I thank Marie Antaya and Bede Sunter for handling all aspects for this new award and the Christine Mowat Plain Language Achievement Award.

We received strong nominations for both awards, and I look forward to announcing the winners at the PLAIN conference in Oslo in September.

PLAIN is supporting the International Plain Language Federation in its efforts to establish a standard for plain language. The federation has made great progress also this year and will update us in Oslo.

Governance and finance

The Treasurer's report confirms PLAIN maintains a strong financial position. We have net assets of \$CAD 63,333.

Our Treasurer, Diane Macgregor, has continued to improve our financial systems and routines. This includes switching our membership payment system to Wild Apricot Payments to minimize expenses.

I thank her for her systematic approach. Fortunately, she has agreed to serve for another year to help us find a replacement treasurer, which under our bylaws must be a Canadian resident.

Secretary Greg Moriarty retires at the AGM after serving on the Board for the maximum six years. He has been a true chief officer during his whole term, under three PLAIN presidents, and I thank him warmly for having handled all big and small matters in a steadfast manner and with excellent judgement.

Report card

Following is a brief report card on the 25 major goals in our strategic plan.

We have made some major achievements during the past year. This especially includes our new e-journal and other benefits for members, and we increase our outreach by introducing plain language to new areas of the world. I thank PLAIN's Board members and other colleagues from around the world for sharing their knowledge and time to achieve our goals.

Margrethe Kvarenes, President

2019 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.	Ongoing
5. Increase membership fees in line with increasing member benefits.	Ongoing
2. Conference	
6. Take increasing ownership of our biennial conference and standardize the processes for organizing the location, promotion and sponsorship.	In progress
7. Double the number of participants from 200-300 to 400-600 per event by 2020.	Ongoing
8. Increase conference activities such as webinars and run smaller events in the years between conferences.	Ongoing
9. Make some conference papers public, but offer extra information to members as part of their membership benefits.	In progress
3. Communications	
10. Continue to upgrade the PLAIN website.	Ongoing
11. Prioritize the website and a newsletter to communicate with members.	Ongoing
12. Provide information through four social media channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.	Ongoing
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.	Completed
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.	In progress
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.	In progress
20. Develop an advocacy program supporting plain language in member countries.	In progress
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.	In progress
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

Kate Harrison Whiteside (Canada) Membership co-chair

Anki Mattson (Sweden) Membership co-chair

Irene Stotko (South Africa) Membership advisor

We are both resigning from our posts due to other demands for our time. We feel the Membership portfolio has moved forward to a stronger position. We thank PLAIN for this opportunity.

1.1 Increasing our membership

Membership is at its highest ever level

We continued to work towards increasing membership to 1,000 by 2020. PLAIN has 252 members. Currently, we have 213 active members, with 39 memberships due for renewal.

Fifteen new members signed up in the last two weeks. We are optimistic about membership growth from PLAIN 2019.

Recommended changes to membership tiers and fees are being discussed

The Membership Committee has assessed membership services and made recommendations to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

The future is set for clearer options for members, new opportunities for recruitment and improved resources online.

After collaboration with Professional Development, we recommended the Board consider reducing the six membership categories to three. Our discussions are continuing.

We also recommended raising the individual membership fee by \$10 CAD:

- Individual: \$70
- Student: \$30
- Organizational memberships: become sponsorships or supporters with different levels.

Collaborate with others to address membership issues

We worked closely with Communications and Professional Development to tackle fees and enhance member services.

This was achieved through extra online services, such as the e-journal and website improvements. PLAIN is working with Clarity and other groups to explore options.

1.2 Internationalizing our membership and our Board

Membership reflects global audience

We are pleased in the increases, particularly in non-English speaking countries, making us a truly an international organization.

New members include the following.

1. Individual membership = 39

- Australia (2)
- Belgium (1)
- Canada (9)
- Columbia (1)
- Ecuador (2)
- Spain (2)
- Ireland (1)
- Italy (1)
- Netherlands (1)
- Norway (1)
- Poland (1)
- Portugal (1)
- South Africa (1)
- Sweden (5)
- UK (1)
- USA (9)

2. Enhanced Individual = 1

- France

3. Organizational membership = 4

- Spain
- South Korea
- USA
- Japan

4. Enhanced Organizational Membership = 1

- Switzerland

5. Student = 5

- Unknown (2)
- Australia (1)
- Sweden (1)
- USA (1)

2. Conference

Claire O’Riordan (Ireland) Conference co-chair

Irene Stotko (South Africa) Conference co-chair

Margrethe Kvarenes (Norway) Conference advisor

2.1 Managing our biennial conference

The conference committee has been very busy over the last year. We have worked closely with the 2019 hosts of our 12th conference, and we have improved our planning for the 2021 conference. We are discussing with Clarity the desirability and feasibility of co-hosting conferences.

Conference planning has secured an impressive program

Over the last year, with The Language Council of Norway (Språkrådet) and the Agency for Public Management and eGovernment (Difi) we have planned PLAIN’s 2019 conference, which is in Oslo on September 25–27, 2019.

Our President met regularly with the national host organisations in addition to email communication. We now have an impressive program, some sponsorship and over 150 participants from the international community, in addition to Norwegian participants.

The venue will be the Radisson Blu Scandinavia Hotel in Oslo. Please visit the conference website: <http://www.plain2019oslo.org/>.

Sponsorship has fallen short of targets

Norway handled national sponsorship matters. PLAIN managed international sponsorship and the target was \$30, 000 CAD – in addition to the more regular sponsors. One month before the conference Norway and PLAIN have together achieved \$19, 500 CAD, which is disappointing.

2.2 Supporting future conference bids

Preparations for the 2021 conference

We developed a draft bid template for those who wish to bid to host our 2021 conference. We have been in close contact with three interested countries, all of which are relatively new in the Plain language context. We are expecting submissions from two countries.

Board member met Japan members

Board Member Miguel Martinho met with the Japanese company A&People in Tokyo in spring. A&People want to introduce Plain English as a new standard in business writing in Japan, particularly as a way to prepare documents for machine translation.

They need influence from abroad to convince government and businesses and PLAIN is exploring ways to support them.

3. Communications

Vera Gergely (Hungary) Communications co-chair, website manager

Jana Goldman (United States) Communications co-chair, social media and newsletter manager

Greg Moriarty (Australia) Newsletter advisor

Joanna Richardson (Argentina) Communications advisor

3.1 Ongoing improvements to our website

Members-only area is finally live

Our website is our front door to members and potential members. We continue to add content and improve the site.

The biggest achievement this year was finishing the members-only section of the website to provide unique benefits to our members.

It is integrated with Wild Apricot, our membership management system, so only paying members can access this section. It can be viewed at <https://plainlanguagenetwork.org/membership/resources-for-members/>

Members can:

- download a “member of PLAIN” logo to use on their websites and publications;
- read and download all issues of the PLAIN newsletter;
- download the new PLAIN eJournal;
- browse TEDx talks on plain language; and
- access past PLAIN conference materials.

This was completed because of the efforts of Vera Gergely, who continues to be an excellent manager of the site, working closely with the contractor.

We added only a few news items this past year: we are looking for a member to help us write new website content.

Monthly visits to our website average around 2,500.

We continue to observe a rise of interest from non-English speaking countries, most notably Spanish-speaking ones.

We are exploring new contractors for improving and maintaining the website

After our previous contractor (Turnbull and Co.) disappeared on us, the Board approved a new tender for creating the members-only area of the website.

Out of three applications we chose fps.hu, a Hungarian company. They delivered the work on time and to the approved specifications.

We want to have a new contract for routine website support, we are currently exploring several options.

3.2 Communicating with our members

Social media engagement confirms we are using the right channels to reach members

There is a good response to our Facebook and Twitter posts.

Facebook: As of August 25, 2018, we have 387 likes and 423 followers – both increases over the last year. Our posts reach an average of 200 people, but the one about the Chile plain language seminar in late July hit a record 786 people.

Twitter: Our followers continue to increase, and as of August 25, 2018, we had 1,933 people following our feed. As with Facebook, our top tweet was about the seminar in Chile.

Quarterly newsletter: Because of the contractor issue, PLAIN Matters has been put on a temporary hold until we find a system that can better produce and disseminate the publication to our members.

LinkedIn: Our forum continues to grow internationally. PLAIN renewed the contract for Deanna Lorianni of Zuula to continue to manage the forum for another 12 months.

There were strong levels of membership and discussions overall, with 156 new members almost evenly split between male and female joining the forum from May-July. The manager declined a few posts because they did not fit in the forum's focus.

India, USA, and Canada were the top countries bringing new members. Qatar, Tunisia, Zambia, Tanzania, and Estonia stood out as new countries to the mix. Professions include lawyers, legal professionals, and communications professionals (writers, editors).

They discuss wide-ranging topics such as Gross Domestic Product, gender and language, resource of words, and health screening studies.

YouTube: the vehicle we least use. We are looking for a member to help manage our YouTube efforts.

4. Publications

Miguel Martinho (Portugal) Publications chair

Joanna Richardson (Argentina) External Publications advisor

Dr Neil James (Australia) External Publications advisor

4.1 Publishing our e-journal

E-journal was a major addition to our program

This is a major new benefit, exclusive to members. Volume 1 of the e-journal was published in electronic format in May and made available to members on the members-only section of our website.

The Publications Committee has published volume 1 of PLAIN's e-journal and is now preparing volume 2.

Through their work on getting volume 1 published, Joanna Richardson and Dr. Neil James have made great progress in developing the underlying systems for the e-journal. This will make it easier to produce future issues.

These include:

- the design and template for the layout
- a contributor guide and style guide
- a contributor template.

Bilingual first edition confirms PLAIN's commitment to internationalize

In recent years, the Board has been focussing on extending PLAIN membership into non-English speaking countries and promoting plain language in languages other than English.

In keeping with this, we published all six papers on developing plain language in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, and Japan in the official languages of those countries, with English translations.

Second edition will report on Oslo conference

Following our next bi-annual conference, which will take place in Oslo, volume 2 of PLAIN's e-journal will report on the proceedings of the conference.

We will publish a selection of papers from the conference early in 2020.

4.2 Developing papers and funding reference books

The focus for this year was the launch of the e-journal. We are working on the second edition.

This means we are not expecting to progress much with occasional papers and other publications.

5. Professional development

Marie Antaya (Canada) Professional development co-chair

Bede Sunter (Australia) Professional development co-chair

5.1 Supporting members and recognizing achievements

We can enhance the commercial benefit of membership

This year, PLAIN has continued to develop opportunities for members to make better commercial use of their membership privileges. Members who have a commercial offering, such as providing training, will be able to advertise those services on our website. This will be through the revised membership levels being launched later in the year.

The PLAIN logo is now available to members to use on their own websites and publicity materials through the members only section of the website. Included are guidelines around using the logo and a specific form of the logo for our members to use.

Nominations for Cheryl Stephens and Christine Mowat awards launched

This year, PLAIN introduced a new award, the Cheryl Stephens Innovation Award. This award recognizes innovation in plain language through one or more of the areas of technology, advocacy, research and professional development.

Nominations were called in March 2019 for the Cheryl Stephens award and the Christine Mowat Plain Language Achievement Award. The Christine Mowat Award recognizes an outstanding contribution to advancing plain language at the local, regional, national, or international levels.

We will announce the award recipients at the PLAIN Conference in Oslo, Norway in September 2019.

5.2 Establishing standards for plain language

We provide financial support to establishing plain language standards

This year, PLAIN provided \$1800 of support to the International Plain Language Federation (IPLF) to support their efforts in establishing plain language standards. These funds will support the following activities: conducting surveys to collect opinions and reactions to the in-process standards, consulting with Standards Australia, managing and analysing comments, and translating the standards into other languages.

PLAIN is represented in the IPLF by two members. In the past year the IPLF has made the significant achievement of attracting interest in establishing a standard for plain language at international level.

The decision whether to adopt an international standard for plain language will be voted on by the International Standards Organization's Technical Committee 37 in June 2020.

6. Governance and finance

Diane Macgregor (Canada) Governance and finance co-chair, Treasurer

Greg Moriarty (Australia) Governance and finance co-chair, Secretary

6.1 Presenting the Treasurer's report

PLAIN is financially healthy

PLAIN continues to be in good financial health, with net assets of \$63,333 at fiscal year end. Our expenses are growing as we work to build services for members and to support plain language efforts internationally.

The financial statements cover July 1, 2018, to June 30, 2019. They accompany this report. We will table these for comment and endorsement at the AGM. This complies with Canada's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act to present these statements to members within three months of our year-end.

Membership fees typically cover our regular operating expenses and profitable conferences allow us to build support for plain language internationally. This year we have spent \$18,000 more than we received from memberships, with total expenses of \$32,559 and total revenue of \$14,455 (memberships only).

Expenses beyond our basic operating expenses (Board approved) include:

- Moderating our LinkedIn Group: \$5,000
- Manufacturing of Mowat Award: \$1055
- Preparing e-journal: \$701
- Recruiting sponsorships for Oslo conference: \$3077
- Improving our website: \$2649
- Sponsoring Chile's plain language event – international speaker + translation: \$7462
- Sponsoring the development of an international standard: \$2477

Our regular financial review by MFGT meets our legal obligations

ABFK (formerly MFGT) Chartered Professional Accountants in Ottawa, Ontario, reviewed our finances. Our members approved hiring this firm at the 2018 AGM. A copy of the financial review is with my report. The financial review is not a complete audit, but it fulfils our legal obligations and costs significantly less than a full audit.

Treasurer submits a request for motion to approve report

As Treasurer, I respectfully submit this report and ask for a motion to approve this report and the financial statements.

Treasurer submits a request to appoint auditor for 2019–2020

Though PLAIN is not required to have a financial review, we are in the practice of having one to ensure transparency.

I recommend that the membership reappoint ABFK, licensed public accountants, Ottawa, Canada, to conduct a financial review for PLAIN's 2019–2020 financial year. They are reasonable in price (about \$1200 plus tax for a normal year) and they are familiar with our organization, which helps keep the cost down.

Treasurer's notes below cover specific parts of the financial statements

Statement 1: Statement of financial position

Assets	Notes
Cash	Cash is amount in bank and PayPal accounts
Prepaid expenses	These are prorated amounts for expenses like insurance, web hosting, communications, and membership management.

Liabilities and net assets	Notes
Accounts payable	This includes the cost of this financial review by the auditor.

Statement 2: Statement of receipts and disbursements receipts

Receipts	Notes
Membership fees	We collected \$14,455 in the fiscal year, down from \$15,498 in the previous reporting period.
Conference	We had no proceeds from a conference this fiscal year. Conference sponsorships were handled directly by the conference organizer to avoid the expense of multiple currency conversions. Any proceeds from the Oslo conference will be received in the 2019–2020 fiscal year.
Other	None.

Disbursements	Notes
Business licence	Annual fee to the government for PLAIN registration (CA\$20)
Conferences, sponsorships	Sponsorship of Chile event (CA\$7401); sponsorship of IPLF efforts (CA\$2477) = CA\$9878
Insurance	Liability insurance for office holders (CA\$810)
Interest and bank charges	PayPal fees (CA\$566); fees for international money transfers CA\$120)
Memberships	Wild Apricot membership management services (CA\$2213)
Office	Mailbox for legal service (CA\$406); postage and other expenses (CA\$31)
Website expenses	Web domain names, website improvements (CA\$2734)
Mowat award expenses	Manufacturing the Mowat Award (CA\$1055)
AGM expenses	Includes printing (CA\$208) and refreshments (CA\$404)
Professional fees	Auditor's review (CA\$1356); contract to moderate our LinkedIn group (CA\$5000); design of e-journal (CA\$701); contract to recruit sponsors for Oslo, contracted to Zuula (CA\$3077)
Telephone	Citrix/GoToMeeting conference calling services (CA\$2528)

6.2 Understanding our governance structure

Switching payment system will keep our costs down

Earlier this year, Wild Apricot informed us it will increase our fee by 20%. This was to cover its costs of dealing with PayPal. We can avoid this increase if we switch payment systems from PayPal to WA Payments.

The Board voted to switch to WA Payments and the committee has started the work of passing Wild Apricot the necessary information. To avoid the increased charge, we have until December 2019 to make this change.

The biggest benefit is for people thinking of joining PLAIN who were reluctant to become a member because joining involves going through PayPal. Once the WA Payments is up and running, new and renewing members will not go to an external site to pay member fees.

Board voted to partially reimburse conference fee to serving Board members

At its July meeting, the Board voted to reimburse serving Board members 50% of PLAIN conference fees. The reimbursement only applies to serving Board members at the time of paying the fee conference, and it only for PLAIN conferences.

This would fall under reasonable expenses as outlined in bylaw 27.

This item appears on the AGM agenda. The Board is keen to hear from members on this.

2019 AGM will elect five Board members

Board members serve 3-year terms and at each AGM, we have some directors vacating positions, which we need to fill. Earlier this year, we put a call out to members for nominations to join the working Board.

Of the seven vacating positions, we have five nominees. Members will receive with this report the voting details in the agenda, proxy form, and short bios of each person nominating for 3-year terms.

Four Board members are retiring this year and three are nominating for re-election.

Greg Moriarty and Claire O’Riordan have served their maximum term of six years. Anki Mattson has finished her 3-year term. Kate Harrison-Whiteside is retiring due to other commitments.

We thank them for their valuable contributions and we wish them the very best.

Governance activities promote the smooth running of the Board

Getting board members to meet online involves operating across several time zones. It is therefore difficult to secure meeting times that are manageable for everyone.

We try to choose meeting start times no earlier than 8 am or later than 10 pm. But we had some directors joining outside this band this year. We thank them for their commitment.

The Board use the GoToMeeting software to hold its meetings. We use this software to let members join the AGM remotely. The secretary organizes the meetings, prepares an agenda with the President and takes minutes.

The committee again thanks Claire O’Riordan for her support in taking minutes. This includes minutes for board meetings and the AGM.

The Board files its minutes, project work and other procedural information. Our procedures and templates are growing. This helps when new directors join the Board.

The working Board carries out most of its work at committee level

The Board currently has 12 directors. Since the last AGM, we held four meetings and many 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.

Most committees have two directors, including the chair. We can also add further members from the membership to participate in any, except the Executive committee. This table lists the full Board, the committees they work on and their Board meeting attendance.

Role	Name	Country	Committees	Meetings
President	Margrethe Kvarenes	Norway	Executive, Conference	4
Vice-President	Jana Goldman	United States	Executive, Communications	3
Treasurer	Diane Macgregor	Canada	Executive, Governance and finance	4
Secretary	Greg Moriarty	Australia	Executive, Governance and finance	3
Director	Marie Antaya	Canada	Professional development	3
Director	Vera Gergely	Hungary	Communications	4
Director	Kate Harrison Whiteside	Canada	Membership	2
Director	Miguel Martinho	Portugal	Publications	3
Director	Anki Mattson	Sweden	Membership	2
Director	Claire O’Riordan	Ireland	Conference	3
Director	Irene Stotko	South Africa	Conference	4
Director	Bede Sunter	Australia	Professional development	3