



Annual Report 2020

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President's message

As this annual report sets out, it has been another good year for PLAIN in spite of the coronavirus pandemic and its economic impact. We feel for those of our members who are in distress because of the pandemic, and we try to make individual adjustments where needed to ease the situation. This year marks the end of PLAIN's strategic plan for 2016–2020 and the start of a new planning cycle for PLAIN's board of directors. We have reported on our overall performance in meeting the objectives of the plan in this report.

Membership

Our focus for membership is still to grow and diversify to become a truly international organization. We had ambitious targets for membership growth that we have not been able to meet. However we have exceeded our diversity goal and now have more than 30% membership from non-English speaking countries. 2019 was our best year for membership growth but 2020 has seen many members not renewing their membership. We will continue to enhance the benefits of membership. My thanks to directors Christine Smith and Ingrid Olsson and associate board member Dominiek Braet for their continuing work on improving membership benefits and the membership structure.

Conference

Our 2019 biennial conference was held in Oslo, Norway and attracted over 400 delegates from 34 countries. It was truly a world conference.

The board worked hard to confirm some promising bids from Japan, Colombia and finally Portugal to host the 2021 conference. Then came coronavirus and those plans had to be shelved.

In October 2020 PLAIN is instead partnering with Clarity International and the Center for Plain Language to hold a virtual conference in two parts, the *Access for All* conference. This is an opportunity to see how well a fully digital conference can deliver a valuable experience and reach a wider audience.

The first part, in October 2020, will be fully virtual. The second part, in May 2021, will hopefully be a mixed face-to-face and digital experience. My thanks to director Irene Stotko for liaising closely with Clarity and CPL to break new ground and make the conference a reality.

Survey

We conducted a survey of members between mid June and mid July. There were 119 responses to the survey and we collected some 65 data points for each record. My thanks to all of those members who responded, as the survey has given us vital information on which to plan our next five years.

Communications

Communications are key to connecting with our members. Our survey results show some members think that PLAIN's level of communication is just right and some that it is not enough. No-one said there is too much communication. This year we have continued to add content to the members-only section of the website (launched last year) to provide unique benefits to our members. We have migrated the Oslo conference content to the website for all members to access whenever they want. As well we have restarted the PLAIN newsletter and released our second e-journal. I would like to thank

director Vera Gergely for her excellent work in managing the PLAIN website and director Hannah Sapunor-Davis for reviving the newsletter. Thanks also to director Jana Goldman through whose steady work we continue to increase our outreach in social media and to director Claudia Olmedo Publeto who manages our Spanish-language communications. We also acknowledge the work of Deanna Lorianni of Zuula Consulting, who manages our LinkedIn forum. Our followers continue to increase.

Publications

In July we released the volume 2 of the PLAIN e-journal and the third is well advanced in preparation. Director Hannah Sapunor-Davis has taken over the production and publication process while former PLAIN president Neil James continues as editor-in-chief. My warm thanks to Neil and former president Joanna Richardson for getting the e-journal underway and my special thanks to Hannah for taking carriage of its ongoing production. Thanks also to the Plain English Foundation, Australia for sponsoring the e-journal. We also acknowledge the work of Paul Da Silva, who is in charge of the graphic design of the e-journal.

Professional development

PLAIN is supporting the International Plain Language Federation in its efforts to establish a standard for plain language. The federation has made great progress during the year. At our Oslo conference we presented the Christine Mowat award and the very first of PLAIN's new Cheryl Stephens award for innovation in plain language. Thanks to directors Marie Antaya and Bede Sunter for their efforts in the professional development committee during the year and to Skritswap for sponsoring the Cheryl Stephens award.

Governance and finance

The Treasurer's report confirms that PLAIN maintains a strong financial position. We have net assets of CAD 64,923 (about CAD 1500 more than last year). Our Treasurer, Diane Macgregor, has continued to improve our financial systems and routines. Unfortunately, Diane must leave the board this year but I trust PLAIN's finances to be in good hands also in the coming term, thanks to Diane's efforts in finding us a new treasurer (we welcome Nicole Watkins Campbell) and handing the tasks over. (Under our bylaw, our treasurer must be a Canadian resident.) I thank her warmly for this and for her systematic approach and the governance she has brought to PLAIN's financial affairs.

Report on outcomes of the 2016–2020 strategic plan

This year, having reached the end of the planning cycle, we have a more detailed report than usual on the strategic plan and its 25 major goals. Many, although not all, goals have been achieved. Some of those goals have simply become business-as-usual and the PLAIN board will continue in that direction. We will be releasing our draft strategic plan for 2021–2025 shortly after the 2020 PLAIN annual general meeting.

Acknowledging our board members

In closing, I would like to express my thanks to all the board members who have served this year and in particular those who are leaving us at the 2020 AGM.

It's a privilege to work with such a committed and skilled team, and I'm proud of the progress that we have made, the knowledge about plain language that we have spread and the new five year strategic plan that we have drafted together.

I am so grateful for the support of Diane Macgregor and Jana Goldman, who have both served six years on the board, Marie Antaya who has been on the board for three years, and also Claudia Poblete Olmedo who has served for one year. Sadly this year also saw the departure of Miguel Martinho, PLAIN's vice-president. I thank them all warmly. Our open call for nominations for new board members was highly appreciated, and it's been encouraging to read the strong nominations that we have received. I look forward to welcoming our new board members and continuing PLAIN's work, together.

I hope, like me, you are looking forward to the next year in PLAIN.

Margrethe Kvarenes, President

Report on PLAIN 2020 goals

1. Membership	Status
<p>1. Double membership over the next three years and work toward 1,000 members by 2020. This was considered an aspirational goal. PLAIN seems to be able to enlist new members fairly easily but we have difficulty keeping them, mainly because membership lapses without active renewal. Currently some of our members also have let their membership lapse because of financial distress due to the pandemic. We try to find flexible solutions in each of those cases. In the next strategic plan cycle, increasing membership will remain a goal – in keeping with our goal to make PLAIN truly international. Our focus will be on increasing the benefits of membership to enlist and retain members and to look at automatic renewal of membership.</p>	Ongoing
<p>2. Double membership from non-English speaking countries from 15% to 30% of members to become more truly international.</p> <p>We reached 32% membership from non-English speaking countries and are actively working with groups from non-English speaking regions.</p>	Achieved
<p>3. Create a tiered membership to better target benefits for professional practitioners and public supporters.</p> <p>While PLAIN's current tiered membership system has served the organization well, we are still working to develop a membership structure that maximizes benefits to members and supporters. This will be presented at the AGM and should be resolved early in the new planning cycle.</p>	In progress
<p>4. Collaborate with other plain language organizations by offering mutual membership benefits.</p> <p>We currently offer mutual discounts on conferences and similar events with Clarity and the Center for Plain Language and will continue to do so. We are collaborating with Clarity and CPL on the 2020 <i>Access for All</i> part one conference. In 2021 the three organizations will work together to stage the <i>Access for All</i> conference part two that will offer a unique new style of event.</p>	Ongoing
<p>5. Increase membership fees in line with increasing member benefits.</p> <p>Fees increased in 2016 from 50 to 60 CAD. A further increase to 70 CAD was approved by the board in 2019 but was not implemented, partly due to the deteriorating economic climate.</p>	Achieved
2. Conference	
<p>6. Take increasing ownership of our biennial conference and standardize the processes for organizing the location, promotion and sponsorship.</p> <p>We have developed conference bidding templates and an assessment matrix to streamline the assessment process for bids. We are developing web-content templates in order to stage conference websites on our own website.</p>	In progress
<p>7. Double the number of participants from 200-300 to 400-600 per event by 2020.</p> <p>The Oslo 2019 conference was our best attended yet with over 400 delegates. The 2020 survey results suggest that cost and travel are the main impediments to conference attendance. The COVID-19 situation pushed forward our ambition to cooperate more closely with Clarity and the Center for Plain Language, and we expect our co-hosted online conference <i>Access for All</i> will attract more delegates as there are no travel or accommodation costs involved. Online registration is likely to increase and we could set ourselves higher goals in future.</p>	In progress

<p>8. Increase conference activities such as webinars and run smaller events in the years between conferences.</p> <p>The current situation makes it difficult to run physical events. The 2020 and 2021 <i>Access for All</i> conference should give us valuable experience and we hope to recruit board members and other supporters with experience at running online events.</p>	Ongoing
<p>9. Make some conference papers public, but offer extra information to members as part of their membership benefits.</p> <p>Our website now has a members-only resources section with member log-in. It currently hosts some conference papers from the Graz 2017 conference and all the materials from the Oslo 2019 conference. It also hosts our newsletters and e-journals. We will continue to pursue the goal of creating valuable content for members and hope to convert LinkedIn users to paying members.</p>	In progress
3. Communications	
<p>10. Continue to upgrade the PLAIN website.</p> <p>Improve the website will continue to be a core function of the PLAIN board. In the near future we are planning to review the website and extend the range and quality of member resources. We will also explore setting up our own conference web pages so that in future conference information can be retained on PLAIN's site.</p>	Ongoing
<p>11. Prioritize the website and a newsletter to communicate with members.</p> <p>The survey results indicated that email, newsletters and the PLAIN website feature strongly in members' preferences for receiving information. The newsletter <i>PLAIN matters</i> is back in production after a break of two years. We now have structured templates and timelines for the newsletter.</p>	Ongoing
<p>12. Provide information through four social media channels: LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.</p> <p>We are making good use of LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter but realize we are not posting as much as we should. We have developed a communications calendar to coordinate efforts. We need to identify goals for each specific channel and use the channels more meaningfully and purposefully to promote PLAIN's activities. We have not yet used YouTube. The survey revealed a surprising number of members were not aware of PLAIN's LinkedIn group.</p>	Ongoing
<p>13. Retain the Yahoo email forum as a functioning archive but run the major discussion group on LinkedIn.</p>	Completed
4. Publications	
<p>14. Publish PLAIN's own online journal.</p> <p>This is going well. The second e-journal has been published and the third is on its way. We are establishing more structured process for commissioning contributors, securing advertisers, and organizing submissions</p>	Ongoing
<p>15. Develop a series of 'occasional papers' to promote debate and research about plain language.</p> <p>We need to identify the types of resources that would be most helpful for members and identify potential collaborators and contributors.</p>	Under consideration
<p>16. Consider funding books or e-books through sponsorship or crowd sourcing.</p> <p>No actual progress has been made on this objective, but the survey has given us valuable information about what members want.</p>	Under consideration

5. Professional development	
<p>17. Develop and promote our website membership listing and use of our logo. The logo is now online and available for members to download along with rules for the use of the logo. Promotion of our membership listing has not really advanced beyond passive website collateral. We need a better understanding of what the membership listing could potentially do for members and design the website content accordingly.</p>	Achieved
<p>18. Extend our awards program to increase the peer-based recognition of plain language practitioners and organizations. In 2018 PLAIN introduced the Cheryl Stephens Award for Innovation. We awarded the first of these in 2019. We will investigate the feasibility of establishing other, lower-level awards for defined achievements in fields and aspects of plain language.</p>	Achieved
<p>19. Develop a training program to provide professional development for members. We are yet to make progress on this goal. Our focus for the immediate future will be on bringing trainees and trainers together. Part of this will be through providing information on our website about plain language courses and training providers.</p>	In progress
<p>20. Develop an advocacy program supporting plain language in member countries. This goal is key to PLAIN's objective of being 'truly international' and we have made noteworthy progress in the last five years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2018 PLAIN supported a one-day conference in Chile • During 2019 PLAIN board members worked to secure conference bids from Japan, Colombia and Portugal for the 2021 conference • Negotiations are underway for PLAIN to support a German-language based conference to be held in Tübingen, Germany in November 2020. <p>The survey of members identified an interest in forming regional PLAIN chapters, and we will look into how we can direct our activity to providing support for this kind of activity.</p>	Ongoing
<p>21. Continue to collaborate internationally in developing plain language as a profession. While we have expanded membership to include more non-English speaking countries, many of those countries have only one or two members. We plan to work with those members to help increase their 'footprint' in their country. An idea we are exploring is to establish 'ambassador' members or regional chapters who may be able to support growth.</p>	In progress
<p>22. Explore the feasibility of a certification program for professional members. This remains a long-term goal for PLAIN. The PLAIN board has not yet been able to deploy sufficient resources to meet this goal. We will discuss options in the 2021-2025 plan.</p>	In progress
6. Governance and finance	
<p>23. Increase the board's policy focus and reduce operational responsibilities. The board is increasingly making use of volunteers, and has hired help for dealing with operations such as conference sponsorships, web development, forum management, and publication layout. There are a number of elements to this goal and our performance has been mixed. Some successes are:</p> <p>The board's policy focus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We now have a second person with signing authority on the bank account • We have a series of documents that track finances and continue to have an auditor's review every July. • Any new expense is approved by the board and minuted for traceability. • We are taking bookkeeping online for easier handover from treasurer to treasurer. 	In progress

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current treasurer is working with the (proposed) next treasurer to ensure a smooth handover and continuity in accounting standards. • The board continues to release an annual report to members every year • The board continues to meet every quarter and its meetings are minuted to ensure transparency; most major decisions are made at board meetings but increasingly, and to maintain the board's agility, some decisions are made via electronic means, but these are controlled and traceable. <p>There are still things that could be improved and these will be addressed in the next plan.</p> <p>Reducing the board's operational responsibilities</p> <p>The 2019 conference was handled by a joint entity created for the limited purpose of administering the conference. Many of the typical conference transactions are handled by this entity. This took some responsibility away from the treasurer in terms of conference transactions.</p>	
<p>24. Professionalize operations, with paid contractors working to standard procedures and an annual plan and budget.</p> <p>The PLAIN board has professionalized operations with formal contracts for some operations (see previous). These have become regular operating expenses but we do not have an annual plan and budget. This will be addressed in our next plan.</p> <p>We also have an official address for service in Ontario, Canada, through a mailbox service.</p>	In progress
<p>25. Greatly increase annual budget to at least \$100,000 through increased membership, sponsorship and income generated by our activities.</p> <p>PLAIN came close to meeting this target after the Graz 2017 conference when our finances reached CAD 83,000. PLAIN continues to enjoy a healthy position financially. However, since 2017 some \$20,000 has been invested in enhancing member benefits while relatively stable membership and break-even conferences have limited our financial growth. This goal is intrinsically tied to goal number 1 – that of increasing membership.</p> <p>The board recognizes that there is no point to funding for the sake of funding, but there is much good that PLAIN could do with increased funding. We hope that in our next planning cycle we can set out some objectives for what we might do with more money.</p>	In progress

Committee reports

1. Membership

Christine Smith (New Zealand) Membership co-chair

Ingrid Olsen (Sweden) Membership co-chair

Dominiek Braet – (Belgium) associate member

1.1 Increasing our membership

PLAIN now has 272 members from 38 countries. Around 32% of our members come from non-English speaking countries.

We are experiencing more lapsed memberships, largely balanced out by around the same number of new memberships. The impact of COVID-19 on businesses is likely to result in some lapses. Of the survey respondents who answered the question about COVID-19 impacts, 45% had experienced loss of some work. The committee works closely with PLAIN's secretary to resolve any renewal problems as they arise.

Membership needs to remain relevant and offer benefits that attract and retain members. The survey showed that members want access to professional and business development, marketing, and plain-language training. They also want access to reference materials, including standards, with evidence to help them promote clear communication.

By collaborating and combining our resources with Clarity and the Center for Plain Language where possible, PLAIN will be better able to deliver what members want.

PLAIN's LinkedIn forum is hugely popular and provides an opportunity for us to promote our work and attract more members. There is a misconception among some forum members that they are members of PLAIN. We are working to clarify the difference and encourage forum members to join PLAIN.

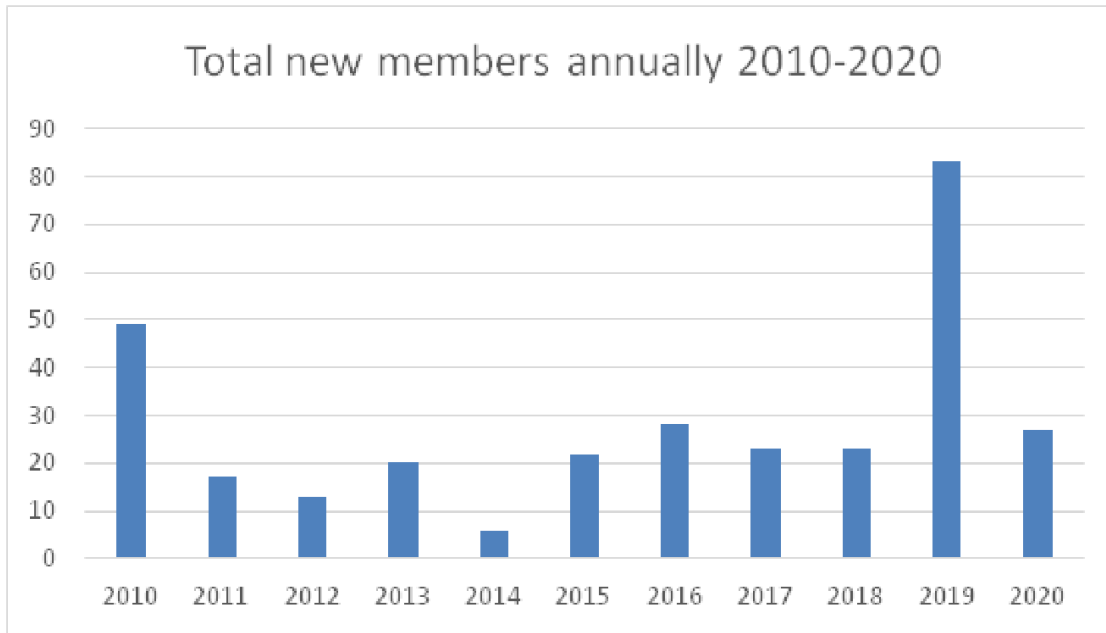
Most of the 2016–2020 strategic goals for membership have been achieved:

1: Double membership over the next three years and work toward 1,000 members by 2020.

This goal has not been met, but the current committee is keen to retain it in the next strategic plan.

In 2016 PLAIN had 231 members. In August 2020 the total was 272, an increase of 18% over the 4 years.

A significant increase in membership in 2019 is linked to the success of PLAIN's conference in Oslo. Looking at new memberships for each year since 2010, PLAIN's best year ever for new memberships was 2019.



- 2: Double membership from non-English speaking countries from 15% to 30% of members, to become more truly international.

This goal has been achieved, with 31% reached in May and 32% in August.

- 3: Create a tiered membership to better target benefits for professional practitioners and public supporters.

At its February 2020 meeting, the board accepted in principle the membership committee's proposal for restructuring membership grades. The proposed new structure increases benefits for all members and introduces options for partnering with PLAIN at an organizational level.

The survey information provided more options for new benefits, and work is ongoing to finalize the new structure.

- 4: Collaborate with other plain language organizations by offering mutual membership benefits.

Collaboration with our fellow International Plain Language Federation members is increasing. PLAIN is supporting Clarity and CPL in organizing the 2020 *Access for All* conference.

The survey information showed strong support for collaboration, particularly on membership. Almost 90% of responders agreed or strongly agreed with a combined membership deal with Clarity and CPL.

- 5: Increase membership fees in line with increasing member benefits.

Fees were increased by \$10 CAD in July 2019, as recommended by the previous membership committee. However, the fee increase was not implemented before the coronavirus pandemic began.

We are now working on increasing member benefits based on what members told us they want, in our recent survey.

The board agreed in February 2020 to change the currency for membership fees to US dollars. This change aligns PLAIN's currency for payment with that of Clarity and CPL. It represents a small increase for most members, based on exchange rates at that time.

1.2 PLAIN members by country

Active members by country (alphabetical)		Active members by country (by numbers)	
Argentina	6	Canada	85
Australia	38	United States	48
Belgium	3	Australia	38
Blank [no country details listed]	15	Blank [no country details listed]	15
Brazil	3	Sweden	15
Canada	85	New Zealand/Aotearoa	8
Cayman Islands	1	South Africa	8
Chile	3	Germany	7
Colombia	1	Netherlands	7
Denmark	1	Argentina	6
Ecuador	1	Spain	6
Finland	5	Finland	5
France	3	Ireland	5
Germany	7	Switzerland	5
Hungary	1	Belgium	3
India	1	Brazil	3
Ireland	5	Chile	3
Israel	1	France	3
Italy	2	Norway	3
Japan	1	Portugal	3
Luxembourg	1	United Kingdom	3
Malaysia	1	Italy	2
Mexico	1	Cayman Islands	1
Netherlands	7	Colombia	1
New Zealand/Aotearoa	8	Denmark	1
Nigeria	1	Ecuador	1
Norway	3	Hungary	1
Perú	1	India	1
Philippines	1	Israel	1
Poland	1	Japan	1
Portugal	3	Luxembourg	1
Singapore	1	Malaysia	1

Active members by country (alphabetical)		Active members by country (by numbers)	
South Africa	8	Mexico	1
South Korea	1	Nigeria	1
Spain	6	Perú	1
Sweden	15	Philippines	1
Switzerland	5	Poland	1
United Kingdom	3	Singapore	1
United States	48	South Korea	1
Total	272	Total	272

2. Conference

Margrethe Kvarenes (Norway) Conference co-chair

Irene Stotko (South Africa) Conference co-chair

Miguel Martinho (Portugal) Conference co-chair

2.1 Oslo 2020: A world conference

Our last biennial conference in Oslo, Norway gathered 405 participants from all continents. The 125 speakers alone came from 25 countries, so we can confidently call it a ‘world conference’. The conference explored the theme *Clear communication – clear results* over a preconference session, two plenary sessions, ten poster sessions and eight concurrent stream sessions. The three most popular streams were *Plain language in the digital era*, *Plain language in practice* and *Plain language pays off*. People especially crave good examples of how plain language pays off. The conference was evaluated and a lot of constructive feedback yielded from that evaluation. One learning point for our future conferences is to encourage more presentations which go to the next level, beyond ‘the data’, to some of the more creative, values-based outcomes – all while covering more basic and practical themes.

2.2 Changing times bring new opportunities

Early in 2019 we started to explore a closer cooperation with Clarity for our future conferences, and with the COVID-19 pandemic this intention became a reality. Together PLAIN, Clarity and The Center for Plain Language present one event in two parts: *Access for All – Plain Language is a Civil Right*. Together we will explore how plain language can be used to break down barriers in society and increase access, justice, and transparency for all. The first part will be digital and takes place October 13–15, 2020. The second part takes place in May 2021 and will hopefully be partly in-person, in Washington DC, USA. Although we recognize the high value of face-to-face networking and exchange, we also see that by going digital we can reach a wider audience with our content and mission.

3. Communications

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

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

Claudia Poblete Olmedo (Chile) Communications co-chair and Spanish-language advisor

3.1 Ongoing improvements to our website

Our website is crucial in attracting potential members and keeping current ones. We continue to add content and improve the site.

We kept adding content to the members-only section that only paying members can access. We are also working on migrating the presentations from the Oslo conference here. The members-only section is available at plainlanguagenetwork.org > Membership > [Resources for members](#).

We added only a few news items this past year. We are still looking for a member to help us write new content for the website. We fixed bugs and other issues as part of routine maintenance.

Monthly visits to our website still average around 2,500 (with a rise in the months around our biennial conference).

We are currently working on auditing the website and figuring out how best to improve it in light of the results of the member survey.

Increased demand from non-English speaking countries

In 2016, 60% of our website visitors came from the US, Canada, the UK, or Australia. By 2020, this percentage dropped to 47%. Meanwhile, the combined interest from Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking countries increased exponentially (from 4% to 20%).

Our users are interested in information about plain language that is not in English, as attested by the popularity of our subpages in German, French, Portuguese and Spanish.

Web support

We wanted to have a new contract for routine website support. We explored several options and decided not to enter into a deal that involved paying a fixed fee every month. We might have to revisit this decision later if we start to have more technical issues.

Conference website

We have a problem with PLAIN conference websites. The organizers usually don't want to keep them up indefinitely. However, it takes extra time and energy to migrate content from them to our own website. Therefore, we decided to host the websites of future conferences on PLAIN's website. We also started working on a template for conferences. However, COVID-19 disrupted the way our conferences are usually organized so we have suspended these plans for now.

3.2 Communicating with our members

The newsletter *Plain matters* is back

We created a new simplified template for our newsletter. The first one was sent in July 2020, which had a 66% open rate and 30% click-through rate (a decent starting metric). We can continue to track

the reach of our emails through the tracking in Wild Apricot. Newsletters are planned to go out in January, April, July, and October.

In addition, we created a simplified template for email announcements, which have been used several times for messages about the conference, member survey, e-journal etc. The open rates for these are all around 65%.

Social media presence continues to grow

Channel	Followers (at Aug 27, 2020)	Growth in last year
Facebook	735	19%
Twitter	25555	24%
LinkedIn (page)	359	(data not known)

Most of our posts on social media are organizational announcements (conference, call for contributions, etc). We do not have any campaigns or member engagement strategy at the moment, but we hope to clarify our goals for using social media in the next strategic plan.

Within the last year, we have also started to test the use of a social media management tool. After six months we will assess whether we want to continue using the tool.

We also started to post to the LinkedIn page, which was pretty much untouched in recent years.

We do not have any plans to use YouTube at the moment.

LinkedIn forum continues to be a valuable asset for members and non-members

Our LinkedIn forum continues to be expertly managed by Deanna Lorianni of Zuula Consulting. She provided the following data about the forum:

	Amount (at July 31, 2020)	Growth in last year
Total new members	629	66%
Total new countries	11	57%
Total countries	77	13%

The countries with the most forum members are the US, followed by Canada, India, South Africa, and Brazil. We are seeing new forum members from smaller countries such as Cameroon, Jordan, and Moldova.

This data confirms that the forum plays an important role in extending our global reach to professionals.

4. Publications

Hannah Sapunor-Davis (Germany) Publications co-chair

Claudia Poblete Olmedo, Publications co-chair

4.1 Publishing our e-journal

Hannah Sapunor-Davis took over the role of Managing Editor from former PLAIN president Joanna Richardson. Former PLAIN president Neil James continues to serve as Editor-in-Chief.

Procedures and templates refined

Within the last year we have updated the contributor guide and established processes and timelines for future issues. This means that the ‘development’ phase of the journal is practically completed. Now the task is to keep up the momentum and continue engaging members for future issues.

Volumes 2 and 3

Volume 2 of the e-journal was shared with members in July 2020. We received positive feedback from members.

We also issued a call for contributions for volume 3 in July. From this we sourced nearly all contributors for the issue. (We reached out to only two contributors ourselves to commission specific topics.) This tells us that publishing open calls is effective and that our members are clearly interested in contributing.

In volume 3 we will include a few bilingual pieces. As an international organization, we are committed to including non-English where possible.

More work to do

Our survey indicated that there are still many members who do not know about the e-journal. This means that alongside the production of the e-journal, we have to focus on the promotion of it, especially to current members. This task will have to be coordinated with organizational communication.

We also plan to begin seeking more paid advertisers in future editions. This will offset some of the costs of our designer, which would make the production more sustainable.

4.2 Developing papers and funding reference books

This was not a priority for the last year. While we still hope to develop more resources for members, we would like to broaden the format. For example, this could potentially include webinars, blogs, web pages, etc. This goal should also be considered in cooperation with other committees’ goals.

Papers for papers’ sake is not enough. We have to think through which of our members’ needs these publications will serve. We will re-frame this goal in the next strategic plan.

5. Professional development

Marie Antaya (Canada) Professional development co-chair

Bede Sunter (Australia) Professional development co-chair

5.1 Developing a standard for plain language

In September 2019, Technical Committee 37 (TC37) of the International Standards Organization (ISO) voted in favor of the proposal by Standards Australia to develop an international, multi-language standard for plain language. The announcement was made at PLAIN's conference in Oslo on September 25, 2019.

The work of developing the standard is being managed by the International Plain Language Federation (IPLF) of which PLAIN is a member. PLAIN is a financial contributor to the project. The work of drafting the standard is being carried out by Working Group 11 (WG11) of TC 37. On August 11, 2020, TC 37 approved PLAIN's application to become a formal 'liaison organization' to WG11. PLAIN is represented in this function by the president and secretary.

Over the last year, PLAIN members have had the following involvement in the standard's development:

- On October 17, 2019 members were invited to complete a survey about the international standard
- On February 6, 2020 members were invited to comment on the first draft of the standard (the so-called experts' draft) and those comments were incorporated into draft version 1.1 of the standard.

On June 24, WG11 met to resolve comments and questions on draft version 1.1. A new draft version 1.2 was completed by the WG11 drafting committee on September 30. Draft version 1.2 will be circulated to PLAIN members shortly after that for their assessment and comment.

5.2 Plain language awards

PLAIN continues to offer two awards for achievement in plain language:

- The Christine Mowat Plain Language Achievement Award
- The Cheryl Stephens Innovation Award.

(Please see PLAIN's website for details of these two awards.)

These two awards are presented every two years at PLAIN's biennial conference. The most recent presentations were at PLAIN's conference in Oslo, Norway on October 26, 2019. The Cheryl Stephens award, a new award for PLAIN, was presented for the first time.

The Christine Mowat award was presented to Dr Neil James, a former president of PLAIN and a researcher, trainer, editor, author, and overall leader in the plain language movement. Dr James is the co-founder and executive director of the Plain English Foundation, an organization that has shaped communication culture in some of Australia's most important sectors.

The Cheryl Stephens award was presented jointly to Katherine McManus and Simon Fraser University Continuing Education department for the development, design, and implementation of the university's Plain Language Certificate Program. Julia Denholm, dean of Simon Fraser University, accepted the award on behalf of the joint recipients.

6. Governance and finance

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

Bede Sunter (Australia) Secretary, Governance and finance co-chair

6.1 Presenting the Treasurer's report

PLAIN continues to be financially healthy

PLAIN continues to be in good financial health. Our expenses were just \$180 more than our income for the fiscal year.

The financial statements cover the period July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020 and 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.

We had a few expenses beyond our basic operating expenses. The board approved them all:

- We continued to have Zuula Consulting moderate the LinkedIn Group (\$1450 per quarter) and extended their contract into the next fiscal year.
- Christine Mowat award expenses (\$1155 for Oslo).
- Improvements to PLAIN's website, with work continuing (\$658)
- E-journal design expenses (US\$750 per issue).
- Refunds to board members for 50% of conference fees (about \$1050)

Our regular financial review meets our legal obligations

The financial review was conducted by ABFK, Chartered Professional Accountants in Ottawa, Ontario. The members approved hiring this firm at the 2019 AGM. A copy of the financial review is attached.

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

All amounts are in Canadian dollars.

A few comments on specific parts of the financial statements

Statement 1: Statement of financial position

PLAIN's financial position is at \$64,923, which is \$49 less than last year's total.

Statement 2: Statement of receipts and disbursements receipts

Revenues: \$18,973

- Membership fees – we attracted more members in the last fiscal year, with fees up from \$14,445 in the previous fiscal year to \$17,228 in this reporting period.
- Conference – the 2019 conference broke even. We expect to recover conference sponsorship expenses paid in the previous fiscal year from the conference organizer, which will be included in next year's financial statements.
- LinkedIn – PLAIN received a \$1000 sponsorship from Simon Fraser University, which offsets the costs of managing our LinkedIn account (\$5800 - \$1000 = \$4800).

Disbursements: \$19,153

- Business tax – the annual fee PLAIN pays to the Canadian government for our registration

- Conferences – this includes printing expenses and refunds to board members
- Insurance – for directors and officers liability insurance
- Interest and bank charges – mostly fees paid to process our membership payments
- Memberships – for Wild Apricot membership management services
- Office – includes postage and miscellaneous expenses
- Website expenses – for web hosting, development and maintenance
- Christine Mowat award expenses – for engraving, shipping, and customs duties for Oslo
- Design expenses – for design of our e-journal
- Cheryl Stephens award – award costs beyond the sponsor's limit
- Professional fees – includes the auditor's review
- Telephone – for conference calling services

6.2 Treasurer submits a request for motion

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

6.3 Treasurer submits a request to appoint an auditor for 2020–2021

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 2020–2021 financial year. They are reasonable in price (about \$1400 for a normal year) and they're familiar with our organization, which helps to keep the cost down.

6.4 Understanding our governance structure

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

The board has been operating with 12 directors. Since the 2019 AGM, we held four board meetings as well as 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 any, except the Executive committee. You can find out more about our board members at www.plainlanguagenetwork.org > PLAIN > [Board of directors](#).

The following table lists the full board, the committees they work on and their board meeting attendance.

Role	Name	Country	Committees	Meetings attended
President	Margrethe Kvarenes	Norway	Executive, Governance and finance, Conference	4
Vice President	Miguel Martinho	Portugal	Executive, Conference	2
Treasurer	Diane Macgregor	Canada	Executive, Governance and finance	4
Secretary	Bede Sunter	Australia	Executive, Governance and finance, Professional development	4
Director	Jana Goldman	USA	Communications	2
Director	Marie Antaya	Canada	Professional development	2
Director	Hannah Sapunor-Davis	Germany	Publications	4
Director	Vera Gergely	Hungary	Communications	4
Director	Christine Smith	New Zealand	Membership	4
Director	Ingrid Olsson	Sweden	Membership	4
Director	Irene Stotko	South Africa	Conference	4
Director	Claudia Andrea Poblete Olmedo	Chile	Communications	3

Governance activities promote the smooth running of the board

With an international board working across seven time zones, finding meeting times to suit everyone presents its challenges. (During the northern winter our time zones represent a difference of 19 hours.)

We have this year adopted FreeConference as our meeting platform instead of GoToMeeting. FreeConference is not free but costs significantly less than GoToMeeting and gives us a video presence.

The secretary organizes the meetings, prepares an agenda with the president and takes minutes.

For the AGM, we prepare an agenda, this report, and other supporting documents. Because the AGM changes location, board members work both online and at the venue to ensure we maximize the meeting time for our members.

Future work for governance will focus on improving the management of our corporate knowledge to provide better continuity in light of the turnover of directors written into our bylaws.

6.5 2020 AGM will elect five new board members

Directors serve for 3-year terms and at each AGM, we have some directors vacating positions, which we need to fill. We put a call out during the year for nominations to join the working board.

Five board members are retiring this year.

Jana Goldman and Diane Macgregor have both served the board diligently for the maximum six years. Marie Antaya has served for three years and is now retiring. Miguel Martinho had to step down from the board during the year due to personal issues not related to working with PLAIN. We must also say goodbye to Claudia Poblete who will step back from the board to become an associate board member.

We thank them for their valuable contributions and we wish them the very best. Special thanks go to Diane for her work in ensuring the integrity of our finances and securing a smooth succession to a new treasurer.

Five positions are available this year, all for 3-year terms. The board has received five nominations from qualified members to fill the available positions. We will ask the AGM to approve all candidates. In particular we have received a nomination from Nicole Watkins Campbell to take up the role of treasurer. Nicole is enthusiastic to take up the role and has the skills and experience to discharge the duties of treasurer. Her appointment will mean we can meet our Canadian government requirement that the treasurer is a Canadian citizen.

In addition, Bede Sunter has served one 3-year term and has nominated for a second term.

Short profiles of the nominating candidates are included in the agenda for the AGM.