

# President's Report to the EAHIL General Assembly 2002

## Introduction

In essence, this report marks the end of my second term of office as EAHIL President, and it has been a great honour to lead our organisation, and a tremendous pleasure to chair such a talented, diverse and hard-working Board. Every Board member has participated energetically, at meetings and in the online listserve discussions where most of the work now takes place. In Arne Jakobsson EAHIL has found a treasurer able to compile coherent, comprehensible budgets that work as well in practice as they do on paper, and in Linda Lisgarten we have a secretary whose minutes are a clear and organised version of meetings that in reality sometimes blow here and there like the wind. My most heartfelt thanks, though, go to our secretariat supervisor Suzanne Bakker. ; Like a swan on a lake, Suzanne has maintained seemed in serene command of every administrative matter, while at the same time keeping an enormous amount of work and commitment hidden from the world.

There have been three marked differences from my first term as President. The administrative efficiency of Suzanne and the NVB team have meant a much looser involvement with the day-to-day running of the association. Even the recent change of office premises went imperceptibly smoothly. Secondly, the universality of email has allowed much more discussion and democracy than was practicable in the days when referring a matter to the rest of the Board entailed a series of two-week delays while letters crossed the continent. The final change, though, is the most fundamental and positive for our future. This has been the emergence of EAHIL Council as a lively and independent forum able and willing to take on practical issues and to form groups of activists to push them along. A lot of the credit for this goes to my predecessor as President, Manuela Colombi, who had a clear view of what the Council should be and who worked hard to make it a reality.

## Organisational Matters

The last stage of EAHIL's organisation comes before the General Assembly today with the new version of our Rules of Procedure, which have been rewritten to match the completely revised Statutes approved in 2000. This will mark the end of a long chapter of detailed and not very exciting work, and we must be grateful to Alice Nørhede and everyone else who has been involved.

## Code of Ethics

Also to be presented at this meeting is the new EAHIL Code of Ethics. A practical code of ethics, relevant to the practitioner and grounded in everyday work is an essential component of any professional organisation. The work of compiling a code for European health information professionals was initiated by Pirjo Rajakili and the much mourned, much missed Turid Tharaldsen and the final version of the code being submitted to the Assembly is the product of a hard-working group from across our region, led by Pirjo and Eva Alopaeus.

## Professional Accreditation

In another step to make EAHIL a more active and useful part of our everyday work, the Assembly is also being asked to approve in principle the establishment by the association of what will become a professional register for European information and library workers who are active in the general area of health and medicine. Much will depend on finding the right group of people to work through the details and of devising a *schema* that will prove relevant across all the cultural and professional traditions represented within EAHIL.

## Virtual Organisation

At the January 2002 Board meeting, Arne Jakobsson made a very telling observation that a very high proportion of EAHIL's subscription income was spent on the administration arrangements which were a direct and necessary consequence of having a subscription. If the subscription were abolished, then very large parts of the subscription budget would also disappear. Whv. he asked. do we not take advantage of the opportunities provided by the web

...opportunities, the extent, as the most take advantage of the opportunities provided by the use of technology for managing devolved and distributed activities at very low cost? Why do we not become a virtual organisation free to all those working in our sector? Apart from the stock reply that no-one has ever done it before, (which in these exciting times is no answer at all) there is no immediately obvious and valid negative reply to these questions, Seeing if the theory can be put effectively into practice will be one of the most interesting tasks which the new Board will face.

### **In Conclusion**

I would like to congratulate Arne Jakobsson on his election to the office of President and to wish him well for the next two years. He inherits, as I did, an able and experienced Board. Given his quite magical ability to produce vast quantities of work and to inspire those around him to do the same while all the time appearing as laid back as a hippie, EAHIL can look forward to a period of excitement and achievement under his stewardship. In closing I would like to thank everyone who has made my second term as President so enjoyable and so easy — many whom I have already named, but particularly my colleague at the BMA Euphemia Coutinho and also Elisabeth Husem, my long-time friend, mentor and fount of help and good advice.

Tony McSeán

September 2002

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| 2003 | Workshop in Oslo - together with the annual conference of the librarians of the Nordic Countries |
| 2004 | Conference in Spain  |
| 2005 | Again with ICML in Brazil  |