



Annual General Meeting 2003: Chairman's Report

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It is my privilege as the Chairman of the Management Committee of the International Press Telecommunications Council to say a few words at this 38th Annual General Meeting.

I must first thank Peter Müller for handing over a company that is in good working order. However, unlike Peter's report of last year, I am unable to report that it was a quiet year, with activities including the appointment of a new Managing Director and the passage of a major new Standard. In order to accomplish the business of the company, the Management Committee had three regular meetings and one special meeting (to deal with the appointment of the new Managing Director).

Change in the Company

The major change of the last year has been the retirement of David Allen and the appointment of a new Managing Director - I would like formally welcome Michael Steidl to his first Annual General Meeting, and hope he will be with us for many more. Michael has successfully moved the IPTC offices to Vienna Austria from England, although the company continues to be registered in the United Kingdom.

The IPTC has also seen the largest amount of change in committee Chairs that I have experienced during my membership. Stéphane Guérillot now chairs the Standards Committee, John Minting the News Metadata Working Party, Laurent le Meur the NewsML Working Party, and Walt Baranger the Public Relations Committee

IPTC has had a number of active members leave due to retirement and other reasons, these included Irving Levine, Tony Allday, and James Hartley. IPTC is also going to lose the services of Walter Grolimund as Honorary Treasurer although he will continue to be active in the Council's work.

Finance

I am happy and pleased to report that, overall, the finances of the company are good. This being said, I need to alert you of future events. While the current financial reserves are at slightly more than 100% of the annual budget, in 2004 we are budgeted to operate at a small deficit. The current operating rules require the Management Committee to consider a dues increase if the reserves fall below 90% of the annual budget.

In addition to watching it's spending, IPTC needs to continue to solicit new members and encourage associate members to become full members in order to maintain financial stability.

IPTC might also need to look for other means of income.

Membership

Membership this year is up slightly and stands at 27 full members and 24 associate members, representing 36 full shares and 24 fractional shares. This is down one share from last year.

We have added six new associate members: ANA (Athens News Agency), Harris, ifra, Inight Software, XMLteam, and MCN.

While there are a few members in arrears, and there are indications that several members may be lost for 2004, overall membership is in good shape. I would still encourage members to encourage membership of any companies they know who are in the news business or develop systems that use IPTC standards.



Standards

The council has approved one major standard this year, SportsML - an exciting standard for information about sport. I think that this will be one of the most widely used IPTC standards and will expose the work of IPTC to many new individuals and companies. It is probably the first IPTC standard that will actually be used by the general public in addition to the normal business to business activities that we are used to.

NewsML continues to spread around the world: The Chinese continue to fast track their development with major seminars in Beijing and Hong Kong; similarly the NSK NewsML Team continues to work on accelerated implementation of NewsML in the Japanese news industry. The Subject Reference System (SRS) continues to grow with a significant number of new terms - both general and specialty-specific - being added. In addition the Public Relations Committee has distributed press releases relating to the standards the IPTC has been developing and other related IPTC activities. Finally, the IPTC Mirror has converted from a mailed paper publication to a completely electronic publication.

Work Ahead

The Standards Committee has embarked on a major review of the IPTC standards. The Roadmap project will begin to harmonize the IPTC standards especially in the area of metadata. There will also be work to improve the technical and marketing documentation with more useful examples, which will help to make the standards simpler and easier to implement. This will be a significant step forward. Part of this project is also the development of NewsML V2, which will be a simplified version.

Work continues on specialized content development with the expectation that at least one new specification will be completed. There is also an expectation that the SRS will continue to grow at a reasonable pace. IPTC will evaluate the possibility joining with other standards bodies to undertake projects of common interest.

The Standards Committee with the help of the Public Relations Committee will undertake a survey of the membership and other interested parties to identify what is restricting the implementation of the current IPTC standards and what can be done to get broader adoption.

Finally the Public Relations Committee will undertake to review and update the IPTC web sites to make them consistent and have them provide more information about the work of the company.

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