

English Books @ CERN

Minutes of the annual general meeting

Thursday, March 16, 2023 at 12:00

1 Attendance and adoption of the agenda

The following members were in attendance: Michael Davis, Sharon Davis, Eva Hansen, John Pym, Klaudia Vass, Sarah Waller, and Kate Whalen. A quorum was reached. (NB: The club's Articles of Association stipulate that the minimum number of people that must be present in order to form a quorum is the lesser of either 5% of the total number of members or four people.)

The agenda, which may be found at <https://indico.cern.ch/event/1249519/>, was approved.

2 Approval of the minutes of the 2022 AGM and EGMs

In addition to the usual AGM in March, two extraordinary general meetings were held in 2022: one in May to elect a new Treasurer, and one in November to modify the club's Articles of Association. One item from the AGM (cleaning of the club rooms) was outstanding as it had not been deemed necessary in 2022; this will be addressed in 2023. The minutes of all three meetings were approved unanimously.

3 President's report

3.1 Membership

The club counted 37 members at the end of 2022; membership has held fairly steady over the past years.

3.2 Book selection

Two book selections took place in 2022; in total, 37 new titles were purchased.

3.3 Activities in 2022

After the post-pandemic return to normal activities on site, the club resumed collecting subscription fees in 2022. In order to attract new members, Sergio designed a new poster, copies of which were distributed around the site. The club also held several promotional events. Unfortunately, none of the prospective members identified at these events followed up with a membership application. It seems imperative that we should accept cash payments on the spot at future events.

Klaudia and Michael created a new Mattermost channel for discussions among the members.

In May, the club elected Sharon Davis as its new Treasurer.

Due to renovation work at the library, the club's shelf for donated books was moved to the "games area" of R1, near the Users' Office. This has proved to be a popular location, as the shelf appears to be well-used.

In November, it was necessary to rewrite the club's Articles of Association in order to achieve compliance with the Swiss Civil Code. This was required to give Sharon access rights to the club's bank account, as well as signing rights to John.

3.4 Thanks

John thanked the committee members for their enthusiastic work over the past year.

4 Treasurer's report

The club's bank account balance stood at 2220.78 CHF at the end of 2022. The club's income totalled 540 CHF, and its expenditures totalled 756.75 CHF. The club's finances were audited and approved by Josephine Stott on February 28, 2023.

The club's bank balance has been on a downward trend for the past several years, from approximately 6000 CHF in 2012 (the large surplus being the result of an insurance settlement following a flood in the basement of the Main Building during the 1990s), down to 2200 CHF at present. At the current rate, the balance will reach 0 in four years. Sharon recommended that we adopt a "net zero" strategy going forward, aiming not to spend more money than we take in from subscription fees, and save the current surplus for emergencies. She proposed that we aim for an annual membership tally of 40 members, which would give us an approximate income of 900 CHF (based on the current club composition with half of the members paying the full fee and half paying the reduced fee for Staff Association members). Sharon suggested that we ask new members how they learned about the club, in order to more effectively target our advertising. Michael suggested that a balance of 2200 CHF is ample and could be reduced further without any great risk to the club's operations.

John commented that the increased spending in recent years had been intentional, in order to rejuvenate the club's inventory and attract new members. Kate also commented that the club has not had an accurate membership tally in the past couple of years due to the pause in collecting membership fees during the pandemic shutdown, and that we should take a careful look at our numbers in the current year going forward, and let this inform our decision. Those present were generally in favour of more careful spending in the coming years.

5 Committee members

The committee for 2022 was composed of the following members:

- President: John Pym
- Secretary: Kate Whalen
- Treasurer: Sharon Davis, replacing Peggy Pithioud and Morna Robillard (deputy) in May.
- Club rooms: Eva Hansen
- Website: Klaudia Vass
- Book selection committee: Sergio Grancagnolo

All those present were willing to stay on in their current roles in 2023 and were unanimously re-elected. The committee will follow up with Sergio, who was absent.

6 Subscription rates and book orders for 2023

The membership fees in 2022 were: 30 CHF for a basic family membership, 20 CHF for Staff Association members, and 10 CHF for summer students. At present, half of the club's members pay the full fee, and half pay the reduced Staff Association fee. All were in favour of maintaining the current fee structure in 2023.

In keeping with Sharon's "net zero" proposal, it was decided to hold two book selections in 2023, with the expenditure dependent on the total number of members.

Michael emphasized that the club should focus its efforts on advertising and attracting new members; he suggested that more posters should be placed in common areas, and that we could also investigate advertising on the screens in R1. Klaudia suggested displaying a list of the new books at the donated book shelves in R1.

Kate did some preliminary investigations into alternative book suppliers in an attempt to reduce costs; she found one shop in Paris (Smith and Son), which offers a large selection of English books. Prices were generally comparable with those of the current supplier (Payot in Geneva) and it was decided to stay with Payot for the time being and focus on increasing the club's revenue.

It was agreed that the annual call for membership renewals would be sent by Sharon following the meeting, and the club room door code would be changed April 30 and sent to all those who had paid their fees for 2023.

7 Programme for 2023

7.1 Book orders

Two book orders will be held in 2023; Kate will organize the spring order shortly.

7.2 Radiator replacement

The radiators in the club room have been disconnected for some time. Recently, one of them fell over and was removed as it was a safety hazard. In order to protect the books from dampness and improve the comfort of the room in the winter, it will be necessary to find another heating solution. John will open a service ticket with SCE to start the process of exploring the available options.

7.3 Jardin des Particules

The coordinator of the CERN crèche recently contacted the club to express an interest in using its facilities. John took the teachers to visit the club room; they were very keen to bring the children to visit the club on an occasional basis to practise reading (the books would stay in the room). They also invited the club members to participate in reading stories to the children. The crèche has a budget available and is willing to join the club.

All of those present were in favour of the idea, but a few important points were raised during the discussion. Michael asked if the room was safe for children, and John confirmed that it has passed the annual safety inspection. It was agreed that the floor should be cleaned and the furniture rearranged to make it more comfortable. The crèche will provide cushions for the children to sit on and should be held responsible for cleaning up after themselves.

Sharon asked if the current Articles of Association contain a provision for institutional memberships. This needs to be investigated, and a suitable fee must be determined (with the aim of using a reasonable portion of the fee to purchase more children's books, and taking into account the shortened lifespan of books handled by tiny fingers). John will organize a follow-up meeting with the crèche to better understand their needs and set a membership fee.

Klaudia volunteered to reorganize the children's shelves to sort the books according to age, and investigate the inventory.

7.4 Data privacy

Each CERN club must have a data privacy notice. A template exists; Michael has experience with this from the Games Club and will provide assistance.

7.5 Club room cleaning

A cleaning session will be organized soon, prior to granting access to the crèche.

7.6 Record club

The President of the CERN Record Club recently contacted John to gauge the EBC's interest in taking over their DVD collection. The Record Club's membership has dwindled and they are no longer active. The Record club has a room near R2 and a positive bank balance.

Several members (Sharon, Kate, Klaudia) expressed reservations about taking on another club's unwanted materials and the additional work needed to organize and maintain the collection, especially since DVDs are more or less obsolete. Eva enquired if the EBC rooms had enough space for the DVD collection; there is sufficient space, but Sarah pointed out that the club is already planning to expand its children's collection and so the current available shelf space in the barracks may be needed for that purpose. Those present were not interested in splitting the collections across two rooms (the current EBC room in the barracks and the smaller Record Club room near R2). Several members were curious about the Record Club's bank balance, but it was not clear if we would have access to those funds, since they would be returned to the Staff Association in the event that the Record Club folds.

Among those present, there was no great enthusiasm for taking on the responsibility for the Record Club's inventory; John will inform the Record Club President.

8 Conclusion

No other business was raised. The Committee was pleased to see that 2022 was a busy year and 2023 is promising to be even busier! The meeting was adjourned.