



Montpellier

by Diana Klein-Franke

Full of anticipation, I attended my first ever major conference in beautiful Montpellier in the South of France. I arrived at Nimes the day before the conference, and who should I meet at the airport but Philippa Clow, Nicci and Jane Stock (my workshop leader for the following afternoon). I was lucky enough to share the taxi with them to the hotel. I attended four workshops and still had enough time for a bit of sightseeing. It really was a gorgeous location and a great "getaway" from the usual hectic pace of life that we all have, and allowed us to get to know our fellow EMWA members much better.

Montpellier was a fantastic setting for the conference. The weather could have been a bit better but hey, let's not get picky here! The organisation and the outings, especially the visit to the "Chateaux" with wine tasting, were such an experience that I am glad I did not miss. I was lucky enough to find time to interview the three women at the top - Philippa Clow, Julia Cooper and Julia F-K. I learned a lot about EMWA while carrying out the interviews; everything from the past, present and future!

I will begin with Philippa Clow, who has been the association's secretary for the past five years (when Philippa started with EMWA, there were only two people running the office!) and hopefully will continue for many more. The first conference (if you can call it a "conference") took place Alderly, UK and was only attended by nine people! Since then, EMWA conferences have grown somewhat (this conference was the largest yet with over 150 attendees!) and have taken place in many wonderful places like Madrid, Copenhagen, Dublin, and Montpellier. Not only has the organisation been growing steadily in membership, but also the educational programme has improved. A major contributor to this positive change has been the education programme with most of the credit going to Julia Cooper. She put many hours of work in the programme and developed it with the enthusiastic assistance of the educational committee. Another great improvement in the past five years is, of course, TWS. This great journal has not been around very long, but it has had a tremendous impact by providing quality reading for all EMWA members - 'well done' Barry for producing a great read!

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Well after speaking with Philippa, curiosity got the better of me and I decided to see if I could catch Julia Cooper to hear more about the EMWA educational programme. I also heard that Julia F-K was taking over the presidency of EMWA. A spur of the moment decision was made and I decided to interview her as well. I had such a good time talking with them that I was late for the workshop I was attending on Ethics - Sorry Faith!

Julia Cooper, the first education officer, has been with EMWA for over five years and is the 'brains' behind the education programme. EMWA used to have the so-called Core Curriculum (CC) programme, which was associated with AMWA. Unfortunately, it became increasingly difficult to work with AMWA, as they wanted to have a say in the various administration procedures and wanted to see the conference programmes in advance. Therefore, EMWA and AMWA reached a mutual agreement that each organisation would 'strike-out' on their own.

Since then, EMWA has evolved into the vital organisation it is today, and the education programme is tailored to EMWA members based in Europe. The programme in its new format has been running for a year and will soon cover all the needs of medical writers in Europe. The second one-day conference in Lille, France, was specially tailored for the needs of new medical writers. The one-day conferences have, so far, been very successful.

Lastly, our new President, Julia F-K has been a member of EMWA for just three years, but what an incredibly successful three years she has accomplished. In her first year, Julia was the membership officer, the second year the vice-president, and now, the president, taking over from Keith Veitch. Julia's first conference was in Copenhagen. Since then, more members have attended the annual conferences and a broader sense of community has evolved, and EMWA is "as friendly as ever". Julia is looking forward to the year ahead in her role as president and certainly has very high goals. She hopes to establish an exchange between the European Community (EMEA) and EMWA, which will not only help to raise awareness, but will also explore ways that EMWA can be involved in the regulatory process. Additionally, Julia has thought of having one-day meetings that are dedicated to one topic/area, for example, exploring the common technical document with the organisation that put produced it. I really wish her a lot of luck in achieving these goals.

In conclusion, the conference in Montpellier was really wonderful. Apart from meeting and mingling with lots of fellow EMWA members, as a relatively new member I also managed to receive an insight into an association to which I am proud to belong. The actual organisation of the conference was superb, and the conference rooms were totally adequate for the workshops. The EMWA mugs we all received were a nice touch, indeed mine is in constant use at work! Also, a special mention has to go to Dominique, who really helped in organizing the fascinatingly beautiful social outing to the Chateaux and, of course, the music, which accompanied the wine tasting. For those of you who did not attend, you really missed out big on the wine!

Let's hope that the next conference, which is taking place in Prague, the 'golden city' will be bigger, better and more successful than ever!

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