



From the President's Desk

by Gerold Wilson

Dear Fellow EMWA members,

As I reported in the last issue of *The Write Stuff*, incorporation has now taken place. EMWA is now a non-profit organisation under the laws of the United Kingdom. I and the other members of the EC are pleased that this long-term goal has been realised and we hope that you share our enthusiasm. We will discuss incorporation at the General Business Meeting that will be held at the Copenhagen conference, and we will ask the membership to approve the Articles of Incorporation. I will see to it that a copy of the Articles are sent out in a mailing with the next issue of *The Write Stuff* (or in a separate mailing, if this is not feasible).

At the EC meeting near Heathrow on 17 November 1998, the following issues were addressed:

While I attended the Vancouver conference, Barbara Good (AMWA President), Art Gertel (AMWA Immediate Past President) and I talked about EMWA's affiliate status and the financial aspects of our relationship with AMWA. The EC will need to submit a statement of affiliation to AMWA before the AMWA Board Meeting in April, but the gist of the agreement is that we no longer will pay a portion of our annual membership dues to AMWA and will pay the AMWA chapter rate for Core Curriculum and Advanced workshops in the future, rather than the \$5.00 more per head that we have been paying. The EC and I agree that an EMWA/AMWA affiliation on the basis of such an agreement will mutually benefit both organisations and it is an agreement that we can live with for a long time.

The EC has firm plans to initiate the Corporate Sponsorship Programme in February 1999 with a mailing to all pharmaceutical companies and CROs. Jane Stock is working on the final wording of our letter and I am contacting EMWA members across Europe to establish exactly to whom we need to send the letters. If any of you have ideas regarding who we can contact to elicit support, please send an e-mail to me (gerold.wilson@schering.de). Most of you know my views on the importance of corporate support of our efforts: significant funding will enable us to extend the scope of our educational work (i.e., a second "session" of workshops per year) and will help us decrease the cost of conferences (and workshops) for members. I feel confident that we will meet the February 1999 deadline and I hope that we can report our first successes at the Copenhagen conference.

I have asked Barbara Grossman (Treasurer) to start planning for a 1-2 day workshop session to be held in the latter months of 1999. The EC sees this as a low-cost, workshop-only event to increase continuing education opportunities. The session, if we can get it going, will probably be held in England, near London Heathrow Airport. If you have suggestions or would like to lead a workshop session, please get in touch with Barbara or Julia Cooper.

And now I'd like to introduce a special message from our current Vice-President and future President, Geoff Hall:

In his speech at the Madrid 1998 conference, new President Gerold Wilson set as one of the objectives of his year in office the establishment of EMWA as a legal entity. Up until this year, EMWA has been a loose club with a constitution of sorts, but with no legal identity. This caused problems, not least with banking. The EMWA bank account for several years had to be a personal account of the treasurer. The implications of this could have been disastrous. Thankfully (not just for this reason. We would seriously miss him), Philip Cooper did not fall under a Basel bus during this period.

So what has changed? EMWA is now a limited company. The type of company that has been formed is called a company limited by guarantee. This means that there are no shareholders as such and so no-one has to fork out for their shares. However, every member of EMWA is now a member of the company. (Remember to make sure you are paid up.) EMWA cannot pay dividends to members and no-one can profit from the company. The company can make money from bank investments without any individual such as the treasurer being liable for the tax.

As a corporate body, we have more standing when it comes to discussions and negotiations with other bodies such as government, educational or EU bodies. By establishing EMWA as an entity in its own right, we have helped to secure stability into the future. The main part of the constitution, incorporated in the memorandum and Articles of Incorporation, is legally binding. We have to stick to rules. The general business meeting at the conference becomes the annual general meeting (AGM) of the company and is sovereign. The committee are the board of directors of the company and responsible to the AGM.

Is there a downside? If a company limited by guarantee goes bust, each member is liable for outstanding debts up to a personal liability of a staggering £1 (yes, one whole English pound). Oh and also on the downside, but only for me, it was a pretty tedious job to get it set up.

So what next? The invitation to the Copenhagen conference will include notice of the AGM of the company. Among other business and elections, members will be asked to ratify the formation of EMWA as:

The European Medical Writers Association
A company limited by guarantee

If anyone would like more information on all this (serious requests only please because it will involve a ton of paper), contact Geoff Hall (see back cover for address).