



Recollections and Accomplishments of Past EMWA Presidents

EMWA has now been in existence for 25 years already! So much has happened over the years. Sometimes it is good to sit back and reflect on the old days and how we are progressing into the future. Geoff Hall, a former President of EMWA, wrote a very personal history in 1999, in which he highlighted his memories and some of the most important changes in EMWA until 2008 (since his article was posted on the EMWA website). Needless to say, the pace of change has increased since then and the history he presented was in need of an update. I am therefore starting where Geoff left off, citing the high points of the terms of past presidents and letting them tell their own stories.

Julia Forjanic Klapproth served as EMWA President twice in 2007 and 2008. During her terms as President, the press officer position was established (today Public Relations Officer) to represent EMWA to the public, and the subcommittee organization of EMWA to encourage volunteers was put on firm footing. The EMWA “members only” section of the website was introduced, as was the first 5-year strategic plan. EMWA also contributed to the update of the Guidance for Good Publishing Practice during Julia’s time in office.

Helen Baldwin began as EMWA President in 2009. At this time EMWA changed the location of its home base from Switzerland to the UK and engaged MCI (a professional management company) to administer the Head Office. Among other accomplishments at this time were, the introduction of the first web-based conference survey, online downloading of workshop assignments, establishment of the executive committee role of conference manager, reduction of the term of vice-president to 1 year, and the creation of the social media group.

Laurence Auffret who succeeded Helen in 2010 was instrumental in organizing the first joint ICR-EMWA Symposium held in London. During her term, a searchable TWS (The Write Stuff) archive was set up on the EMWA website, which enabled readers to comment on the journal’s articles. The “Buddy system” was also continued to help first time attendees get oriented during the conferences. During Laurence’s time a standard EMWA presentation was created, that was accessible on the website to use to promote the organization regarding our activities, benefits, conferences, and the value of EMWA membership.

Over the years, changes came about in EMWA as a result of crises where major decisions had to be made to ensure the smooth running of the organization as described here by former EMWA President **Rita Wellens**.

“Soon after the appointment of the EC team in May 2011, we went full throttle into crisis management mode. We had been notified by MCI – EMWA’s association and conference management provider – that *they* were ending their contractual agreement. The EC only had the summer months to find a replacement. A previous request for proposal was updated including a much needed requirement for advanced website and software solutions; the turnaround time for receipt of candidacies was shortened to 10 days; the site visits for the selected service providers had to be done in August, with final appointment and hand-over



scheduled for September. This rollercoaster ended with KSAM being selected as EMWA's new service provider. EC members attended several F2F meetings in London and beyond to evaluate the candidates and to coordinate MCI's hand-over activities. During one of these meetings in London, I requested a volunteer to take minutes; a newly appointed EC member urged Sarah (Choudhury) to take on this task, after all... wasn't she the Honorary "Secretary"? This remark triggered much merriment, tears of joy and release of pent-up stress, and remains to this day an inside joke.

During the London and Cyprus conferences, it became clear that KSAM had fully caught the EMWA modus operandi and we were finally able to relax and to have fun. Heartfelt thanks to the witty winning EMWA team that made it happen – in random order – Elise (Langdon-Neuner), Gillian (Pritchard), Jo (Whelan), Sunethra (Wimalasundera), Sarah (Choudhury) and the always supportive Laurence (Auffret)."

We have been quite satisfied with KSAM running EMWA's Head Office thanks to Rita and the EC in 2011. We should also not forget the first issue featuring the MEW's new look was issued at this time in 2012.

Rita was succeeded by **Susan Bhatti** who made further strides in improving our organization. During Susan's term in office in 2012, the first EMWA Spring Conference Symposium was organized, the Geoff Hall Scholarship was established, and a Merchant's Bank account was set for EMWA members enabling them to pay conference fees via credit card. Together with Vice-President Andrea Rossi, she broadened EMWA's contact with other professional organizations such as ISMPP and ICP (Institute for Clinical Research). Susan's other accomplishments included extending the Fall conferences to enable delegates to take up to 4 workshops, and initiating webinars and online voting for EC candidates.

Andrea Rossi became President of EMWA at a time when EMWA was financially sound which allowed the Executive Committee to introduce additional strategic improvements for the future of organization that we are still building upon today. Here are Andrea's memories of those days.

"...2013-2014 confirmed that EMWA was an excellent organization with a great reputation and a clear strategy for its development. The financial health of EMWA allowed us to look at our future with more optimism. The EMWA brand was renewed and a new voting system for the election of the EC was adopted to simplify and increase our member's participation for the first time. Having new sponsors, more members and greater attendance at conferences allowed us to maintain the yearly subscription fees and to offer discounts for members referring new EMWA "adepts". Furthermore, the spring congress in Budapest had a new format with a full day dedicated to a symposium where our EMA colleagues presented for the first time. Our financial health also allowed EMWA to revise bank and insurance agreements, in order to offer improved service at lower costs. The new version of the EMWA journal increased its distribution thanks to the enthusiasm and competence of the MEW's editor Phil Leventhal and the editorial board who supported him. The agreement with software vendors and other organizations for offering member benefits was another important achievement that maintained EMWA's reputation and visibility.

Twitter views began with a lot of attendees and the Linked-in and Facebook profiles were regularly populated and maintained, thanks to the great job of the Social Media group. Last but not least, the EC and HO job initiated the renewal of the www.emwa.org website. I'll never forget the enthusiasm of the members when Diarmuid announced that only 1 password



was needed to access all of the member's sections. The work behind this and other achievements was amazing and always enjoyable thanks to the fantastic EC and HO. I'll never be able to thank all of them enough."

As you can see, social media became increasingly important for communicating between our members and for promoting the organization. This continued during the presidency of **Julia Donnelly** who also dedicatedly represented and spread the word about EMWA to a larger international audience. Here is what Julia has to say about her years in office.

"I was president of EMWA between May 2014 and 2015 – and my persisting memory will be of the people – the supportive team I had surrounding me and the interesting individuals I met - and the places I visited. I was honoured to present a lecture on publication ethics to medical editors at the Ashmolean museum in Oxford; they were an interested and interactive audience – and the surroundings were stunning. However, my most exotic assignment was to represent EMWA at a conference of Eastern Mediterranean and Middle Eastern medical writers in Dubai. The countries and cultures represented were diverse, but the attendees were eager to learn from the European experiences of EMWA. I even managed to find time to explore the desert and experience a night-time dhow excursion with invited doctors who had shared the podium, and had presented medical writing from a clinical perspective."

The tenure of **Sam Hamilton** (2015) can be characterized as a period during which a number of new initiatives were started including the Core Reference document for clinical study reports, the Expert Seminar Series, and the Regulatory Public Disclosure Special Interest Group (SIG). Through all that work she even managed to have some fun times as she tells us here in her own words.

"I feel my time on the EC is perhaps best described as being in the eye of a storm - like being on permanent 'fast-forward'. We churned out multiple new initiatives, the most ambitious being the first - CORE Reference (or the 'Cor Blimey' Reference – as it was affectionately known to certain members of the EC), which was published (www.core-reference.org) as my term ended. We introduced the Expert Seminar Series (ESS) and the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – first Pharmacovigilance SIG (PV SIG) and later, Regulatory Public Disclosure SIG (RPD SIG), not to mention the Internship Forum. I certainly had some sleepless nights throughout my 2 years, but with such great team support in my fellow EC members and on the CORE Reference team, they jollied me along when needed and I somehow survived. Highs included getting to know some wonderful EMWA friends a lot better – Art, Debbie, Viv, Tracy, Walther – it was a blast! The Dublin Conference Irish dancing at the Spring dinner – everyone making a beeline for the dance floor without hesitation. Later, at my final conference as president, I enjoyed memorable nights with good friends in Munich. They'd probably like to remain nameless, but as I've sworn an oath of allegiance to EMWA – James, Diarmuid, Lynne – you're outed! Rest assured that the time-honoured EMWA tradition of keeping up the bar staff is being diligently upheld. I am pleased to say I emerged wiser after 2 years in unexpected ways too. Picture this - one memorable February EC meeting in London, I flew as usual from Newcastle to Heathrow, expecting to be locked in the warm 'plane-taxi-meeting room' bubble all day. Not so - I missed the last flight back and ended up on the King's Cross train home, arriving in at 2.00 am the next morning. Acquired wisdom - never use an aeroplane as your coat - the plan unravels on a freezing cold train! A final thought – I also never realised I am an adrenaline junkie until I was set free. Thanks for the insights EMWA – and the friendships - all of which are unparalleled".



Alison Rapley took over the helm in 2016. During Alison's time in office EMWA invested in a number of new systems to ensure that the initiatives developed over the previous years continued to run smoothly and to flourish. These included development of a web based document repository so that all EC documents could be filed and retrieved by the committee members, a dedicated e-mail system using Office 365, and a dedicated conference "mini-site". In addition a position statement on the role of professional medical writers was published, jointly with AMWA and ISMPP, and a managing editor of the MEWs was hired.

As you can see, EMWA has gone through numerous changes. Our organization continues to evolve as medical writing increasingly gains in stature and as the demand for excellent medical communicators continues to rise.

Many people who contributed to the success of EMWA over the years may not have been mentioned here due to lack of space. This does not in the least diminish their influence and involvement at all levels in shaping our organization. They deserve our gratitude and a round of applause.

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