

2006 JETAAi International Meeting Sydney, Australia

(Source: Unedited notes posted by Cindy Pitkin 11/08/06)
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Day I: Friday, November 3

The conference opened with welcoming remarks by Mr. Takahisa Tsugawa, Director of the Exchange Program Division at MOFA, who spoke about the growing population of foreigners in Japan and its increasingly multi-cultural society. This has necessitated what is generally referred to as “kyosei”, or living together. It has also prompted many people to study other languages besides English in recent years, while the focus of the JET Program has remained English language instruction and the West. Mr. Tsugawa then talked about the upcoming 20th anniversary celebrations in Tokyo for the Program, the guest speakers who have been invited, and efforts to utilize the anniversary to increase public awareness of and support for the Program.

Next, Mr. Eiji Hirosawa, Deputy Secretary General for JET Program Management at CLAIR Tokyo, talked about the ongoing CMS project, proposed expansion of the Program into elementary schools, the possibility of extending contracts into a fourth or fifth year, now, the 20th anniversary logo competition, and the upcoming anniversary celebration / symposium.

Sharon Bignell, JETAA Liaison at CLAIR Tokyo, spoke about the JET Streams Newsletter being distributed online, an online survey of alumni they conducted, and publicity efforts for the Program. She then showed a 20th anniversary video produced by CLAIR.

The JETAAi Executive Officers gave progress reports on their activities over the past year. Peter de Valda, Chair, talked about efforts to keep people engaged and active. Ali Bond, Vice-Chair and head of the Small Chapter Committee, focused on attempts to help small chapters like South Africa, which is attending an international event for the first time, Singapore, Hong Kong and Vietnam. These are all countries with small alumni populations struggling to get chapters going. Michael Barrett, PR Coordinator and head of the Big Picture Committee, gave information on the promotional brochure developed by Jeff Huffman, which will be put on the website for each country to access, manipulate, and use. He then gave the pros & cons of non-profit and incorporated status for chapters and JETAAi as a whole. He said incorporation with NPO status would have the advantage of releasing members from liability for the chapter’s or organization’s actions, and would also possibly be advantageous in fundraising and banking activities. It would, reportedly, not be possible to establish JETAAi as an international NPO; but this would not necessarily preclude doing so at a national level, depending on laws and conditions in a given country. There was also discussion of setting up a bank account through an incorporated, NPO chapter in one country and using this account to issue debit cards to chapters around the world. The London chapter, through Liz Aveling, said they would look into setting up such a bank account there, and this was unanimously approved by all delegates. PayPal was mentioned as another option, although there does not seem to have been much detailed discussion on this.

The next session concerned MOFA’s request that the delegates create a new mission statement for JETAAi that is catchy, succinct, and encompasses the idea of diversity. It is felt that the existing statement doesn’t reflect the evolving nature of the alumni network or its activities. He also suggested the alumni work with an international organization, like Save the Children, to motivate members and keep them engaged throughout the year, beyond the international meetings. Talk about the mission statement developed into discussion of alumni

participation in promotion of and recruitment for the JET Program.

After a brief session in which each delegate expressed their hopes and goals for the meeting, they then each reported on issues and activities in their home countries:

- ✧ Joseph Luk (Canada) talked about the Canadian conference and individual chapter activities.
- ✧ Shannan Spisak and Shannon Quinn (USA) talked about the US conference, and about frustration with situations where country reps cannot attend national and/or international conferences.
- ✧ Marie-Louise Siddle (New Zealand) talked about the regional conference held in Canberra from October 22nd to the 24th (which she could not attend) and various chapter activities.
- ✧ Yvonne Chu-Kit (France) told about the European Conference held in March, with eight chapters attending from the UK, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany, France, South West England, and London. Among other things, they reportedly brainstormed on the 20th anniversary commemorations, conducted a review of the JET Program, and agreed to cooperate on a regional photo exhibit project.
- ✧ Lee Eon Yong (South Korea) reported on the Asian Regional Conference, held in Korea this year, and attended by Russia, East and West Japan, China and, of course, Korea. The conference was held in Japanese, but language seems to be a major obstacle in working among these countries and with the wider alumni community. Difficulties in liaising with the Chinese government and in possibly holding a conference there were also discussed.
- ✧ Cristina Izumi Sagara (Brazil) talked about the difficulties faced by the alumni in Brazil, given that they are so spread out and that so many Brazilians remain in Japan after finishing JET. They are, however, making effective use of Yahoo.groups, and have been active in recruiting and interviewing new participants. They plan to be heavily involved in celebrations for the Centenary of Japanese Immigration to Brazil in 2008.
- ✧ Janet Crick (Jamaica) spoke about the activities of the alumni in Jamaica who, like Brazil are a smaller chapter with many alumni who choose to remain in Japan after leaving the Program. They are active in promoting and recruiting, besides holding events, and are hoping to link up with alumni in Tobago and around the Caribbean, if possible. She reported that there are more applicants for the Program than the embassy can handle.
- ✧ Mary Evans, representing South Africa at its first ever international meeting, talked about the difficulties faced by alumni there with reverse culture shock and how the chapter is trying to help them, and help Japanese students who come to study and suffer from frustration and problems there. They are also working to increase public awareness and understanding of the Program, and conduct pre-departure and reentry seminars.
- ✧ Charis Hughes (Ireland) spoke about benefiting from participation in the regional conference and about resuscitating the chapter, which had lain dormant for a couple of years.
- ✧ Elizabeth Aveling (UK) also spoke about the benefits of the regional conference, especially given the limitations of JETAAi's work in supporting the numerous smaller countries with few alumni who have no representation on the international level.

Mr. Shinichi Ono presented CLAIR's proposal for the development of a virtual "*kenjinkai*"

(prefecture association) for alumni. This would be an online resource for alumni organized by where they worked while in Japan, allowing them to network with other alumni from that prefecture, to keep in touch with their communities there, and allowing new JETs to contact their 'sempai' before leaving for their new teaching positions.

Various ideas were discussed for alumni contributions to the 20th anniversary commemorations, although there seems to have been some difficulty agreeing on what might be an appropriate type of activity. Ideas included working with children in some way, holding a photo competition, publishing manga, a book, or short stories relating to the Program, and holding a 24 hour, around-the-world karaoke party for all the alumni.

Day II: Saturday, November 4th

Day two began with a session on the CMS project led by Ali Bond, since no members of the CMS team could attend the meeting. After she gave some background on the development of the project, the group watched a video presentation from Paul Donovan and Paul Reid. This was followed by a Q&A session.

The first main point of concern to delegates was how to encourage alumni to sign up for the new system when they have already registered on the CLAIR database and their own chapter websites. This matter is particularly worrisome given concerns that each chapter's Grant-in-aid will be calculated based on their membership list on the CMS. Mr. Ono, of CLAIR, said it would be a long time before CLAIR begins to use the CMS registry in the Grant-in-aid process, so it should not be an immediate concern. Ideas were discussed for motivating members to register on the new system, including providing lifetime email addresses, emphasizing the ability to network with other alumni, and providing access to stored files and other information pertaining to JETAA matters. Peter de Valda explained that the CMS is like a 'link farm', or directory to other websites. Liz Aveling discussed its potential benefit to prospective and new JETs, who can readily find information on the Program and on living and working in Japan.

The second big concern was how CLAIR would work with the chapters to integrate the CMS into the Grant-in-aid process, and how soon this might happen. One question here was how much information a chapter member would have to provide in order to be counted as a member qualifying for Grant-in-aid. A recurring question throughout was whether chapters and CLAIR could just transfer names from their existing databases to the new system, and it was explained (again) that this is legally prohibited by the privacy laws of each country.

Paul Reid provided answers to some questions (via email / online?), discussing and confirming the points above in more detail, and giving information on how the system will also become the Web server for the chapter websites, at no cost, should their chapter executives choose to do so.

A list of possible resources to be posted on the CMS was created, including chapter and country reports, pre-departure handbooks, Top Tips for new JETs, calendars, and a Grant-in-aid guide.

Next came the Parliamentary Session. Bylaw amendments were discussed. However, they were not immediately voted upon due to the fact that they were not provided to the delegates prior to the meeting. [As of this writing, there is no list of proposed amendments available. mwg. 11/06] Of the 15 proposed amendments, no objections were made to 13 of them, although discussion was held on #10, concerning the need to reschedule Country Rep elections giving consideration to regional and international conferences/meetings, and on #15, concerning terms

of office and conditions for JETAAi Executive Officers. Voting will be conducted later, online.

Because there was extra time, there was a session to review the meeting, both to discuss topics and ideas that had been brought up and to evaluate things that did or did not go well in the execution of the meeting itself. A couple of main topics of discussion seem to have been recruitment for the JET Program by CLAIR, MOFA, and the alumni, and how to deal with the problems inherent to depending on email for communication. In discussing regional conferences for small chapters (single chapter countries), it was decided that Jamaica will approach the other Caribbean chapters to see about joining together in a regional grouping.

Advice on hosting meetings was given by delegates who had helped with this and other conferences, and possible venues were discussed. These were Vancouver, somewhere in Russia, and Berlin.

Elections were then held. Ali Bond was elected Chair, Michael Adams Vice-Chair, Cindy Pitkin Secretary, and Liz Aveling PR Coordinator. Then it was decided that the Action Plan for Executive Officers would include:

- ✧ A buddy System and Working Group for small chapters.
- ✧ Regional meetings for small chapters.
- ✧ A mission statement.
- ✧ Creation of groups by prefecture for alumni.
- ✧ A 20th anniversary project.
- ✧ Contacting the CMS team to obtain an updated contract for the BC chapter (the legal owners of the system).
- ✧ Preparing and disseminating proposed bylaw amendments to the Country Reps for voting.
- ✧ Roles and responsibilities for Country Reps based on those for New Zealand.
- ✧ A video band for the next meeting. [?]
- ✧ Developing a strategy to market the CMS to chapters, members and alumni.

The idea of creating a leaflet on the JET Program to be used in recruiting from companies was shelved until next year.

After closing remarks by outgoing and incoming executive officers, the meeting was adjourned.