

MINUTES OF THE TNG-CWA Human Rights and Equity Committee

December 8, 2007

Telephone Conference

PRESENT: Michael D'Souza, Chair; Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe; Carl Younger; Olivia James; Vernon Clark; Natalie Hill; Sheila Lindsay; Melissa Nelson TNG-CWA Sector Rep;

ALSO ATTENDING:

Linda Foley

Bernie Lunzer

Scott Stephens

Lucy Witeck

Arnold Amber

ABSENT: Judy Lee; Randy Gilliam; Fareed Mohammed

MINUTES PREPARED BY MICHAEL D'SOUZA.

The committee started its meeting on schedule at 1:00 p.m. Eastern, 10:00 a.m. Pacific.

Conference on Equity Issues:

The committee discussed the upcoming CWA Civil Rights and Equity Conference in April being organized by the CWA and agreed that this would not conflict with the TNG's own plan to hold a conference on Equity Issues in conjunction with the Minority Caucus of the CWA in Vegas in June.

Some of the possible issues for the Vegas Conference are:

- The state of human rights in North America
- Diversity and Economics. Vernon Clark volunteered to research this further.
- Dealing with equity issues in a shrinking job markets, looking at seniority and carve outs.
- Looking at the Future of Jobs in the communication industry. Sheila Lindsay will share her notes from the conference on this issue.
- Computers and the future of jobs and how this affects equity issues, especially matters of making the web more accessible. A report by Michael D'Souza on access issues is appended to these minutes.
- Expecting 50 to 60 people to attend is reasonable.

Scott Stephens advised that Malinka Franklin of the TNG office will help with the logistics of organizing the conference and co-ordination with the CWA.

The committee agreed to discuss this conference again at its January meeting in preparation of a more extensive discussion at the sector conference in Providence, Rhode Island early next year.

Carl Younger Library project:

Carl reported that it is unreasonable to reduce the projected budget of \$5,500 because of the high costs of food. He also said the Boston local will pay up to half the cost, up from the \$1,000 originally offered. He also reported that a municipal official had offered to help line up speakers on equity issues.

The committee suggested a fee of \$5.00 be set for people attending. This was seen as a way of attracting people more interested in equity issues. The funds generated could be used for the operations of the library. And the fee would also be a better indicator of how many people would actually attend. Locals that couldn't attend could also buy tickets to support the library. It was also suggested that Carl explore the idea of setting up the library as a non-profit operation under Section 501(c) of the United States Internal Revenue Code with its own board.

The committee agreed to recommend that the TNG support this event to a maximum of \$2,500.

New Local Officers Seminar:

Michael D'Souza informed the committee that he had agreed to do the seminar on equity issues at the New Local Officers Seminar in Springfield, Maryland in mid January.

Adjournment.

The committee adjourned at 1:45 pm Eastern, 10:45 Pacific, and agreed to meet again on Saturday, January 12, 2008 at the same time.

Addendum to minutes of Dec 8 meeting.

A report on the

International Open Forum on e-Learning and Standardization

Supporting Human Diversity Through Inclusive Design

Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto

Thursday, September 13 and Friday, September 14, 2007

Prepared and presented by Michael D'Souza

Director of Human Rights, CBC Branch of the Canadian Media Guild

The Adaptive Technology Resource Centre at the U of T hosted delegates from around the world at the MaRS centre on College Street in Toronto. The open forum was held in conjunction with the International Plenary Meeting of the IT Standardization for Learning, Education and Training, [ISO/IEC JTC1/SC36](#), the international standards committee responsible for information technology standards in the fields of learning, education and training. Recommendations made by delegates at the open forum went directly to the SC36 plenary.

While the forum was focused on e-learning, the sessions actually addressed a variety of diversity and access issues. An analogy that came up repeatedly was the curb cut. You've probably all seen them, the gentle slope in the sidewalk to the road. Initially built to accommodate wheelchairs they're used much more by fully ambulatory people pushing baby carriages, pulling suitcases on wheels or riding in-line skates. There was much discussion about the necessity of making the world a much more accessible place, including making web pages more easily accessible to people with limited or no sight and the same applying to documents such as forms. While the initial motivation may be to meet the needs of people with disabilities, such changes make the documents etc. much more useable to everyone; a consideration to keep in mind as the baby-boomer population of Canada and the United States ages. The modern technological equivalent is the *digital curb cut*.

Speakers at the forum ranged from Abdul Waheed Khan of UNESCO to Barbara Hall, the Ontario Human Rights Commissioner, to representatives from Bell Canada and IBM. Keeping the talk real were Kathryn Woodstock a professor of engineering at Ryerson University who is deaf and Leesa Levinson, an actress and founder of Lights, Camera, Access who uses a wheelchair because of MS.

The forum prompted questions the union should consider about accessibility of material distributed by the CBC and the CMG. At equity meetings of the CMG some members with problems reading have commented about the difficulties accessing some CMG and CBC materials. Quoting the Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C): *Accessibility means that people with disabilities can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact with the Web, and that they can contribute to the Web.* It goes on to say: *Web accessibility encompasses all disabilities that affect access to the Web, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, and neurological disabilities.* The Consortium has a list of tools that can be used to evaluate websites. But software evaluations are limited; a proper measure of compliance needs the human touch.

The Guild should do an audit of its websites for accessibility compliance. A couple of places where help may be available are the Adaptive Centre for Academic Technology at the University of Toronto and Karen McCall of Karlen Communications who does such audits.

The forum brought was a good place to meet other people grappling with accessibility, some dealing with Canada's legislative requirements such as the Employment Equity Act and others making accessibility work in the communication industry. Sujith Reddy works with Scotiabank on Equity Issues and Gareth Ford Williams does the same at the BBC. Both have agreed to share strategies that have worked in their organizations.

Cost

Registration for the two day forum was \$250. Added to this is two days of work relief.

Web references:

International Open Forum on e-Learning and Standardization

<http://openforum.elsacc.ca/>

WAI Resources on Introducing Web Accessibility

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/intro/accessibility.php>

Complete List of Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools

<http://www.w3.org/WAI/ER/tools/complete>

Evaluating web pages:

Adaptive Centre for Academic Technology

University of Toronto

www.atrc.utoronto.ca/

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