TUG 2016 Annual General Meeting informal report

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The TUG Annual General Meeting for 2016 was in the afternoon of the second day. Jim Hefferon, the current TUG President, moderated it. He started with a few slides. First, he gave a summary of the TUG bylaws and goals, that are, further summarized, maintaining TEX, supporting TEX users and caring for fine typography. Following those objectives, the TUG sponsors conferences, development of fonts, and specific activities and projects such as CTAN and LuaTEX development.

Jim introduced the board of directors. Everybody on the board in the room stood up, so everybody knows who they are. At last year's meeting in Darmstadt they sat in front of us, this year they just stayed in the audience. Jim skipped the financial information on purpose, saying that probably few people in this audience were interested in financial details; he'll provide them for anybody interested. They are also publicly available on the TUG web site, since TUG has to publish them as a tax-exempt organization. As a general remark, he mentioned that TUG maintains its budget very conservatively.

However, there's the challenge that the number of members has fallen steadily. In 2000, we had 2211 members, in 2015 only 1260, and 1124 as of June 2016. The membership fees have been raised over time. One might see this kind of connected, either could be partially a consequence of the other, but: as long as TUG provides public services such as CTAN support and TEX Live development and more, also for non-members, and the TUG office, with revenue mainly from membership fees, the fees may get higher. As long as there's no relevant change of the model.

This led us to an open discussion, with Jim as the moderator. It started similarly to last year, and raised some of the same questions or suggestions: what should be changed, what could be done, up to whether the existence of TUG as an organization is still relevant. The latter was quickly answered. How to get developers together, such as at the present conference, how to get funding and to finance projects, without an organization?

The question was raised of how many members we would like to have, what would be desirable— stay small or grow— before doing anything about it. Somebody said, and that's good: we should be much bigger to be representative of the very many people using TEX. Several people confirmed that there's a general decline in membership numbers at many societies. Today, young people seem to be less interested in societies and paper journals.

We had a members-bring-members activity last year. We had tried different things. It wasn't summarized what has been done, I missed that. It would be good to touch ground before new suggestions come. [Editor's note: Although not mentioned at the meeting, Boris Veytsman reported last year's results in "The continuing TUG membership drive", *TUGboat* 37:1, pp. 6–8, `tug.org/TUGboat/tb37-1/tb115veytsman.pdf`. The campaign continues this year: `tug.org/membership`.]

One such new suggestion was a lifetime membership. But if we all use that, there would be no subsequent membership fees at all. The 5-years-limited lifetime membership was discarded as nobody wants to kill anyone. We started to look beyond member numbers . . .

The suggestion came to raise the *TUGboat* journal from a member's journal to a premium journal with subscription options. It would not take too much, it was believed, we would have the ability to produce a high quality journal. Libraries usually don't have the option to become a society member, but would be able to subscribe to a journal. Institutions where we study, teach, and work, could subscribe. [Editor's note: There was no chance at the meeting to discuss it, but *TUGboat* currently has, and has always had, a subscriber option available.]

Also not new: the suggestion to improve the TUG website came up. To attract users to return to the site on a regular base, such as by a blog. Well, also blogs experienced a decline. I try to support and to encourage blogging: on the one hand I maintain `TeXample.net` with its blog aggregator to keep up with blog posts, on the other hand the three web forums `LaTeX-Community.org`, `TeXwelt.de`, and `goLaTeX.de` present recent blog posts in their side bar, so any TEX user jumping in (e.g., from Google) anywhere in the forum can see the posted list. You post on your blog, and the world can see it at various places.

I have other thoughts too, though it's just not my thing to stand up in public. I am sending a few suggestions to the TUG board . . .

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