

ENGLISH LIBRARY LA SOUTERRAINE

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Assemblée Générale

26th MARCH 2019

Welcome all to the 2019 AG of the English Library. Thank you for coming.

The last 2 years has seen many changes and some upheaval in the library, and last year under the leadership of John Essom and Steve Chicken much work was done, and stability restored. Unfortunately for personal reasons John and Steve both felt it necessary to step down and at the EG at the end of November I was elected. We should express our gratitude to John and Steve for their work. I hope now to be able to build on that.

Unfortunately we had also hoped to have found a treasurer who would continue for some time in post, but Ray Metcalfe has sadly felt it necessary to step down due to an unexpectedly large increase in workload in his work. Time for other interests has been reduced to a point where he has had to resign. We are therefore looking for a replacement.

The big issue 12-18 months ago was the financial situation caused by issues with increased electricity bills. This led to the necessity to raise the membership subscriptions to this year's 24 euros, and to raise an extra levy on groups using the library. This has resulted in a much healthier situation to report this year, though with the increase in subscription fees we will keep a close eye on the situation this year. I do however want to suggest we remove the extra levy on groups, and return to the previous 2 euros per person per meeting.

Since becoming president, I have visited a number of the Groups at their meetings. It was nice to see what is going on, and to see the keen interest people show in attending these groups. Unfortunately, the gardening group seems to have withered, and I will try to meet with any remaining members interested to see how this could be revived if there is demand. Margaret Harding and Marité Touroude have found it necessary to cease their leadership of the French conversation group, and I hope now that Allan Holmes and his wife are going to take this over. With teaching experience in French and English, this I hope will keep this group active. Gilles Schweyer is liaison for Associations in the town, although I must check with him, we believe the matter of insulation in the library is being considered at finance meetings.

I have met with the Maire and now also met Gilles Schweyer and discussions are making progress.

Further ideas for this year:

I have visited the lycee in La Souterraine and am trying to make contact with the English Department to see if we can offer anything to students and for that reason want to introduce a “student membership” category. It would be a good way for our English speaking community to offer something to the town and its inhabitants if some French youngsters would come and chat and borrow books!

I have also been considering some form of film club at the Eden cinema. I have yet to make contact with the manager there to discuss this to show films in VO both new and old perhaps, followed by a drink in one of the bars or a meal somewhere nearby. This could be nice for us, and give some additional custom to some local businesses, and with subtitles for the films in French, perhaps local hearing impaired French might be attracted? There is some work to do here but if there is anyone interested, please let us know to gauge interest. But it could perhaps be a monthly event.

I would like to find other ways of attracting more French members of the community and also the library becoming more a part of the French community.

The Grand National Sweepstake event is a new idea. We need to sell some more tickets for this event, but hope it will be a sociable event with some excitement!! Please book up for this on 6th April. You can buy tickets here or via the website. We are also in the process of arranging a Murder Mystery Evening with the Script written by David Brown who is arranging a team of actors. This will be announced in due course but should be a good evening.

Considering the website, I hope you find ways of using this. A great deal of work went into setting this up by Andrew Perryman. It is fully GDPR compliant. Members can use it now to message each other without seeing the private email addresses of other members. You can message other members of your group easily by using the group “buttons”, and can now make announcements by the User Submitted Posts which are checked by a moderator before being published. Thus you can advertise events, or private for sale notices.

We have started looking into sponsorships for the library. Axa have agreed to insure us free which equates to about 400 euros per year. The Immobilier Beaux Villages has given us 300 euros, and I am waiting to hear from our bank – Banque Populaire. With another member, I hope to visit France Bleu Creuse and see if they would like to help! We are also looking at re-introducing a small fee for small businesses advertising by leaving flyers or cards in the library. 10 euros per year does not seem excessive. We hope to find a way of giving all our sponsors some acknowledgement on the website. For the small businesses perhaps some form of directory.

There are other matters which are on the agenda for discussion also.

I would like to thank all our volunteers who man the café and library, provide cakes, and often the refreshments for other events, and who help organise and run events. Thanks to Jane our

secretary, and all the other members of conseil especially Christine, without whom the library would not continue to function.

We are always grateful to the membership for help, advice, and suggestions for the library, café and events. It is in the end your library; the membership has the opportunity to guide the direction of the association, what it does and how, through the AG which directs the Conseil for the next year. Conseil has the responsibility for the day to day running and to ensure financial security and that the association runs within the laws of 1901. Equally it is your association, and it needs members help to man it and run it successfully!

Damian Trafford

March 26th 2019