

The Instructor's Guild - Training Programme

For convenience, I shall use IG for Instructor's Guild

What is the Instructor's Guild?

In a way it is premature to ask this, since it is not yet formed. But we must form some prospective view of what it will be to make progress. Some things seem apparent.

- The IG must be different from what currently exists. If not, then why form it, and how will it help?
- The IG will operate on very diverse scales. As a national (or international) body its boundaries will be far wider than any traditional (territorial) guild, yet its aim of drawing a membership directly from practicing instructors (and would-be instructors) in towers means that some of its activities must be experienced at local level.
- The IG will embrace some new forms of activity. It is unlikely to be credible if all it offers is a mixture of (very) occasional courses and reading matter.

Given these assumptions, we can speculate about the range of activities its members might be engaged in. We can expect most of:

- People developing training material of all sorts, both centrally and locally
- People delivering some conventional courses
- People undertaking self directed courses of improvement
- People acting as mentors, either to the above, or to trainees in their own towers
- People teaching in their own towers
- People learning to teach, either through courses or through mentoring

This list might prove incomplete, but it is probably adequate for initial thoughts.

What do we mean by its training programme?

The training programme of a body like a college that delivers training is an easy thing to understand, whether it offers courses to a timetable or on demand. Likewise a training programme for an individual student is a fairly clear concept, whether (s)he be studying a set course, or mixing and matching from available options.

But the Instructor's guild does not fit either of these alone. As noted above, the IG is likely to include within its membership people playing pretty well every possible training related role. Thus the 'training programme' of the Instructor's Guild will necessarily be very diverse, since it will consist of the collective activities of all these people, in as far as the IG's existence has a bearing on what they are doing.

How can we describe its training programme?

Initially, it is probably simplest to describe the 'sum of the parts' Undoubtedly there will be synergy between different threads, but a 'catalogue' approach would avoid trying to work out all the interactions. Thus we should consider each type of training related activity and ask:

- Could the IG be involved in it?
- At what scale would it work?
- How would it be driven? (by member 'pull' or organisational 'push'?)
- What would be needed to initiate it?
- What would be needed to achieve and maintain adequate quality in it?

Some activities might be novel, and some might depend on the existence of structures set up by the IG, eg local cells, possibly under the auspices of local (territorial) guilds.

Training courses

The IG could run courses, and might wish to take over from the CC Education Committee being the organiser of specialist courses (eg MTM, the Listening course). That would certainly help raise its profile with its ordinary members, and help it to work with, rather than compete with, the local guilds. The Education Committee's role¹ is to do things other bodies cannot, and to pioneer new ideas and approaches. Therefore it would be logical to pass this responsibility on.

The IG could run national or regional courses. It might have more success than the Education Committee has done, since it will have direct access to a constituency of its members, whereas we had to rely on indirect means of advertising.

The infrastructure for running courses would include course prospectus, syllabus and tuition material, plus the administrative mechanisms to bring together students and instructors in suitable venues.

Master classes

Since all members of the IG will, by definition, be instructors, or aspiring instructors of some kind, there should be a kindred affinity between its members that does not exist between members of a conventional guild in the same way. The members will share a common goal to improve their own and others' teaching.

The master-class format could well be appropriate in such an organisation. It would not need large numbers of participants to make it viable. It would be most readily amenable to 'intensive' activities, like teaching bell handling or bell handling clinics, rather than 'extensive' teaching, like the continual coaching also needed to develop general ringing skills. (Though it could be argued that courses like the listening course are almost master classes, since they encourage teachers to observe, and participate in the teaching of other ringers).

The infrastructure for running master-classes would probably be similar to that for courses

Self directed learning

This is an obvious form of activity for a dispersed organisation. As far as I know there are no precedents for such activity within ringing. The only activity I know of is the group² set up by the ODG Education Committee to develop such a course for developing conducting³ skills. This should produce some results during the next year, and I hope they would be made available outside the ODG in some form.

If the IG used this medium, it would presumably focus on aspects of teaching and instruction, or perhaps those ancillary aspects that in practice a teacher needs, such as calling, and keeping right.

The infrastructure for self directed learning will include the course material, the administrative mechanisms for distributing it, networks of mentors, guidelines for mentors and observers, and possibly some conventional course-like activities (analogous to Open University Summer Schools)

Newsletter

The newsletter will be a vital means of maintaining a sense of connectedness between the members. With a dispersed guild outside the local guild structure, it will be particularly important to help maintain a cohesive identity, and a sense of belonging. To do this the

¹ Policy agreed by the new committee at the meeting in June 1993.

² Three people, of which I am one.

³ Conducting was felt to be poorly served by conventional courses or books, hence the incentive to try a new approach

newsletter will need to be regular, and to justify itself it will need material. Some of this will be administrative, eg lists of events, contact details, etc, but it will also need editorial copy to make it live. There will be a potential clash here, since much material that would be suitable for the IG newsletter, would currently be offered to the RW. Would it be offered to both? OR would membership of the IG be a means of seeing 'exclusive' material?

Some of the material would be generated within the IG, eg discussion topics or reports of events. But would the IG not want to report its events in the RW, as a form of advertising to attract new members?

Training resources

The IG would be a natural holder of material to support training activity which it could distribute to its members, however, here again there might be seen some clash of interests with the CC Publications Committee.

Help line

One thing no current ringing organisation does⁴ is to provide a help line. The IG being based on a common interest (teaching) and having the objective to share knowledge and good practice, could well see it as appropriate to develop some sort of help line. This might be literally a single number to ring, but is more likely to be a set of contact numbers, perhaps categorised by region or subject matter. Alternatively it could be an E-mail help line. That could fairly easily be set up to allow a number of people to share the load of responding, while giving users a common address to call.

Distribution list

It is relatively easy to set up an E-mail distribution list so that people can send it a message which it will forward to all its subscribers. There are two general ones for ringing (change-ringers and riggers-chat) and some guilds are setting them up to distribute information internally. The IG could set one up for use (only) by its members, with the charter that it would be used to discuss matter related to training and instruction. That in fact could be a better solution than a help line, since posting a query would not only get an answer from one or more experienced person, it might also spark off fruitful discussion.

Meets

Many organisations have 'meets'. They combine both 'serious' and social purposes. The IG might have weekends (or days) where there was a combination of talks, hands on sessions, general ringing and socialising. This might not be seen strictly as part of the training programme, but it could be the matrix in which a number of training events were embedded. In any case, it would help to gel the communal spirit of the IG

⁴ Apart from the complaints line at the RW.