

## **Instructor's Guild**

### **How we got here**

The idea of an Instructor's Guild (under various names) has been around for a while, motivated by the desire to do something to improve the general standard of teaching. If people are better taught, they should have fewer impediments, be more motivated and thus ring better, in due course passing on higher expectations to the next generation. By common consent some improvement is needed.

An organisation devoted to the interests of those who teach ringing should be able to achieve more than the established guilds, with their far broader remit (or even the CC Education Committee). Even so, to flourish, the Instructors' Guild would have to work in harmony with established association.

Defining a body that represented high standards inevitably implies excluding those who did not reach the standards. Council seems divided on the merits of this, and almost certainly reflects ambivalence in the Exercise at large, but quite clearly it mandated that the Instructor's Guild should not be set up as a certifying body.

The working group has wrestled with this impossible compromise, without being able to resolve it. The group did produce many valuable ideas about the potential activities, resources and organisation of an instructors' guild, for example the need for regional co-ordinators to provide focus within each region. These ideas should be useful when the basic issue of membership and standards has been resolved.

### **The current focus**

Some rethinking during the run up to the 2000 CC meeting led to a statement, accepted by Council, based on a slightly different approach. The need now is to work out that approach into a practical form so that the Instructors' Guild can be launched.

The current intention is for the Instructors' Guild not to represent the achievement of a given standard by its members, but to represent a commitment by them to improve the standard of their own and their fellow members' teaching.

A related shift is for the guild to be driven (in due course even if not initially) by its members, most of whom will be 'improvers', rather than 'experts'. Such organisations tend to be more successful, both at meeting the needs of their members and at surviving.

### **Where do we go now?**

In defining the IG and what it does, we need to answer three key questions:

- What will encourage people to join?
- How will it work?
- How will it relate to other things?

If we can answer these adequately, we can probably crack the problem.

### **What would encourage people to join IG?**

We need to consider two groups of people:

- Those we are mainly trying to help, ie those whose teaching can be improved
- Those who will spend more time helping other people

I think we need mainly to target the first group, since they are likely to be harder to attract, and in any case, their participation is the main motivation behind the whole thing.

Members must either get something they value, that they could not equally well get as non members, or they must feel that belonging is a worthy cause. The second group might be motivated more by altruism, but the first group must perceive benefit from belonging.

What sort of things might be offered, where else might they be got, and what might make them appear better got through the IG?

What	Other sources	IG advantage
Newsletter	RW, associations	Focussed on their needs. Delivered direct?
E-mail discussion list	RinginEducationNet (and others)	No direct advantage, but the list could re-badged, 'given' to the IG, and used to promote it.
Training events for instructors	Associations, CCedCom	More focussed on their needs, a say in what is run, automatically notified, sense of ownership
Networking and social contact	Ad hoc through associations	More targetted on sharing common concerns, likely to be more open and fruitful, not constrained to local contact.
Seminars, workshop, etc	CC Education Conferences, etc	More regular, focussed on their needs, a say in what is run, automatically notified, sense of ownership
Role comradeship	Ad hoc	Build on above and develop personal contact through IG events
Mentoring?	Very infrequent	Promote the concept and put suitable people in touch with each other

Overall, this presents a potential gain, with the main factors being the concentration on instructors, rather than just ringing (mostly focused on methods), the sharing of common concerns and interests, and the increased sense of ownership of events.

Some of the ideas will need developing to make them really effective, eg building a sense of community within the IG. Some are difficult and would need care in how they were tried, eg mentoring.

We also need to understand what will deter people from joining.

What	How IG might overcome it
Unaware of IG	Use all channels (associations, RW, E-mail lists) to advertise
'I'm not good enough'	Push the message that it is not for the elite.
'I don't need it'	Raise awareness of how instructors could benefit
'I haven't got any more time'	Provide a mix of offerings to fit in with different needs

Much of this is about awareness, and it will be important to use all possible channels (media and people) to get over the messages.

The third point is a difficult message to get over. I don't think we will get far trying to persuade people to join because they don't teach very well. (Some will respond to this, but many won't). We are more likely to succeed by encouraging them to think about the results they get, and the processes they use, to realise where they might find it helpful to alternative ways they could do things to make them easier or more effective.

Many seminars on topics like tower leadership are billed as 'come and share your experiences with others'. This is partly a sop to get along people who think they know it as well as those who want to learn, but as a concept it will be crucial to the IG. Most instructors will have

experiences (good or bad) from which others could learn. Being prepared to share these, and take a little trouble in the process, is perhaps an easier step for some people. (So perhaps altruism has a role to play after all!)

The time argument sounds trivial, but might prove quite significant. I suspect there is a reasonable split between those who are enthusiastic and would take up the IG and just fit it into their lives (the sort of people we get on MTMs) and those for whom ringing fits into a neat slot - Sundays, practice night and not a lot more. Perhaps the odd association function, and extra hours teaching learners. So a barrier could be getting them to allocate another slot in their lives, and seeing that it is valuable, even though it is not 'necessary' for keeping things going (in the short term anyway).

I have not 'produced the prospectus', but perhaps these ideas will help us to work out how to fit the ingredients we have already considered into an attractive and practical package.

### **How would the IG work?**

The IG must offer a clear vision of what people are actually joining, ie where it is going. It must exist as an entity in its own right. That means it must have officers who conduct its business, and they must be elected by its members.

The IG will clearly need a structure that is different from the associations (or the CC) since it will need 'on the ground presence' like an association, but will not have the natural advantage of geographic focus. There will need to be some sort of 'local co-ordinators' who organise events, and 'national co-ordinators' who organise global things (publications, web sites, etc) as well as helping to provide the co-ordinating framework within which local activities occur.

Communication will be an important role of the IG. As more people become 'wired' electronic communication will play a bigger part, but to assume it will be the sole means would be restrictive, and would exclude a lot of people. Personal contacts at local level need to be generated somehow. The IG should be about people - its members - and what they need, not just about those at the top pumping out information.

### **How would the IG relate to other things?**

#### **Associations**

Although the IG should be independent from the associations (and the CC), it must have a constructive relationship with them. The IG will operate in each association's territory and involve association members, both as ordinary members, as co-ordinators, and as those called on to deliver training, seminars, mentoring or whatever.

It is probably sensible for some sort of formal relationship to exist between 'local chapters' (or whatever) of IG and relevant associations. For example, it might become established IG practice for local chapters to invite the education officers of the associations in whose area it operates to participate in its planning activities.

It would certainly be desirable for the IG to provide the associations with good information, not just to avoid clashes and misunderstandings, but as a means of communicating with more people, notably those who are not yet IG members.

#### **The CC**

The relationship with the CC is perhaps problematic, and the use of the term CCIG represents this problem. I believe the CC's role should be confined to assisting the IG to come into existence. Once that is done the fledgling should be encouraged to fly the nest and make its own life. There are three reasons for this.

- Formal CC links would imply strings, and that would inhibit the idea of it as 'owned by' its members.
- As an independent body, it could have unprejudiced relationships with the associations, but an arm of the CC might be seen as a source of conflict.

- The IG should be driven from the grass roots, but as an arm of the CC it would tend to be driven from above.

People have commented that several current initiatives are 'the sort of thing the IG would do'. One is RingingEducationNet and another is the co-ordination of MTM courses. Both were initiated by the CC Education Committee, but there is no reason why the CC should not hand them over to the IG, if it makes sense an

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