

Report by Gary Sealey

Consistent with the Financial Operating Procedures I have prepared a brief report of my activities for the past year.

Undertakings

The Job of President is to Chair the General Assembly and Exco, and maintain contact and an overview of Servas.

- During the year in review I hosted about 40 teleconferences as Chair of Exco and in support of the Servas Online project.
- I assisted the Editor of Servas News. Wrote some articles for the News, and arranged for a neutral proof-reader.
- When the International Peace Secretary lamentably died I arranged for appointment of Danielle Serres.
- I also encouraged applications for host of the GA, developed a financial deposits scheme, and gave background and guidance to the prospective hosts on how to plan a GA.
- For Servas Online, I developed a project plan, called for volunteers; developed alternatives to the failed BeWelcome agreement, brought alternative schemes of licensed and Open Source Software to Servas, created a Senior Resource Panel, and debated an improved community building approach for Servas.
- When the services of Servas server provider (www.servas.org) finally collapsed, after several failures, I obtained legal opinion and negotiated a release and a settlement
- For the Distant Vote on registering SI in an area outside Switzerland, I researched, wrote a neutral paper with options and contacted a lawyer for free advice
- To the Nominations Committee I urged prompt and widespread solicitation of new nominees, offered translations.
- For the Development Committee I arranged joint consultation with Exco, proposed an improved approach to joint funding which worked better than previous arrangements
- Although I was invited to some national meetings, I was unable to attend, for lack of funding
- There were no meetings of Exco nor of Servas Online in 2011

Results

Admittedly, all of this listed activity is essentially administrative, “treading water” rather than successful leadership advancing Servas. Despite my keen efforts any of my success at improving Servas, and improving its benefits to its member groups, hosts-travelers-helpers or the general public have been limited. I feel this is largely due to the inertia in Servas. Among some, perhaps many in key Servas offices, there appears to be reluctance to give up the travel benefits and personal recognition which comes from remaining in office. Some national secretaries maintain a gate of national sovereignty rather than promoting international access and networking among all Servas hosts-travelers-helpers. An example: SI News Monthly, although sent online, does not seem to be getting to many hosts-travelers-helpers in any regular way. Sharing of data takes months and is resisted, even for pilot projects of improvement. Of course this is directly contrary to the purposes of Servas as a network. Servas lacks a continuous learning approach to its management process and strategic planning has no clear home.

Expenditures

Most of my expenditures were on essential communications. None on travel. I have provided the Treasurer with a detailed accurate statement with receipts. What follows is a statement based on rounded amounts.

During the year I spent \$2000 of SI funding, all on communications, of which one quarter was spent supporting Conferences of Exco and also of Servas Online. This sum was for use of a Budget Conference bridge. When conferences are held in one region of the world, Skype Conference suffices. But from experience when more than 2 continents are involved, the use by Skype of the submarine cable or satellite seems to produce line drops, echoes and other static noise which make sustained conversation impossible. Accordingly, most people call by telephone or by Skype to the conference bridge, which charges about \$60 per conference.

About another quarter of my expenses are for my use of Skype and Skype Out to call a wide range of Servas participants. Now, by the end of 2011 almost a year after Microsoft purchased Skype, the quality of Skype has much improved.

Also about a quarter of my charges to Servas are for the use of long distance telephone. Not everyone can be reached by Skype as they do not all have a personal computer or home telephone. For that reason and also to ensure call quality, I use international telephone frequently and pay about \$29 per month for "free long distance calls". Among the people I can call this way and join to conferences are for instance the Host List Coordinator who cannot use Skype at his office. Using these "free long distance services" I have saved thousands of dollars. The costs of this service are equivalent to the cost of Voice Over the Internet (VOIP).

Finally, about a quarter of my costs are for the use of the Internet. I use a medium-level service. Internet is expensive in Canada compared to some other countries, and my service is over \$50 per month.

In addition to these costs, I have also personally spent over \$2100 on my cell phone charges and approximately \$600 on my telephone. These costs are a heavy personal responsibility, and yet essential to maintain contact with Servas when I am home or away from home. Among the incremental costs are roaming charges which are higher than I would otherwise pay if I were not serving Servas.