

The History of ELTABB

By John O'Dwyer with additional text from Kristi Decke and details of Board Members from Wolfgang Neuendorf

(Written in late summer 2009)

Background.

Autumn 2009 approaches so it is time to open a bottle of champagne to celebrate 15 years of the English Teachers' Association Berlin-Brandenburg (ELTABB).

This history is designed to help new members who have asked where, when and how did it all begin.

As time moves on we all age and already some of the active early members, such as Karen and Cedric, have died, so I add their names in gratitude and to remind us of the march of time with all its consequences.

This is a history so I shall only cover the first five years. By then the general structure and activities of the organisation had been set out and are practiced even today.

Let's start the ELTABB journey now! Please note that moves to create ELTABB started at the end of 1993, but the organisation was not legally formed and registered until early 1994, therefore, you can read about activities in 1993, before you read the names of the first Board formally registered in 1994.

1993

It all began in autumn 1993 when Kristi Decke and her family arrived in Berlin, from Frankfurt-am-Main where she had been a member of the English Language Teachers' Association Frankfurt (ELTAF) and found there was no such association in Berlin. Throughout autumn, Kristi presented her idea of a teachers' association, patterned on ELTAF, at all publisher events and collected a list of over 90 teachers who showed interest. During the first years Kristi continued to present ELTABB at publisher events and this was a major source for recruiting new members.

10 October 93. Meeting of teachers at Kristi Decke's home. There was a general discussion ending with a decision to create an association. This was to include the name of Brandenburg to reflect the recruitment area, in addition to Berlin. I volunteered my flat for the next meeting and we decided to ask teacher friends who we thought would be interested in supporting such an association.

14 November 93. Meeting at my flat on Landsberger Allee. Discussed details of a teachers' association and its purpose. Two trends, first modeled on a trade union, second modeled on a professional support association working with schools and publishing houses. The second model was promoted by Kristi based on her knowledge of ELTAF.

27 November 93. Teachers workshop at The British Council Teaching Centre. I attended for I had taught a course there. The Director of the school and assistant, with many of the BC teachers, expressed support and interest in ELTABB. A very positive early step!

11 December 93. Founding meeting of ELTABB at the congregational meeting room of the Georgienkirchestraße Church at 3.00 pm. The first Board was elected and in January 1994, details were given to a Notar and ELTABB registered under German law as an e.V. The first Board Members were --

1994 ELTAB-B Board

Chair: Patrick Martyn

Deputy Chair: David Sullivan

Recording Secretary: Gordon Dobson

Treasurer: Kristi Decke

Additional Board Members: Pam Cromartie, Eileen Laurie and Maggie Rankin

Newsletter Editor: Tyrone Ronganger

Newsletter Layout: Barbara Seidler

Proofreading: Evan Frendo

Advertising: Kristi Decke, Patrick Martyn

Within the first year under the leadership of Kristi Decke, ELTABB offered all the services that it took ELTA Frankfurt 10 years to develop: Newsletter, teacher training workshops, events in co-operation with publishers and social events.

Here, thanks have to go to Neil Deane who was then working for Cornelsen. Kristi had met him in Frankfurt at an ELTAF meeting. In Berlin he helped to organise the first event which was by Liz and John Soars, who did a workshop on presenting Headway. ELTBB was very grateful to Neil for giving support in the early days and in providing a place for ELTABB to hold workshops and meet for AGMs. An early example of the close co-operation that developed with publishers.

1995

The year started with a Stammtisch showing that this tradition had been established early in the life of ELTABB. It was followed on 28 January by the ELTABB AGM and Board Elections for 1995. There were 19 workshops and Stammtisch meetings, in addition to publisher events, ending with the Christmas Party on 2 December. Again all showing the pattern that continues to the present. There was even a Business English Group. This has not survived the passage of 15 years!

1995 ELTAB-B Board

Chair: Kristi Decke

Deputy Chair: Eileen Laurie

Recording Secretary: Alison MacDonald Treasurer: Evan Frendo

Additional Board Members: Sheila Grabow-Woolmore, Dale Hambrecht, and Wolfgang Neuendorf

Newsletter Editor: Dale Hambrecht

Newsletter Layout: Barbara Seidler

Advertising: Kristi Decke

1996

The year started, as usual, with an audit of the books followed by the AGM on 27 January 1996. There was an unusual change of Treasurer until I took over in June and so finally joined the Board. I also added a Cash Book to the Treasurer's tools!

The year ended with Kristi being very ill. Wolfgang puts it as follows - Kristi landed in hospital. ELTABB Board regrouped under the leadership of Wolfgang Neuendorf with strong support from John O'Dwyer and Dale Hambrecht so that all Board members took on an active task and the Management Team Members were created. We survived and celebrated the Christmas Party on 6 December.

1996 ELTAB-B Board

Chair: Kristi Decke

Deputy Chair: Wolfgang Neuendorf

Recording Secretary: Eileen Laurie Treasurer: Richard Booth/ Neal Deane/John O'Dwyer

Additional Board Members: Neil Deane, Dale Hambrecht, and James Murphy

Newsletter Editor: Dale Hambrecht

Newsletter Layout: Barbara Seidler

Advertising: Kristi Decke

1997

An interesting historical feature is that Board Members had tel/fax numbers but no-one had an e-mail account! How things were to change quickly. Windows 95 and the internet were on the march! A new feature was introduced.

The new feature was that auditors would do an early check to see that the treasurer was okay before doing the official audit just before the AGM. This practice was fixed in early 1997 and continues to the present. We not only taught good business practice - we practiced it too!

1997 ELTAB-B Board

Chair: Wolfgang Neuendorf

Deputy Chair: Dale Hambrecht

Recording Secretary: Eileen Laurie Treasurer: John O'Dwyer

Newsletter Editor & Layout: Dale Hambrecht

Additional Board Members:

Advertising Coordinator and Newsletter Assistant Editor: Alison Gibson

Events Coordinator: Margret Rohner

ELTA Coordinator: James Murphy

Additional Management Team Members:

Membership Secretary: Christine Becker

ELTA Co-Coordinator: Jennifer Kendall

1998

Records show Board Members with e-mail accounts including me - and all within one year! The pattern of Board Meetings on a Sunday and Stammtisch on the last Friday of the month and of Workshops on a Saturday continued this year. The pattern had been firmly established over the previous five years. The new features were computers, internet, e-mail accounts, ELTABB web page first created by Edward Tanguay and the ELTABB members e-mail list. Eltabb went electronic! What an eventful year.

For example, at 3,00pm on 3 May there was a computer session for all board members at my flat given by Edward. My first computer had Windows 95 and a call-by-call internet connection using a modem. All there was then!

But we were really learning under Edward's guidance for on 6 June, there is a record of an ELTABB Workshop at the British Council Language Centre with the title 'What is available on the Internet'.

It was not all work for on 3 June there was an ELTABB Garden Party in the garden of my flat. Members to bring food + BBQ. 52 present including partners and children. I hosted this event until 2001 when it moved to Treptower Park.

1998 ELTAB-B Management Team

Chair: Wolfgang Neuendorf Deputy Chair: Dale Hambrecht

Recording Secretary: Christine Becker Treasurer: John O'Dwyer

Newsletter Editor & Layout: Dale Hambrecht

Additional Board Members:

Advertising Coordinator and NL Assistant Editor: Alison Gibson

Events Coordinator: Margret Rohner

ELTA Coordinator: James Murphy

Additional Management Team Members:

Membership Secretary: Ines Krall

1999

Again the year started with the audit then the AGM, followed by a visit to the Notar and so the next group of teachers took over and steered ELTABB to new successes. I handed over the Treasurer's baton to Rose and was pleased to see younger talented members taking the ELTABB message of teacher helping teacher into not only another year, but into another millennium.

Kristi had also taken a step back and watched with pride as new members took over. It had certainly been an interesting five years. Creating the organisation clearly showed that teachers in Berlin and Brandenburg had a wide range of talents and abilities and joining ELTABB had given them an opportunity to demonstrate these talents for the benefit of other teachers.

Now to raise another glass and toast ELTABB and the next 15 years! May they be as interesting and exciting as the last 15 years.