

Outgoing President's Message

Over the finish line



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Dear EMWA Friends and Colleagues,
A week or so after its conclusion, my brain is still flooded with kaleidoscopic memories of our recent spring conference. The phenomenal attendance, especially by the number of newcomers; the programme; the social events; the banquet; the conversations...and all of it amid the grandeur of good ole Prague. And to me, the remarkable success of #EMWASS seems as the perfect culmination of my one-year service as the EMWA president.

It perhaps needs a mention, as often as possible, that the core strength of our association are its volunteers. At times, it is difficult to believe that an association such as ours with all it has to offer its membership is run entirely by volunteers. I've been an EMWA volunteer for eight years, starting off on the freelance business group and over time serving on the Expert Seminar Series committee, on the Ambassador Programme, as a workshop leader, and in other roles. I strongly

believe that volunteering my time for EMWA has been instrumental in my development as a medical writer. Serving EMWA has allowed me to develop my network, make friends and acquaintances involved with medical communications, learn from them, collaborate with them, and eventually build my freelance business. So, my advice, especially to freelancers, is to look for opportunities to volunteer.

"How does it feel to finish?", I was asked frequently in Prague. I'll admit, I have mixed feelings. The role of the president comes with a huge responsibility of overseeing the management of an almost 1500-member strong association that offers educational and other outreach programmes throughout the year and especially at biannual conferences. Of course, in this the president is well supported by members of the Executive Committee (EC) and our staff at Head Office; I can't thank enough EMWA colleagues who served on the EC with me as well

as our staff. This vast amount of background work, largely unseen by the membership, consumes a substantial amount of one's time and before one realises, the year is up. So, there is a palpable sense of relief and a feeling of satisfaction for having donated one's time and efforts in the top position in the association. And there's also a twinge of not having brought to life the initiatives I had hoped to start as the president. Perhaps this requires a different perspective: I don't need to be a president to bring in or share initiatives.

So, how does it really feel to finish? Well, most EMWA volunteers don't "retire", we merely exchange hats. And as I pass on the presidential headgear to Maria Koltowska-Häggström with my best wishes to her, I have tried on a few new ones including that of a joint guest editor of this issue themed on Freelancing. I am still very much an EMWA volunteer.

Happy reading!