

Third-Level Teachers of German in Ireland

AGM, Saturday 19 November 2005, 14:00, Goethe Institute, Dublin

Attendance

Jürgen Barkhoff (TCD), Karl-Bernhard Bödeker (IT Sligo), Kristin Brogan (IT Tralee), Gilbert Carr (TCD), Una Carthy (Letterkenny IT), Deirdre Creighton (UCD), Andrew Cusack (TCD), Siobhán Donovan (UCD), Jenny Farrell (GMIT Galway), Helen Finch (TCD), Theo Harden (UCD), Valerie Heffernan (NUIM), Florian Krobb (NUIM), Sabine Krobb (UCD), Geraldine Mitchell (ITT, Dublin), Patricia Quigley (Tipperary Inst., Thurles & Clonmel), Jeff Morrison (NUIM), Christer Petersen (UCD), Gillian Pye (UCD), Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa (NUIG), Riana Walsh (ITT, Dublin), Jeanne Riou (UCD)

Apologies

Deirdre Byrnes (NUIG), Karen Feery (IT Blanchardstown), Linda Graham (Dundalk IT), Geraldine Grogan (IT Tallaght), Gisela Holfter (UL), Eimear Kelly (AIT), Dirk Köhler (NUIM), Caroline Krakowski (IT Tallaght), Caitríona Leahy (TCD), Jessica Lysaght (GMIT Castlebar), Cliona Marsh (UCD), Carol O'Byrne (WIT), Pól Ó Dochartaigh (UU), Rosaleen O'Neill (NUIG), Hermann Rasche (NUIG), Eda Sagarra (TCD), Manfred Schewe (UCC)

1 Chairpersons' Report

Florian Krobb welcomed everyone to the AGM of the Association of Third-Level Teachers of German in Ireland. He noted that it was exactly a year ago to the day to the AGM of 2004, when it had been decided not to disband the Association, particularly in these rather challenging times for our discipline.

Before the business meeting proper, a minute's silence was held for Susan Judt-Keary (NUIM), who had been present at that AGM on 20 November 2004, and whose sad and untimely death after a short illness occurred in January 2005. Susan Judt-Keary was a much-loved colleague and teacher, always full of life and fun, and she will be fondly remembered.

The Goethe Institute, and its director, Dr Matthias Müller-Wieferig, were thanked for hosting the Schillertag and AGM.

The Constitution of the Association states that the committee officers are elected for two years. The current committee elected in November 2004 is happy to stay on until November 2006. They are: Florian Krobb and Geraldine Mitchell (Joint Chair), Siobhán Donovan (Membership Secretary and Treasurer), Patricia Quigley (Communications and Website), Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa (Yearbook).

FK reported on the feedback from the questionnaires/membership forms that were sent out to all colleagues teaching German at Third Level in January 2005. The committee is very grateful for all suggestions received. The Committee has been able to take on board some, if not all, suggestions. The issue of advertising/creating awareness for our discipline is a challenging one: FK has written many letters to appropriate outlets in the media, heads of colleges, etc., but the response has been slight. However, there is now an Association website, and this should contribute to our profile. The Association as a whole is unable realistically to coordinate recruitment drives or run workshops, but it welcomes proposals to aid these where possible.

The Committee met three times during the year. It is currently working on the three issues that met with almost unanimous acceptance in the questionnaire:

- The compilation of a directory of all teaching German at Third Level

This will be made available online, with a hard copy sent to all paid-up members.

- The setting up of an Association website
- The establishing of a Yearbook

The aim of the Jahrbuch/Yearbook (*Germanistik in Ireland: Yearbook of/Jahrbuch der Association of Third-Level Teachers of German in Ireland*) is to showcase our research in all areas (linguistics, language, literature, history/Kulturwissenschaften, Landeskunde, DAF/Technology). It hopes to carry articles from across the board, offering younger researchers the opportunity to publish, and should carry shortish articles and reviews of books emanating from Irish Germanistik. There should be two editors and an advisory board for the peer review of articles. It is hoped that the first volume (2006) would contain the articles from the Schillertag, with subsequent editions also having a thematic focus. Hartung-Gorre publishers in Konstanz are quoting a price of €1,200, which is very competitive. Florian Krobb and Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa are pursuing the matter.

Planning is underway for the 2006 AGM, which will take place on 14 October 2006 in NUI Galway within the context of a day's conference on the provisional theme of "German in the Context of Irish Language Policy".

Membership Secretary's and Treasurer's Report (see accounts below)

Siobhán Donovan thanked all those who had paid their membership subscriptions and returned the directory forms. The membership for 2004/05 came to 43 (39 full-time, 5 part-time/retired), bringing in a total of €1,200 in membership fees. 11 colleagues had joined/rejoined for the year 2005/06. Membership subs always welcome! – Forms were sent out by snail mail in November, and are also on the web, or can be obtained by contacting Siobhan.Donovan@ucd.ie. The membership fee will remain unchanged at €30 for full-time, €15 for part-time/retired colleagues. Colleagues may pay by cheque or standing order.

There are currently about 160 colleagues teaching German at Third Level, and they are now on the email distribution list, so it is hoped that the membership numbers and return of directory forms will swell to reflect this. Ideally we should be taking in at least ca. €1,700 Euro from membership in order to finance our activities.

3 Webmaster's Report

Thanks to Albert Zeller (formerly UCD, now back in Austria) for the website design. This is under construction, but is now online at www.germaninireland.org. A noticeboard section is planned: all items to be sent to Patricia Quigley (pquigley@tippinst.ie).

4 Announcements of conferences, meetings etc.

- Conference on Austrian State Treaty: 50 years on, in TCD, 25/26 November 2005 (contact: Gilbert Carr, Caitriona Leahy)
- Reading by Swiss Writer in Residence at UCD, Gabrielle Alioth, Goethe Institute, 8 December 2005 (contact: Siobhán Donovan)
- Business German Working Group, next meeting: 6 October 2006, UCC (contact: Gisela Holfter)
- Conference on “Mythos Schweiz” to be held in NUIM and TCD, 19-21 October 2006 (contact: Jürgen Barkhoff, Valerie Heffernan)
- Böll and Irisches Tagebuch Conference to be held in UL in 2007 (contact Gisela Holfter)

5 Proposal to change Article 3 of the Constitution

As stated in the letter sent out in November, it was proposed that Article c (“[...] will be responsible for the publication of a newsletter”) be changed to “[...] will be responsible for the maintenance of a website”. The proposal was accepted.

6 A.O.B. and general discussion

Points that arose in the general discussion that followed related to the Yearbook, the issue of falling numbers and language policy.

Yearbook

It was pointed out that the CUTG proceedings made a deficit, and many copies were left unpurchased. FK said that it was planned to distribute the Yearbook to all paid-up members. If it does not prove itself financially, then we will rethink it, but it seems fair to try it out.

Falling numbers and language policy: what we can do?

It was agreed that the situation at present is rather gloomy and that all languages are being affected – not just German. In many Institutes of Technology, language-teaching is done by part-time colleagues, and they feel marginalized. Languages (taught by part-timers) in DLIADT have died out completely.

With growing globalisation and the falling numbers in languages in general, it makes sense to work together. We should also team up with the GDI (again, letters have been written by FK).

Some things we can do:

- all colleges are already embarking on recruitment drives;
- a viable language policy needs to be adopted by the Academic Council in the IT sector and the marketing of languages in a modular curriculum needs to be addressed;
- the transferable skills of language graduates need to be highlighted (cf. the award-winning project run by WIT, DCU and TCD).

It was noted that while the Fórfas report brought up the issue of cultural awareness, the Institutes of Technology and the Universities were not mentioned. The Primary Schools Initiative is encouraging – and FK has written to them.

The AGM concluded at 14:50, and the Schillertag resumed.