

Gillian Mansfield (2012–2016)

When I became President of Cercles in 2012, I had already been part of the CercleS Executive in the previous 4 years as Secretary General, so in one sense for me it was a question of being handed over the baton and carrying on the work of my predecessor, Johann Fischer. In the other, it was one of creating my own personal contribution to the Association. In these terms, just as when preparing a research essay, I reflected on our past work in the field of language education, on the work of others with like mission and intent, in order to create my own niche in which I would endeavour to consolidate our impact in the future by fostering recognition of our expertise throughout Europe and further afield. For me, this is possible through learning from the other and learning by doing in order to go forward.

It was therefore important for me to identify what needed further attention and what newly developing language demands needed to be taken on board. It is not easy to condense into a few hundred words how I went about this, nor how I see CercleS now and how I foresee its future. Nor is it easy to focus on one or two of the multiple strands related to foreign language education that I wanted to prioritise during my two terms of office. So, I would like simply to note how, in just some areas, our Association has grown to what I see it is now and how I think it will continue to do so given these premises. In my own time, a high point was CercleS being called by the Council of Europe to take part in

some European projects, in particular in 2015 for a Council of Europe CEFR project "CEFR Extended Set of Illustrative Descriptors: Focus on Mediation", co-ordinated by Brian North. I think there were around 70 CercleS members who participated. There was also our participation the annual ECML meetings.



Let me stress that I have always believed in teamwork, which relies heavily on regular communication and committing to a time to meet on a regular basis. This is at all levels, not only in the Executive but also the Co-ordinating Committee, Focus Groups, project work... I was pleased to have initiated regular monthly Skype meetings with the Executive Committee I was leading, where we were able to discuss and distribute tasks. It is not easy to keep enthusiasm and commitment high on tight working schedules. The Bulletin was no longer possible, it was rather costly to run, and it was difficult to encourage contributions. However, I am glad to see that now a regular e-bulletin such as this one is in place.

My biggest challenge during my 4 years in office was to get the CercleS journal *Language Learning in Higher Education* really off the ground after its initial struggle. This was only possible thanks to having the privilege of working alongside David Little as Co-Editor-in-Chief. David has always strongly believed in the potential of CercleS and what it can offer language educators in general with a dedicated journal. It is thanks to him that ten years on, the journal has gained greater recognition. We persevered, never daring to give up when few quality contributions were being sent in and not everyone was convinced of its potential success. Indeed, as I have now returned to co-edit the journal after my retirement, I have been able to see how its reputation has grown through the overwhelming number of submissions my colleague Carmen Argondizzo and I find in our mailboxes every month. Receiving so many proposals, we have the difficult task of selecting the most promising ones for publication.

On a final note, the fact that so many young, and not so young scholars and practitioners, now aspire to publish with us, is surely an achievement that all CercleS presidents can be proud of. The recognition of CercleS expertise in and around Europe, and also further afield, is clearly extending.

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