

CHAIRMANS REPORT 2005

February 2005 is a very important for the QL fraternity.

It marks the 21st Anniversary of the launch of the Sinclair QL by Sir Clive Sinclair, and the 21st Anniversary of the founding of QL Users and Tinkerers Association (Quanta) by Leon Heller and Brian Pain. Both events took place in February 1984.

Who would have predicted in 1984 that there would still be a lively QL community in 2005.

Quanta will be celebrating both of these Anniversaries next October with a Major International Workshop – “QL is 21” – at Portsmouth; but more about that anon.

The aims and objectives for 2004/2005 have been to maintain the services to members at 2003/2004 levels whilst carrying out a structured review of Quanta so that a development plan can be based on ascertainable facts and not subjective supposition.

This is the first time in the history of Quanta such a review has been undertaken.

It has been carried out in two parts – firstly a Survey of all members to discover the hardware and software they are using, their use of Quanta Services and the Internet, their perception of the direction Quanta should go and their willingness to help in moving Quanta forward; and secondly a Survey of the Committee to ascertain how well it is suited to present needs and what changes may be needed.

The Membership Survey was launched simultaneously in the October / November 2004 Magazine and on the Quanta Website. Time constraints meant that Quanta could only put the Project Assessment forms on the site in downloadable formats.

Tony Firshman was quick to spot the advantage of members being able to respond online. Quanta was pleased to accept his most generous offer and this facility was available on both his own & Quanta's website in under 3 days. Thank you, Tony. To my great pleasure and delight 63 members, and 52 other QL users making a total of 115 respondents in all participated. Quanta thanks all those who took the time and trouble to take part in this Survey. You have provided sufficient data to ensure that a meaningful assessment can be made.

The Survey ran for two and a half months. It closed on 15th February, and analysis is now in progress. Reports will be made at the Annual General Meeting, in the Magazine, and on the website. That is not to say that acting on the analysis will be put on hold until after the AGM.

Subscription rates for 2005/2006 have been reviewed having regard to the Financial Report for 2004, and it has been decided that it would be inappropriate to vary the present rates of £14 for Ordinary Members, Overseas Members £17, and £5 for Associate Members.

Once more there have been loud noises about spending Quanta's MONEY but on WHAT? Those who made those noises have not supported them with constructive suggestions.

Quanta has continued to be, and is willing to support financially software and hardware development projects beneficial to members.
If you desire funding it is up to you to ask. Quanta cannot fund a project for which no request for assistance has been made.

From the start the principal means of communication with members has been the Magazine. It was published and sent out on a monthly basis until about 18 months ago when ongoing shortfalls in copy received resulted in a decision to go bi-monthly. Whilst this change has made it easier to fill a given issue more copy is needed from ALL Members. Even an article of three hundred words would be very welcome. Some members write articles of over 1000 words for another QL related newsletter, and that begs the question of why are those members not submitting articles for Quanta Magazine?

Having looked at the cost of producing the magazine it has become apparent that costs could be significantly contained if those members who have internet facilities received their magazine electronically.

Committee have agreed to carry out a trial of receiving the magazine electronically themselves. Subject to that it is intended to offer members the opportunity to receive their own copies electronically. This will be optional and members who do not elect to receive their copy electronically will continue to have it posted to them as now.

At the same time it is intended to move from an A5 to A4 format. This change is cost neutral and brings the format into line with current general scientific journal practice.

Near the start of the Quanta year it became apparent that the longstanding arrangements for the desired dates for all Quanta Workshops and QL Shows worldwide to be cleared with Quanta before going firm on a given date had fallen into disuse with the result that near conflicts were occurring. Committee decided that a "Workshop Coordinator" (including QL Shows) was needed. The job was assigned to Geoff Wicks and the problem seems to have been resolved.

A rolling programme of Quanta Workshops and QL Shows will be included in the magazine, and on the website.

A previous Committee perceived advantage in electronic communications as a means of reaching members more quickly than is possible by traditional snail mail. To this end they set up a website. It had links to pages giving newsletter contents, subgroup meetings, workshops, and listings, also a facility to email Committee Members direct. Within a very short time the email links were becoming overwhelmed with spam. Also the ISP ceased to trade.

An arrangement was made with Bruce Nicholls of "Quo Vadis Design" and the site relaunched as "www.quanta.org.uk" – The immediate spam problem was eliminated. Recently there have been some spam attacks but not on the scale encountered with the

original site.

Last autumn it was discovered that some pages were in need of updating, and that the presentation had become dated. Clearly a major overhaul was more than due. On making further enquiries it was found that previous committees had not made specific provision for the maintenance and update of the site.

There has been updating to the content of the site but the real need is for a revitalised website and the content for that has been defined.

However a “Web Editor” is needed to bring this to fruition, and to maintain the revitalised site. A volunteer is wanted to do this vital task. Will YOU HELP – Yes I mean YOU. If so please contact me.

In his Chairman’s Report for 2003/2004 my predecessor, Robin Barker, identified the need for an email Forum in which Quanta members could discuss Quanta specific issues. To that end it is proposed to set up a mailing list site.

To coordinate both the updated website and the mailing list site a task of “Ecomms” has been established, and its terms of reference specified.

The Committee Survey revealed a need to vary some duties to better meet present day requirements.

To that end it is intended in 2005/2006 to –

- a) Discontinue a separate duty of Membership Secretary and to include it with the duties of the Treasurer.
- b) Discontinue a separate duty of Software Editor and to include it with those of Head Librarian

Turning to the question of how to keep the Committee refreshed and at the same time maintain continuity. Like many others of its time Quanta’s Constitution envisages that a completely new committee will be elected each year. This works well whilst a club or society is less than 7 years old, and its members are still very enthusiastic. However by then new committee members have become difficult to find and clubs rely on a limited number of long term members to run its affairs. They have run out of new ideas and the club wilts.

The rules of many clubs now provide that committee members may serve for not more than 6 years without standing down for at least one year before seeking re-election. This has been found to provide a good balance between continuity and refreshment of committees.

Quanta Committee believe that Quanta should adopt such a policy and they recommend you to approve Special Resolution No 1.

The question of the size of the Committee has been addressed with particular consideration being given to membership numbers, and the nominations received for 2005/2006. The conclusion reached is that it should comprise the three officers together with three other members. The new Committee will need to co-opt a member to be the

Magazine Editor.

The outgoing Committee are concerned, however, that there could be difficulty in achieving the present quorum of “four” for a Committee Meeting of four with a Committee that may have less than six members. To obviate this they consider it necessary to vary the set quorum to be “two or half the number of Committee members whichever is the greater.”

They recommend you to approve Special Resolution No 2.

Roy Brereton and John Southern have both decided not to stand for re-election to Committee for 2005/2006. Both will sorely be missed

Roy has been on Committee for a number of years during which he has performed well, successively as Head Librarian, Chairman, Secretary, and most recently as Magazine Editor. I think that we all agree that his efforts in that last role have saved the Magazine from extinction.

John Southern has had two shorter spells on the Committee, firstly as Sales, and during 2004 as Secretary. Both jobs have been carried out with John’s usual good temperament, joviality, and efficiency. Thank you John for your service.

Sarah Gilpin has been nominated to serve as Secretary, but nobody has been nominated to serve as Magazine Editor, and the new Committee will need to address this as a matter of some urgency.

Both Geoff Wicks and I have been nominated for the post of Chairman so the AGM will need to vote on that.

The essential research has been done to enable Quanta to move forward in 2005/2006 on the basis of ascertainable facts - not subjective supposition.

It is your choice as to whom you entrust with this. You have a Vote – Use IT.

John Mason

Chairman