

# Summary report: 2015/16



*The power within*

## Outgoing Chief Executive Steve Doswell reflects on IoIC's annual performance in 2015 and the start of the current year.

**IoIC** is a collective enterprise, the fruit of the work of many dedicated people, most but not all of them volunteers. The appropriate pronouns when reporting on a year in the life of IoIC are therefore 'we', 'us' and sometimes, when reminding ourselves that IoIC is also a legal entity from which a certain professional distance must be observed, 'it'. In my final report as chief executive, please also indulge me for the occasional reference to 'I'. As always, the AGM is traditionally the start of a new year of activity and the point of renewal for IoIC, this year more so than many. For me it is the point when I stand down from a role I have held for more than five years and I write this fuelled by a genuine mix of emotions. The overriding ones, though, are firstly: relief and satisfaction that in Jennifer Sproul we have found a really capable and energetic successor as chief executive; secondly, a sense of anticipation for the period to come, in which I expect IoIC and its members will begin to see real benefits from the work done by so many people to lay the groundwork for the UK's professional body at the heart of the internal communication profession. But first, we should consider IoIC's financial fortunes in 2015.

### Finance

**We** sustained an overall Year End loss of £38,774. Any loss is regrettable and this is a higher figure than we could routinely sustain if it merely reflected our trading performance. But it doesn't. In 2015 we added significantly to our headcount by creating a new role – the Head of Commercial – and recruiting to this position in mid-August. The financial effect of this move alone was to add £20,000 to our salary bill in 2015, plus a one-off executive search fee (a fee which resulted in us finding and being able to recruit Jennifer Sproul) of £6,000. Factor these combined £26,000 costs out and the residual loss is around £12,000. Given that we made this exceptional recruitment spend to build our core capability, not least in bringing us valuable new commercial skills (and by this helping to equip IoIC to fulfil our strategy for the next three years) and also in bringing our intended next chief executive onto the team, it must surely be right to see this as an investment in IoIC's future strength and growth.

Of the residual loss, it would only have taken relatively small movements – slightly higher income, slightly lower costs – across several of our income-generating lines to have narrowed this net result closer to a break-even point.

This is not said to mask the fact that the year ended with a loss, but to highlight an encouraging point, one endorsed by the whole IoIC Board, that there needs to be only minor improvements in what we already do to bring us back to a surplus-generating position. In short, although last year's headline figure is negatively eye-catching, this is not a performance requiring IoIC to make any major structural changes to its activities.

What 2015 has taught us though is that we now need to restore our reserves to a more comfortable and sustainable level. Our current reserves stand at £87,519. We have a sensible reserves *policy* but on its own this is not enough. The Board has now committed to developing a proactive reserves *strategy* with targets and review-points to help us to build a separate reserves fund on which IoIC can draw as a bulwark against contingencies and ultimately for selective future investments.

Returning to the 2015 figures, there are several positive indicators in these results (figures rounded to £k).

- Turnover up £38,000 to £448k
- Sponsorship up £13,000 to £24,000
- Debtors down £19,000 to £113k
- Education and Training up by a startling £58,000 to £154,000, which can perhaps be seen as a positive payback for the organisation's strategy adopted in the late 'noughties' and vigorously pursued ever since, to anticipate the emerging needs of the IC sector by putting professional development at the centre of our activities. It was this after all that led us to become an institute back in 2010.

- Although overall administration costs rose by £11,000, once those previously-mentioned £26,000 recruitment costs are factored out, the underlying year-on-year performance is one of a £15,000 *reduction* in administration costs – the underlying costs of running IoIC. We try to run a tight ship.

## Change of Chief Executive

**Jennifer** Sproul joined us in August 2015 as Head of Commercial. It was our intention from the outset that whoever we appointed to this newly-created role would offer strong potential to step up to lead the Institute as Chief Executive. The rationale was – and remains – that the next phase in IoIC's development would require an added commercial focus, without for one moment diluting our identity as a non-profit professional body that exists to develop IC practitioners and the fast-emerging IC profession as a whole. IoIC does not exist to make a profit and we are not commercially-driven, and yet we must generate income, achieve viable surpluses and be commercially capable if we want to achieve other aspirations which are our true purpose and, indeed, our vocation as the acknowledged body for our profession.

Prior to joining IoIC, Jennifer had worked for 12 years at the Market Research Society, most recently as business development and marketing director. In appointing her we knew that we had found an individual with impressive commercial skills, experience and acumen, and a deep understanding of the working environment and purpose of professional membership bodies which like IoIC exist to serve and develop the skills and professional standing of members.

After arriving last summer, Jennifer rapidly got to grips with the specifics of her Commercial role and with the detailed workings of IoIC in a way that has impressed the HQ team and the Board alike.

When I became Chief Executive in January 2011, I saw the role as a three-year change programme, one intended to enable IoIC to become in practice, behaviour and outlook the professional institute it had become in name and law less than one year earlier. In fact it has now been over five years and it is a good time for us all to start something new.

I have been a Member of this organisation for nearly 30 years and had been actively involved as a volunteer for most of that time, firstly with Central Region in the 1990s, then with the Communicator of the Year event and the national Awards competition, becoming European representative and then national Chairman in 2002, before taking on my present paid role as chief executive in January 2011. So much for the CV. But spending so long with one organisation inevitably creates strong emotional bonds, too. IoIC is precious to me as it is for so many of our Members. When beginning the search for a successor, I was determined to hand over the stewardship to someone who would cherish it and who could also bring a renewed financial strength, to take IoIC further on its journey to become the universally acknowledged institute for internal communication in the UK and beyond.

I have absolute confidence that Jennifer will be that person and her early work for IoIC bears this out. She will work ably and with dedication for you and all Members of IoIC as she leads our organisation and I will actively support her as she does so.

## Highlights

**Among** annual highlights, IoIC's long-established conference committee have set the delivery standard for IoIC events. In each of my five years as chief executive, I have been convinced that that year's annual conference had topped the previous year's event for the calibre of the line-up, freshness and originality of the content and delivery and for the quality of the overall delegate experience. So it was once again last April when IoIC Live returned to Brighton. It's an exceptional feat to keep doing that year after year and the core team responsible for delivering such sustained high-quality and enjoyable conferences deserve to be named and acclaimed. So take a bow Helen Deverell, Nigel Legg, Suzanne Peck, Claudi Schneider, Brenda Scott and Justine Stevenson. I expect no less when IoIC Live comes to Birmingham in May under this year's umbrella theme of humanising IC.

While IoIC Scotland once again maintained its proud tradition of dependably glitzy gala award ceremonies, among the other most pleasing developments during 2015 were the signs of new vitality across our wider regional network.

From an initial meeting (a first tango?) in Halifax, the re-ignited IoIC North group led by Andy Holt has fused into a very creative and dynamic team. As a result, the forthcoming Better Connected event in Manchester promises to be one of the landmark events in 2016.

Mark Hill has re-established IoIC's presence in Bristol after several years' absence from a city in which we were once very active and are showing signs of becoming so once again. Colin Archer has now taken up the challenge,

with the added ambition of flying IoIC's flag across the wider south west.

In Rich Baker, IoIC has found an able new director for Central region. Well-planned, delivered and attended, the Central Seminar took place once again in Leicester, followed by a joint award ceremony in which Central and North came together. Originally an improvised effort intended to rescue IoIC North's then ailing awards competition, the Central-North collaboration has proved both effective and popular and there are plans for the newly-revitalised North to host next year's ceremony.

With London's capable regional director Nada Zbirek (who is also Board director responsible for Marketing) on maternity leave, it fell to Paula Wilson to maintain IoIC's interests in the capital. With so many competing IC sector events on offer, it has sometimes been a challenge for IoIC London to attract sufficient numbers to make its events viable. But Paula's perseverance and the support of a committee combining both long-standing and new members seem to be paying off. Albeit on a modest scale, IoIC London's events programme is running and more good things are expected during 2016.

The Insight Seminar and ICon Awards event in Bloomsbury, London brought IoIC's annual calendar of activities to an enjoyable close in November. This is now a popular fixture which effectively bookends IoIC's year of national activities. The latest ceremony was enlivened by the presence of the award-winning in-house team from Northumbrian Water, led by Jane Lawrence, IoIC's Internal Communicator of the Year (COTY). For the first time for around a quarter of a century we decided not to present an *external* COTY. Frequently a challenge to find appropriate recipients, the

external COTY no longer fits with our profile after five years of being exclusively focused on internal communication.

## **Professional development**

**Our** portfolio of training courses and qualifications is at the core of our activity programme. As well as being central to IoIC's purpose, professional development proved to be of great importance for generating vital income during 2015 (see Finance above). Professional development and insight are the cornerstones of a professional institute and IoIC expects to continue to build on these during the next three years and beyond. The year's professional development highlight was undoubtedly the signing of an external accreditation agreement with Southampton Solent University in November. Thanks are due to Phil Weare for ably managing this process on IoIC's behalf. This means that IoIC now has independent verification that both the Foundation and Advanced Diplomas are delivered to a high-quality and academically robust process.

## **Fellowship**

**Following** President Suzanne Peck's review of Fellowship during the year, IoIC admitted two new Fellows, Lee Smith FIIC and Rachel Miller FIIC, and looks forward to awarding more new Fellowships during the current year.

## **GCS**

**We** were delighted when the UK Government's annual communication plan named IoIC for the contribution we have made to the current skills development drive for cross-government communication practitioners, a very large professional population. IoIC has worked hard to support

the government's IC professionalisation programme. Following the successful conclusion in April 2015 of a civil service pilot version of IoIC's Foundation Diploma, the Government Communication Service (GCS) then embarked on a pilot of our Advanced Diploma (re-badged as the Intermediate Diploma for GCS purposes) in October 2015. We are now working towards the launch of a further iteration of the Foundation Diploma for GCS in September 2016, with the prospect of a second run of the Intermediate/Advanced Diploma to follow in spring 2017.

## **The Board**

**We** are at the end of the current Board's period of tenure. On behalf of IoIC and all its Members, I express my gratitude to the people who have freely given their time, energy and ideas (because those who serve on the Board do so entirely as volunteers) to ensure that IoIC is governed appropriately and its officers held properly to account: Kate Jones (Chair); Liz Cochrane and Phil Weare (Professional Development), Alastair Scott (Network), Justine Stevenson (Awards & Events), Andy Williamson (Communications), and Nada Zbirek (Marketing). The President also attends Board meetings by invitation and Suzanne Peck has seen it as an important part of her responsibility to attend and make contributions at every meeting. Brenda Scott has also served with customary diligence throughout the year as Board Secretary.

At the time of writing, the deadline for nominations to the Board of IoIC had just passed. Following last year's Board reform, approved at the 2015 AGM, the IoIC Board is smaller than before. In fact there was an equal number of candidates (ten) as there were places on the Board, so once again no election

was necessary. As a firm believer in renewal, I think it is important that the Board line-up is regularly refreshed, while also being a committed advocate of three-year terms rather than the previous one-year term. The longer tenure gives individual Board members an opportunity to grow into their roles, to build a collective esprit de corps and to become increasingly effective as the prime governance body for IoIC. Happily, then, the incoming Board retains several familiar names but has also been refreshed with the arrival of three new members. This looks on the face of it as the best of both worlds. As IoIC protocols require, the new Board line-up will be formally announced at the AGM on 5 May.

## **Also without whom...**

**Beyond** those already mentioned, I offer my thanks to Andy Rushton, who worked with great vigour during a relatively brief period as Board Director to strengthen our relationship with the Government Communication Service.

Thank you also to Magnus Wake for taking on the IoIC mantle in Scotland, and to his successor Alastair Scott for fulfilling the Scottish role and also representing the overall regional network.

Not least, I thank Dominic Walters, a long-standing member of the Board, former national Chairman and latterly a very capable chair of the Governance Group, who generously remains in range as a reliable source of good advice.

Finally, my personal thanks – and surely those of IoIC overall – to Suzanne Peck, who has demonstrated by her actions how effective an honorary President can be even without formal constitutional powers. Loyal, committed, determined and tenacious, Suzanne has given

me guidance and unfailing support when I've asked for it and also assistance when I didn't know I needed it – and for that I am truly thankful.

### **The team**

**We** have been blessed with the constant dedication of our core central team and for that, IoIC members can be truly thankful. Thank you for another year of hard, patient and fruitful work to membership & operations manager Tim Beynon; events manager Brenda Scott, and PR & marketing consultant Catherine Park. This is the team at the heart of IoIC's operations, and for most members and contacts they are the voices and faces too.

### **You**

**Finally**, once again we thank *you* sincerely for choosing to belong to IoIC. By doing so, you share a common purpose with the Board, the central team and all other members – to build and establish IC as a profession and its practitioners, as well as to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the professional body at the heart of internal communication. It remains a cause for which I work, and I hope you do, too.

*Steve Doswell, Chief Executive, April 2016*

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