

# ELT



## Ireland bulletin

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Email us to write for the next ELT Ireland Bulletin!

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# Welcome to the Sixth ELT Ireland Bulletin!

by Peter Lahiff (President of ELT Ireland)

## ELT Ireland Reflections & Resolutions

The first ever ELT Ireland event was back in April 2014, now a whole other decade, and when you have been going for almost 7 years, the time comes to reflect for a moment on why we have ELT Ireland and how it can move forward to 10 years. The team got together on the 28th of January with members, to ask ourselves the key questions about the organisation; why, what and how.

The first thing on the agenda was a mingle where the participants shared their key ELT Ireland moments. For the longest serving members, this was being part of turning a conversation into an organisation. For those who were newer to the profession, it was to attend an event and find there was a network of fellow professionals and a world of ideas to dip into and contribute to.

When asked why have ELT Ireland, some contributors mentioned a particular ELTed talk that encouraged them to change their teaching, while others got the opportunity to try out giving talks and sharing their ideas at these same events. While it is cool to have the guy who wrote the book come to where you are, using it to answer your questions, it is in developing the capacity for local teachers to take the stage that I feel we do our best work.

Although English language teaching is all about people, managers and teachers can still feel isolated and it is the sense that “you are not on your own”, that is one of the most important things that ELT Ireland provides. For those who were dipping their toes into choppy waters, summer academic management found our “Get Ready for Summer” event a rock of reassurance. Providing support for managers as well as teachers is an important aspect of the ELT Ireland mission.

From the start it has been our organisation’s mission of develop a sense of professionalism in the sector and they tell us that it provides a forum for understanding the ELT environment beyond the particular organisation they are working in and get to know what is going on in the sector more generally. We summed up all the answers to the why question by agreeing that ELT Ireland fulfils a need to get together, learn from each other, connect and professionalise.

The list of activities offered is quite long, and with a small voluntary committee, it is important to ask whether they are they all worth doing. We have listed 50 events on Eventbrite since we started. Our most successful activities are the Annual Conference with around 250 attendees, our ELTed Teacher Talks and our Joint events, which have 30 or 40 attendees each time. One of the most valuable things about our events is of course the coffee breaks and the networking time, before, during and after. This is something we will definitely continue to make time for. A new event this year was the hackathon which we agreed needs to be on a Saturday in future, but is worth repeating.

We maintain a lively social media presence, but one suggestion was to develop a platform for ELT influencers, to draw people in and to offer something members could try their hand at, through ideas like our proposed webinar event. The other important channel of communication is the fortnightly newsletter, which goes out to



The Committee 2019 ELT Ireland 5th annual conference.

Pic by Lou McLoughlin

270 people and is read by just under 100 every time. The ELT Ireland bulletin is also an important part of the project, showing off a collection of articles by Irish-based teachers every year and providing an enduring resource through our website.

Managers also appreciated the jobs board facility, but wished that it would be updated through the busy summer period when they needed it most, as this is when the committee takes a break to work flat out on their day jobs. It was also felt by those in attendance that the Manager events were very worthwhile, but we should try different time slots to see what suits, aiming to increase attendance. Instead of evening we are going to try a half day event for managers once a quarter on a Friday afternoon with specific professional development goals.

There are things we have proposed which have not worked as well as we had hoped. The Twitter chats we used to run have been suspended due to a lack of engagement from members. We also get very few applications for our grants each year. Maintaining an up-to-date events page on the website has also been a challenge this year and proposals like a register of in-service trainers and a listing of current institute members, have not got past the drawing board.

In addition to running events, having an organisation means a lot of housekeeping, like answering correspondence, designing programmes and promotional material, issuing invoices and ticketing for events, maintaining an up-to-date membership register, and sending renewal reminders, all the other accounting and banking activities along with maintaining connected with IATEFL and other associations. These are all done by members of the committee around their regular jobs.

Having agreed on why we do things, and what it is we need to be doing, we came to the most difficult question, which was how to do them within the constraints of a voluntary, part-time committee and how we reach out to let more people know about what we are doing and get them involved.

The communication challenge is clear. All correspondence about professional development goes to one very busy person and gets overlooked. We need to get event posters or fliers into the staff rooms. As each member institute is entitled to send someone to the annual conference as part of their membership benefits, it was proposed that that person be recognised at a delegate for their organisation. Someone who could be sent notifications and would spread the word and pass on questions. This is something we are going to start doing this year.

We also discussed the other big challenge of getting people involved in the committee and agreed that the best way to do that was to have event sub-committees and invite volunteers to be part of preparing one. That way we can break the big jobs down into smaller contributions which get people involved, without asking them to jump straight into a full commitment at the start.

The question was posed as to whether it was time for ELT Ireland to consider recruiting someone to a part-time role to coordinate the house-keeping tasks and be the professional source of communication for the organisation. The consensus was that this was not the way we wanted to go as it would create imperative to raise revenue to cover these obligations, which would change the character of the organisation. As with any good organisation like this, the members make it. Our mission in the coming year is to be better at getting you involved. Talk to any of the committee about how you can contribute. You might ask, who me? But I ask if not you, then who?

**“Talk to any of the committee about how you can contribute. You might ask, who me? But I ask if not you, then who?”**

## Keeping you up to date

by Ben Dobbs (Newsletter Editor)

ELT Ireland's regular newsletter is sent out to members and subscribers every other Monday at 8.00 am Irish time.

Our newsletter aims to share news from ELT Ireland and the wider sector including conferences and events in Ireland and abroad, calls for presenters, materials and links and requests for assistance with research.

As we want more people to engage and to show more of what is going on with ELT members, we invite readers to send us anything that may be of interest to members. We would love to share more of members' news, ideas, publications, conference appearances and research so, if you have something to share, please let us know.



In your Monday morning mail

## ELT Hacked at our First Hackathon

by Peter Lahiff (ELT Ireland - President)

We had the first ever ELT Ireland Hackathon, which was hosted by Future Learning with the support of Eequals, on Friday 29th of November. Teachers worked in teams on how to make different applications of technology work in the classroom including; Online Dictionaries, Language Databases like the BNC, Google Classroom, Video Trimming Tools, and Pronunciation Apps.



Collaborative problem solving in action

Pic by Future Learning

A hackathon is an event where the teams come together for a defined amount of time to tackle a problem related to their area of expertise. It has been borrowed from the world of coding and applied in this case to the problems of using technology in English language teaching (ELT). When it comes to the use of technology in education there is a tendency to think that the mere fact of having it is a benefit, but like any tool, we need effective techniques for using and to work out how to manage a class that is using it. It is important too to know what preparation is needed beforehand in order for it to be of use.

The event was opened up to the floor by asking participants to consider What technology does for us, not just what applications we use, and what we would like it to be doing. They were then asked to articulate the problem that they would like to solve and with the help of a partner to define it in terms that could be tackled in the time available. This was considered over coffee and then groups were formed with similar objectives. With the help of suggestions from others groups they selected an application and worked out the steps for implementing it in their classrooms.

When the groups were ready with their proposals we invited a group of students from Future Learning's afternoon classes to ask the hard questions and give their views about how it would work for students. The students then gave a presentation on the advantages and disadvantages of some of the applications that they were using in their classes including Edmodo, Kahoot and Quizlet. The participants found this feedback direct from the end user very insightful.

## Letter from the Editor

by Laura O'Grady (Bulletin Editor)

2019 was such an exciting year for everyone at ELT Ireland with the publication of our fifth issue of the Bulletin. To recreate all that excitement! We kicked off the year in style with our Article Writing Forum hosted by Alison Banks and ATC Language Schools. This saw a gathering of ELT professionals ranging from teachers, teacher trainers to academic management all working together to share their knowledge and to inspire one another in the hopes of generating interesting and useful content.

Our Sixth issue doesn't disappoint! This issue sees us covering a broad range of topics from the changing face of ELT in Ireland to the usefulness of corpora! Our sixth issue would not be here without the contributions from our writers, the advice and support from our reviewers and the ELT Ireland team. I would like to thank our reviewers for their resolute commitment to the reviewing process.

To all the potential ELT writers I would like to say, being a writer allows you to reflect on your practices, allows you to sit still and think, it encourages you to develop your skills and to share your invaluable knowledge with others. So, if you are interested in contributing to our fifth issue contact us at [info.eltireland@gmail.com](mailto:info.eltireland@gmail.com). Many thanks to all!

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