

2013 BJCP Annual Report

President's Report

by Gordon Strong

For the last several years, we've been delivering our annual report through the BJCP Member's Meeting at the AHA NHC, and through expanded database reports and updates to the BJCP web site. At the 2013 conference, several people commented that they missed the old written report. So, by popular demand, here's a report on the state of the organization as of the end of 2013.

NHC Meeting

At the June meeting in Philadelphia, we covered the following status and member-introduced topics:

- **Exams.** Gave status update: backlog of legacy exams cleared, processing time for new exams cut in half, new changes made to the exam seem to be well-received, always need more volunteer graders. We intend to raise the quota of monthly exams from 8 to 10 in October. We continue to look for opportunities for faster exam turnaround, including process and technology improvements. Changes to the exam program drove most of the major scheduling of projects for the last three years.
- **Style Guidelines.** A major planned update due in 2014. We had wanted to do this in 2012, but the major changes to the exam program put this project on hold due to their inter-relationship. The update will be a major change, like in 2004, with new styles and organization. Changes had been collecting since the last update in 2008, including several user-submitted proposals. Looking at including fewer commercial examples, or putting some of that material on the web site to reduce need to change due to examples.
- **Web Site.** Members requested easier access to data, including some additional information on how to perform common tasks. Status update given: rehosting of web server in progress, which will give us more control. Looking at a complete web site redesign.
- **Communications.** Members requested more communications about ongoing projects and general organizational status. Bulk emails have traditionally been a problem due to getting flagged as spam. We promised to look at new tools, methods, and processes to improve this. A newsletter was discussed, but many members were against an increase in unsolicited mailings. More study needed on potential solutions.
- **Cider Exam.** A cider exam is under development, but the progress is somewhat slow due to lack of deep subject matter experts within the organization. Attempting to partner with the cider community. Draft materials developed and under review.
- **CEP.** Kit order processing has sped up, and the backlog has been cleared. New staff is in place and is working on additional training programs and posting of material to the web site.
- **International.** A question was raised about whether expanding international membership was a goal – yes, it is, and has been for several years. We're working with judges in

many other countries now, and continue to give exams and sanction competitions there. We have been collecting member-submitted translations of BJCP materials, and have organized them in an International Resources page on the web site. We give the online exam in English, Spanish, and Portuguese, and support giving the written and tasting exams in those languages, if translated to English afterwards.

- **Code of Conduct.** Members raised a discussion about how judges conduct themselves, whether disciplinary procedures existed, and what responsibilities judges had. Past efforts at developing these procedures devolved into punishment too quickly, and were abandoned. But more information and guidance could be provided. We agreed to look at revising some of our program materials to address this subject, but will continue to handle specific incidents reported to us on a one-off basis. Our experience has been that gentle peer pressure from senior judges or program staff tends to resolve most problems successfully, but additional guidance could help prevent more incidents.
- **Grading.** Members raised the discussion about more standardized and consistent grading, and whether we needed additional training and guidance for graders. We reported that we had been looking at ways for improving grader training, working with the CEP and Exam programs, and also with the AHA. Past efforts at developing standardized grading rubrics had not succeeded, but we agreed to try again.

These were the notes from the June meeting. As you will see in the remainder of this report, many of these issues have been addressed or are actively being worked.

As part of our annual planning process after the NHC, I discussed a number of ongoing, active projects and identified potential new projects for the coming year based on the board's goals of reworking the exam program, better supporting program growth, and increasing international outreach, as well as the member input received during the annual meeting. Following is a list of those projects and their status as of the end of 2013.

- **Raise the exam quota to increase throughput.** In October 2013, raised the monthly exam quota by 25% after increasing exam directorate staffing (six new associate directors, and two new exam directors) to handle the additional workload. Steve Platz was moved into a managing role for the exam directorate to focus on policy, procedures, and projects, while Scott Bickham is focusing on the online and international exams.
- **Perform a major update to the style guidelines.** An ongoing project, on target to deliver a draft for public review by the NHC in June 2014. Many new styles have been identified and completed (Black IPA, Australian Sparkling Ale, English Golden Ale, Grodziskie, Gose, Wheatwine, American Strong Ale, various Czech styles, etc.) while a reworking and expansion of various specialty entry categories is being completed. Mead and cider guidelines have been revised and expanded. Some categories are being split, while others are being moved. Research and review activities are being conducted on other styles, commercial examples validated, descriptions standardized and clarified, historical notes updated with more current references, and formatting standardized. Once a draft is complete, work will begin on revising the exam, online exam question pool, foreign translations, mobile platform versions, multiple print formats, and the many other things that depend on the guidelines. A presentation based on this project has been accepted for the AHA NHC in 2014.

- **Improve web site navigation.** On the current web site, additional FAQs were added to describe to answer common questions about how to take the new exams, how to become a judge, how to become a grader, how to order an off-flavor kit, and similar questions. These were requested at the Member's meeting. Additional improvements won't become evident until the web site redesign and rehosting project is complete.
- **Add new communications tools and staff.** Responding to member requests, we added a new Assistant Communications Director, Jeff Sanders, and tasked him with selecting a commercial service for conducting bulk communications with members without being flagged as spam. This task was completed, and the BJCP has paid for the GetResponse service. Jeff conducted a member survey and created a quarterly newsletter based on interviews with staff, to be published in 1Q 2014. I worked with Jeff to load the system with current judge member and provisional judge information. We plan to have the newsletter be published quarterly. The communications directorate has also been more active in using social media including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- **Create a cider exam and study materials.** Dave Houseman is leading this project, and has created a draft exam and study materials that are currently undergoing review. New cider guidelines have been completed, and a new cider scoresheet has been posted.
- **Add grader training.** Responding to member requests, the exam directorate has been working on a rubric for graders, and it is nearly ready for publication; Scott Bickham has been leading this effort. Exam directors have published additional guidance for exam administrators, and additional guidance is being developed for proctors and graders with expected publication in 1Q 2014. The BJCP has entered into an agreement with the AHA to support additional grader training, with the AHA providing travel reimbursement funds for grader workshops. The CEP directorate is working on training materials in conjunction with the exam directorate.
- **Rehost the web site.** A long-term project has been underway for quite some time to improve the web hosting experience for the BJCP. We have procured a commercial hosting provider, and are planning the migration of services to the new site by 3Q 2014. While our current hosting arrangement, graciously donated by MoreBeer, has served us well, it has limited our expansion potential and the ability to implement additional services. The BJCP is deeply thankful to Chris Graham and MoreBeer for their support over the years.
- **Hire a web developer.** The BJCP hired Lindsay Husted to design a new web site for us on the new host, moving from a 1990s-style site to a more modern design based on WordPress. This new site should allow for more frequent updates by a larger group of staff, better organization of data, better experience on mobile devices, and a better tools for finding and retrieving data. We expect to cut over to the new service by 3Q 2014.
- **Complete the vocabulary transition to a wiki.** The long-stalled vocabulary project is active again, with James Golovich leading the effort. The content generated under the previous project is being revised and refreshed, and loaded into a modern wiki-based system. The application will be hosted on our new hosting service, and launched after the content revision is complete and the new host available, planned by 3Q 2014.

- **Refresh graphics used in support of the program.** In response to member requests, we are looking at creating rank-specific graphics similar to the BJCP logo that can be used in more places. We are working with a BJCP member who is a graphics designer to produce these materials.
- **Find a new merchandise supplier.** Mike Dixon has been working towards setting up a new merchandise supplier for BJCP-logo shirts. We have identified a partner, Rebel Brewer, who can make shirts in-house to our specifications. We have seen a prototype of the online shop, and are waiting to validate samples before launching the service. We expect this to be available by 2Q 2014.
- **Rewrite the competition handbook.** Much has changed in competitions since the original competition handbook for the AHA/BJCP Sanctioned Competition Program was developed in 2006. Luann Fitzpatrick had volunteered to lead a rewrite based on experiences running large competitions including the second round of the NHC in several locations. Dave Houseman, Mike Dixon, and myself also contributed content. The document was published in December 2013.
- **Expand international resources.** I appointed Ali Kocho-Williams, representative from the northeast (and international locations) to be the point-of-contact for international members and to respond to inquiries from potential members outside North America. I've also asked him to help identify in-country leaders for BJCP members who can answer questions and help coordinate with the BJCP on international issues. The international resources web page has been expanded additionally with new member-generated translations and content, additional exams have been held in new countries including Chile, and interest is growing in additional countries. We have targeted some international members to assist with identifying revisions to the style guidelines to make them more usable to those outside North America.
- **Refresh the bylaws to be more modern.** A project was underway in the late 2000s to refresh the bylaws, but the project never was completed. The issue with out-of-date bylaws came up every time elections were conducted. Starting with the recommendations and work produced by the earlier committee, I completed a new draft of the bylaws and submitted them for review and approval, with a final vote expected in early 2014 before the new election cycle. The draft was posted for public comment and many member-suggested improvements were added.
- **Look at a code of conduct or more formal disciplinary processes.** A committee hasn't been formed, but issues relating to ethics and judge conduct were added to the bylaws, and additional material has been identified for inclusion in the Judge Procedures Manual and exam. Look for these to be completed by 2Q 2014. A number of incidents have been handled by directors and officers on a case-by-case basis, which seems to be working adequately.
- **Establish more regional training events.** We appointed David Teckam as an assistant CEP director to focus on regional training events, including grader training and advanced judge training. We have entered into an agreement with the AHA to help fund grader training, since the AHA has an interest in more judges being available to judge in NHC

events. The board approved a plan from CEP Director Randy Scorby to provide additional regional training, including approving a budget to support these activities.

In addition to these planned activities, we have also made or planned some additional improvements:

- **Increase exam grading speed.** We negotiated an arrangement with the AHA to centrally process exams, converting them to an electronic form to speed up grading. We hope to launch this in 2Q 2014. We are considering other changes to the exam grading process to reduce the workload on graders and to decrease the turnaround time. The goal of these activities is to be able to handle more exams annually, which will allow us to expand the number of exam sites. This continues to be an area of ongoing investigation into the processes and methods used with an eye on optimization. Steve Piatz is leading these changes.
- **Better share exam processing workload.** We have added new procedures to electronically import new judge information into the database, reducing the workload on the Assistant Exam Director. New procedures for importing exam results and online exam information have also been added.
- **New iPhone app.** A new developer took over the iPhone application, producing a new update. By negotiating the handover of responsibility, users did not have to download a new application – it just looked like an upgrade.
- **Additional CEP materials.** The CEP directorate produced a newsletter and added a number of member-submitted materials to the web site.
- **NHC events.** Our partnership with the AHA continues to be beneficial, allowing us to hold many events at the NHC. We gave the biggest exam ever, and had available seats for the mead, written, and tasting exams. We continue to provide a quality judge reception with emphasis on hands-on training, and we hold a large members meeting (attended by over 200 members). We're thankful to the AHA for the support they provide us in this mutually beneficial partnership. We continue to plan large events at future NHCs, looking to improve the experience for judges at the conference.

In summary, the BJCP is a rapidly growing organization with many challenges but even more opportunities. We continue to run as a volunteer organization, and have expanded our staff considerably over the last year to help tackle additional projects. We are working on projects that members have told us are important, and are looking to address the shortcomings in some of our operations. We're hopeful that the improvements that have been made or that are in process will continue to benefit our current and future members.

We have established ourselves as an international leader in beer judging, with growing interest in the United States and around the world. We have established key partnerships with other leaders in craft beer-related organizations. Our style guidelines are being used well beyond our original intention since they have an unsurpassed level of information and detail. We have an outstanding financial position that gives us the flexibility to invest in targeted areas that benefit the program and our membership. While we are proud of our accomplishments, we are not resting on our laurels; we continue to look for better ways we can improve and expand our services to our membership and the community.

Treasurer's Report

by Al Boyce

A separate financial report has been published on the BJCP web site. Following are additional notes and explanations to accompany the report:

- The AHA discontinued charging us the \$1000 sanctioning fee negotiated as part of our 2006 Sanctioned Competition Program agreement.
- There were 99 BJCP Exams hosted in 2013, 19 more than in 2012; four exams were cancelled, and three remained unpaid as of 12/31/2013.
- There were 1042 exams written (average of 10.85 tests per site).
- A total of \$23,082.50 was collected - ALL paid via PayPal. (Average income of \$248.19 per site.)
- \$9733.50 of exam fees was left with the sponsoring organizations.
- There were 616 new tasting exams.
- There were 369 retakes (combined tasting and written).
- There were 5 new mead exams (not previous BJCP members).
- There were 29 existing mead exams (previous BJCP members).
- There were 23 "First Time" exams, a holdover from legacy exam days.
- We already have 112 exams scheduled for 2014 (15 more than in 2013), and 83 exams scheduled for 2015.

For the first time in many years, the BJCP spent more (nearly \$14K) than it took in, using program resources to invest in new projects and to cover expenses from prior years (since we use cash accounting instead of accrual accounting):

- Part of this was expected – the new website development has cost \$5116.25 so far. This was taken out of reserves.
- A big part was reimbursing the 2012 BJCP reception at the AHA NHC in 2013 instead of 2012.
- We went over on “Merchandise” with Name Badges for judges – spending \$2749.75 instead of the budgeted \$1500 (reflecting higher than expected program growth and interest in badges).
- We spent \$2041 for Case Consulting – this is the online testing service. We had only budgeted a total of \$632 for this (under Miscellaneous). We need to expand this budget item next year. (Again, reflecting higher demand for the program).
- Postage was much more expensive, likely due to changes in personnel and availability of discounted services. We spent \$7668.39 instead of the budgeted \$3100.
- Printing was \$2239.91 vs. the budgeted \$790.

- Recognition was \$4800 vs. \$775 budgeted – completely due to a large reorder of Certified and Recognized pins in August, a multi-year expense.
- We spent \$600 on the surety bond on the treasurer vs. \$175 budgeted. Partly because we raised the covered amount due to the large reserve fund we now have = \$69,490.69 as of the end of 2013. We also paid it twice – once in January for 2013, and once in December for 2014. We should raise this to \$300 in 2014.
- Siebel kits were also a huge overage –\$12,966.18 over the budget of \$20,700. We paid for 210 total Siebel kits in 2013 – total of \$33,666.18. 53 of these were purchased in 2012 – for \$8370.48. That leaves 157 kits purchased and paid for in 2013 - \$25,295.70. 69 of these kits in 2013 were subsidized kits – BJCP members paid \$50 for them. So 88 of the 2013 kits were purchased for BJCP exams – so only 11 of the 99 exams given in 2013 did NOT get a kit (a total of \$13,200 for kits, about \$907 for shipping = \$14107 total.)
- In 2014, we have 112 exams scheduled. If we give them ALL a kit, it would cost about \$18,480 – including freight. That would only leave us about \$2220 for subsidized kits – only 13 kits.
- We were slightly over budget on paying online exam credit card fees – \$2011.38 vs. a budget of \$1500.

Competition Director's Report

by Dave Houseman

The BJCP sanctioned 492 competitions in 2013, which is twice the number registered in 2007 – 100% growth in 6 years! The BJCP is now sanctioning competitions in a record 13 countries.

We are looking at additional changes to automate processing, including developing a XML validation tool for organizer reports not coming in through our online system. Dan Frechette is leading that project.

The cider exam project is also ongoing. We have a draft exam and study guide, and it is undergoing review.

A new competition handbook has been published, and it looks very good with modern practices and advice very well described.

Education Director's Report

by Randy Scorby

Accomplishments in 2013:

- Updated website with member-submitted materials and presentations.
- Posted an updated newsletter with information on kit ordering, exam prep courses and vocab. (We've seen a noticeable increase in kit orders since posting the link more conspicuously).
- Added the Training Coordinator position to develop courses for Grader Training, Advanced Judge Training, and NHC Judges Reception presentations.

- Continued proactive approach of contacting exam admins to get them sensory kits for exam prep courses. We're finding the majority of admins are using them.
- Processed 161 Siebel kit orders.

Exam Director's Report

by Steve Piatz and Scott Bickham

Accomplishments in 2013:

- Over 1600 people have passed the new online examination since the program was implemented.
- Looking at results of individual questions on the question pool to see if some that have a low passing rate need to be reworked or dropped.
- The 3-for-2 online exam option is surprisingly popular. We think many judges may be using the first exam as a practice test.
- Passing rate for online exam seems to be around 65%, with those selecting the 3-for-2 option passing at 56% and Spanish/Portuguese passing at 54% of attempts.
- The online exam seems to be doing its job of weeding out unprepared examinees since the passing rate for tasting exams is now very high. The new tasting exam is also serving its purpose of reducing written exams, which are now a small fraction of overall exams given. The transition to the new exam system seems to be functioning quite well.
- The expanded exam quotas are just starting up so time will tell if we can keep up with more exams every month. It seems to be working, given the expanded staff. As always, what we need most is lead graders.
- The mead exam study guide and exam questions were revised slightly to bring them into more agreement and to bring the T/F questions into agreement with the beer exam.
- Coordinating with CEP on grader training.
- Investigating more automation of exam processing with the AHA providing back-office support.
- 100 exams planned with 1073 examinees; 1288 available seats at those exams (83% exam seats used, 214 unused). Resulted in over 14% growth in new judges.

IT Director's Report

by Gordon Strong

Much of the material covered in this report has been discussed in my President's report. The major effort is the rehosting of the web site, with a major redesign. This has been holding up the implementation of the vocabulary application, which is now moving along under James Golovich. James is also helping me with the implementation and migration of the back-end elements of the new web server, including the BJCP forum and the applications infrastructure.

Lindsay Husted is working on the new web site design, having completed the initial inventory and information architecture. We're looking at implementing the new system in the first half of 2014, with a cutover after the BJCP elections are concluded.

Dan Frechette has developed a web application for validating organizer reports from third-party applications; this program is awaiting testing.

Some minor reorganization and streamlining of the existing web site has occurred, but most major work has been put off until the new site is in place. A great deal of additional content has been loaded in the past year, including more CEP information, revisions to many program materials, new translated materials, additional FAQs, and more historical information.

After we transition to the new WordPress-based system, I hope to be able to recruit a new webmaster to maintain the content on our system, and to also allow more of the staff to directly contribute content. Our legacy system has turned away many potential webmasters over the past years since no one wanted to maintain something that old.

I expect applications will receive a new emphasis once we're on the new host. We're initially migrating applications as-is, with the static content receiving the major changes. After the revision, I hope to recruit a new assistant to focus on developing our application portfolio as well as adding an assistant to look over the infrastructure. I envision the need for additional developers once we have the new system in place and can start planning the expansion of services.

Our legacy database system continues to support the demand, and we are processing more and more transactions than ever. We have implemented some optimizations in our processes and look to better distribute some of the workload over the coming year.

Once these projects are complete and staffing changes are made, I'm going to be looking seriously for a replacement to step in and drive the next round of advancements.

Communication Director's Report

by Mike Dixon

Accomplishments in 2013:

- We ordered 561 badges this year. Total cost was \$2749.75.
- Our Facebook group membership is now 1234 members and has doubled since the NHC. I typically approve 5 new people everyday and the vast majority are existing judges or those who are waiting to take a taste exam.
- Forum membership is currently sitting at 1091 and we approve three to five new members weekly and delete year old inactive accounts periodically.
- Added Jeff Sanders as Assistant Communications Director. Jeff picked a communication service and developed a newsletter; the newsletter is due out in January.
- Ran the elections, planning for next year's elections. Looking to use the new communications tools to assist with communicating with the regions holding elections.
- Investigating merchandise alternatives, have identified a solution, waiting on final details from vendor.

International Report

by Ali Kocho-Williams

On the international outreach, I think it's worth noting that the number of judges is growing in Europe, with 25 now in the UK, an upcoming Irish exam, judges in Poland, development happening in Hungary and with Czech and Catalan groups currently coalescing. I've also been engaged with people in Moscow and St Petersburg.

Ireland held their first BJCP sanctioned competition in March 2013. The UK National Homebrew Competition has become well established and attracts a large entry number.

One currently active project I have bubbling away with some contacts in Ireland, Czech, Poland and Germany is the development of a European Homebrew Championship – in part as a way of trying to draw the disparate groups in Europe together.

I should also note that there is a group of craft brewers in India who are interested in pulling something together, and I have been contacted by people hoping to take the exam from China and Japan.

It seems to me that the BJCP is really developing an interest in countries outside of the US and that we are becoming a truly global organisation. One of the things that I hope globalisation can achieve is some revision of style guidelines at some point such that they don't receive such fierce criticism for being 'wrong' in some parts of the world (in the UK, there is almost constant griping about English Pale Ale, English Brown Ale and Scottish Ales – these don't need rethinks, but perhaps some adjustment).