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Training Institute Board for England

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### Grease is the way we're feeling – A view from inside the Engine of Growth

HOW DO YOU do the work of an Area Co-ordinator? For that matter, what IS an Area Co-ordinator? Possibly a military strategist, or a disaster relief official? Neither volcanoes, nor floods nor armed conflict were on the agenda at the Area Co-ordinator Training Day, so we could put those possibilities aside at least.

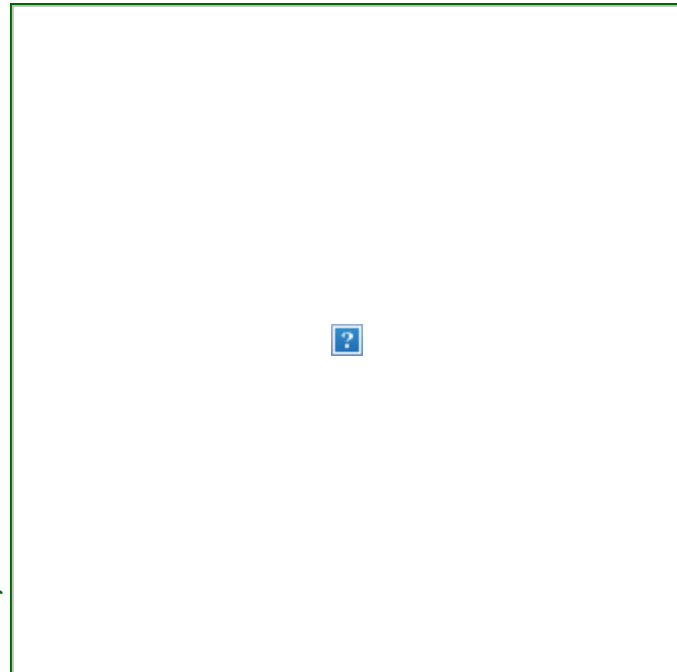
Back in January 2001, there were 70 study circle tutors in England. Most of them could only tutor one book. Now there are 230, and many of them can tutor two or more books. Chances are that if you are not a tutor yourself, you at least know one, or two. Bearing in mind that

each tutor could be running as many as three study circles (it's not unknown!), then that's potentially a lot of study circles going on. Tutors need more training as it becomes available, and access to the latest guidance from the World Centre and the Training Institute Board. By now it's becoming clear that the whole system might require just a little co-ordination.

At the end of last year, a full-time Training Co-ordinator was appointed to have an overview of the training institute process in England. This has made a big difference to the work of the Training Institute Board. Now, if you or your community has particular training needs, there's someone you can get in touch with right away who can help you out.

But if you are a tutor, the person you turn to for immediate support is your Area Co-ordinator. If it's help, advice, further training, or any other needs you have, your Area Co-ordinator is your first point of contact. Until recently, there were only four of these courageous individuals, which meant yours might in fact live half way across the country from you. Now there are seventeen of them – a massive expansion of resources. They all arrived bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for their Training Day at Rutland Gate on June 14 (except those who had been travelling since the crack of dawn, and had bags under the eyes as a disguise.)

“At the regional level, closer to the study groups themselves, the duties of the coordinators include training tutors, following their progress in the villages and towns, ensuring the availability of materials, and organizing conferences and seminars for the exchange of experience.” (“Training Institutes”, document commissioned by the Universal House of Justice April 1998)



The Training Institute Board for England Area Co-ordinators  
ordering lunch

We were guided lovingly and with precision through the guidance of our Training Institute Board, and slowly but surely, a clear picture of our role began to emerge. Area Coordinators are an essential level of administration. On the one hand, the Training Institute Board (and beyond that, the Bahá'í Council for England) needs someone in every part of England who has their finger on the pulse of study circles, and knows what's going on. You might have read recently that in the first year and a half of the Five Year Plan, the number of study circles worldwide more than doubled to 9,000. The only reason we know that is because people such as Area Coordinators are keeping track of developments in their part of the country.

On the other hand, tutors in England only get together once a year, at the Tutors' Conference in September. For the rest of the year, they need an easier way of being kept in touch with developments and opportunities for further training. So the Area Coordinators are responsible for that.

We left Rutland Gate with a great deal more responsibility in our hands than we had arrived with, but also with a strong sense of purpose. Whether we were looking after one cluster or twelve, with four tutors or forty, a small element of the training institute process in England had been entrusted to our care. If the training institute is the engine of growth, and the study circles are the individual cogs and wheels in the engine, perhaps that makes us the grease between the moving parts – is this a metaphor too far?

Viv Craig

