

American Society for Environmental History Executive Committee Meeting
Saturday, 2 April 2016, 12-4 pm
Seattle, WA

Attending:

Officers:

Kathleen Brosnan, President
Graeme Wynn, Vice President and President elect
Mark Madison, Treasurer
Jay Taylor, Secretary

Executive Committee Members:

Sarah Elkind
Emily Greenwald
Christof Mauch
Kathryn Morse
Ellen Stroud
Paul Sutter
Rachel Gross, Graduate Student Representative
Lisa Mighetto, Executive Director & Chair Local Arrangements
Harriet Ritvo, Ex Officio, Past President
Lisa Brady, Editor of *Environmental History*

Guests:

Steven Anderson, Forest History Society President
Brett Walker, Chair 2016 Program Committee
Trish Thomas, Oxford University Press

12:39 pm, Kathy Brosnan called the meeting to order.

After brief introductions, President Brosnan thanked Rachel Gross for organizing the graduate reception, Brett Walker for chairing the Program Committee, and Lisa Mighetto for heading up the Local Arrangements Committee.

1) Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the 2015 Executive Committee Meeting were moved, seconded, and approved pending a change to reflect that Harriett Ritvo did not rotate off the Executive Committee last year.

2) Conference Report

Local Arrangements Committee Chair Lisa Mighetto thanked the rest of the committee, which included Fred Brown, Martha Henderson, Regan Huff, Christopher Johnson, Dave Louter, Linda Nash, Lorraine McConaghy, Heather Lee Miller, Gena Peone, and Douglas Sackman. Mighetto reported that the conference had 713 registered attendees, making it the Society's largest meeting yet. After expenses, the Society should net approximately \$10,000. Program Committee Chair Brett Walker thanked the rest of his committee, which included Connie Chiang, Neil Maher, Lisa Mighetto, and Alan Mikhail. The committee received proposals for 87 panels, 37 roundtables, 66 papers, and 44 posters. Most of the graduate proposals came as individual papers, so the committee worked to bring in a higher rate of these than the panel proposals. The overall rejection rate was 38 percent. The committee also arranged for two plenaries rather than a keynote address to save money. The surveys indicate that attendees prefer plenaries to formal keynotes. Ensuing discussion noted that accepting lots of individual papers poses more work for the program committee, but in this case the committee deemed it worthwhile. Members also seem to prefer plenaries to keynotes, but the timing of the plenaries is a perennial issue because attendees want time for relaxation and social interaction during the evenings, and easterners often feel compelled to leave West coast meetings on Saturday. Thus placing plenary requires a lot of forethought, and maybe just one plenary is enough.

Walker left the meeting.

3) Journal Report

Trish Thomas gave the publishers report for Oxford University Press. As has been the case for several years, the journal's institutional subscriptions continued to decline while consortia subscriptions continue to increase. Members asked a number of questions about the implications of this ongoing shift in subscriptions, including how much the societies are remunerated by each subscription (depends upon individual consortia agreements), what each consortia agreement entails (depends upon the types of collections of institutions from universities to regions), price of each consortia (many variables depending on which country or countries are involved, their economic standing, the number of institutions, and the number of journals in the holding for any given IP address), and what the membership committee should consider about e-journal-only subscriptions. OUP is wary of dropping prices, and if the revenue declines the profit share would have to be recalibrated. Also, the FHS has not yet discussed the prospect of an e-journal subscription, and a membership survey would have to be done first.

Kathy Brosnan asked the Executive Committee to revisit the journal's open access policy. OUP changed its Gold Open Access fee from \$1600 to \$1700, so the journal has to make a decision about whether to change its language to match the OUP minimum. Members also discussed whether to eliminate the editorial prerogative to open some articles to open access, or at least remove that language from the online statement about open access. Brosnan concluded that further discussion should be deferred to an online deliberation. On May 17th, via an online vote

of the Executive Committee, new language was formally adopted: “Open Access: *Environmental History* does not charge authors to publish in the journal. If an author wishes, or is required by institutional or funding agency mandate, to make his or her article freely available immediately upon publication, the journal offers an author-pays, open-access option currently set at Oxford University Press's minimum fee. Direct questions about the open access fee to editor@environmentalhistory.net.”

4) Editor's Report

Editor in Chief Lisa Brady reported on the performance of the journal. Article submissions were stable during the last year, and one award-winning article was made open access by OUP. The editor has also invited suggestions for themes for virtual issues as well as interest in curating such an issue for teaching or other purposes. Associate editors Finis Dunaway, Finn Arne Jörgensen, and Jack Hayes did a great job last year, but Jörgensen is currently weighed down by grant duties and Hayes is stepping down as Book Review Editor. Lawrence Culver will take over Hayes's duties. The Editor in Chief met most of her self-imposed goals, but submissions on forest history remain uneven. The journal's overall acceptance rate increased slightly to 18.75 percent. Time-to-decision averaged 64 to 65 days, and time-to-final-decision remains under 90 days; both are significantly below the profession average. There was also an adjustment of how the final-decision rate is calculated; it now accounts for decisions within the calendar year.

Brady and Thomas left the meeting.

Kathy Brosnan raised the issue of Lisa Brady's contract as Editor in Chief. Brady's term ends in 2017, but she is interested in continuing. The problem is that Boise State University is not funding editorial assistance, and while the BSU History Department has lightened her teaching load and provided departmental support for an editorial assistant, it cannot continue this support. Member discussion focused on the timing of the next editorial search. Most members believe we can wait a year without getting behind the timeline. The issue at this point is not dissatisfaction with Brady but a growing awareness that fewer and fewer public schools will subsidize editorial operations for a scholarly journal. Several members suggested that the ASEH and FHS actively recruit potential editors and institutions, and that the societies actively negotiate with institutions on the editor's behalf. Members also discussed the length of editorial terms, and questions about whether the current five-year contract is sufficient. Members agreed that the ASEH and FHS should investigate the business models of other journals, especially how they handle editors, assistant editors, and editorial support. A motion to extend Lisa Brady's contract to June 2019, and that thereafter editorial terms be seven years and non-renewable, was moved, seconded, and passed.

There was no report from the Journal Management Group.

Anderson and Mighetto left the room.

BREAK 2:00
RETURN: 2:12

5) Treasurer's Report

Brady returned to the meeting.

Treasurer Mark Madison noted that the Society netted little income in 2015, so the 2016 budget mirrored 2015 except for an additional \$5,000 to improve the ASEH website and \$10,000 for three summer interns. There were some savings this last year because the Executive Director traveled less due to the conference being sited in Seattle. Discussion focused on the poor returns from investments. Madison suggested that this was linked in part to the vicissitudes of the stock market, but there were also questions about the overall performance of the Green Fund. Analysis of current accounts is not complete, but energy sector investments were a significant drag on the overall investments. Madison suggested that the society revisit the allocation of investments after the 2016 presidential election. Members discussed different investment strategies, including reinvesting profits and capital campaigns. Madison thought both were in order, but we had to observe IRS rules for non-profits that penalized growing investment earnings without additional spending. There were a lot of ideas about how to spend money.

Kathy Brosnan noted that Lisa Mighetto's salary was not raised last year, so several ideas were discussed, including awarding her a bonus or making two 4% raises. Madison argued that it was more prudent to follow the structure of the existing contract by sticking with a 1-year raise and instead increasing support for travel, computer, and other expenses. There was a motion to award a 4% raise. Moved, seconded, passed.

The amended 2016 budget was then motioned for approval: moved, seconded, passed.

Madison summarized the ASEH's financial situation, which he called very strong. Expenses are roughly \$133,000 per year for staff, infrastructure, and grants, but the reserve is presently at \$564,298. Income strengths include the OUP contract and some investments; income weaknesses include uneven contributions, some investments, and inelastic commitments to monetary awards and salaries despite unpredictable revenue streams. Looking forward, Madison sees financial opportunities in grants and contributions. The ASEH has done very well with grants due to Executive Director's expertise in this area, and we can do more to leverage contributions from members on a more regular basis. Conversely, financial threats exist in the current vector of journal subscriptions and the retirement of the Executive Director. Journal revenues may not be competitive if the ASEH and FHS adopt an online subscription category; as it is, there has been very little growth in subscription numbers over a number of years. Equally important is that the next Executive Director may not be as skilled as a grant writer. We should also do a membership analysis to figure out whether we are aging as a society, and whether this poses a threat to losing skills and the ability to pay fixed costs. Members returned to the subject of making conference attendees register. This can increase conference income but also annoy prospective presenters.

Moreover, unlike large conferences such as the AHA, CAPAL, and OAH, the ASEH lacks a mechanism to patrol registration on the grounds, and the book exhibit is not always a space that can be cordoned off from the rest of the conference. It is possible to require membership in order to present at the conference, however, and there is a lot of precedence for making registration a pre-requisite for presenting. There was a motion to allow local arrangements committees to determine the cost difference between registering as members and non-members with the idea that this could be set in such a way as to encourage membership: moved, seconded, and passed.

6) Review of Executive Director and Transition Plan

Kathy Brosnan noted the main concern at this point is not the Executive Director's performance, which is more than satisfactory, but her impending, planned retirement. Mighetto produced a transition plan that is a flexible pathway forward. Madison suggested that we "buy Lisa's time" during transition to tap her expertise. Brosnan observed that staggering committee assignments will also lessen the Society's dependence on Mighetto's institutional memory. Discussion ensued on the profile of the next Executive Director. Some think this person should have an academic institutional affiliation (currently more than half do have some link to an institution), but the National Council on Public History shows that a different model can work. There is also some question whether the next salary will have to be much higher, but Madison and Mitman noted that institutional affiliations aid with access to work study labor, and that the current salary is low but not insanely so. Much depends on the level of experience of the next Executive Director.

7) Fundraising Committee

Graeme Wynn reported that the Fundraising Committee produced a glossy brochure, and it had developed a proposal, previously discussed online, to raise money by offering institutional memberships. The ASEH previously had an institutional membership, with 4 to 8 registered at any given time, but it had fallen into disuse. The revised committee proposal would establish two categories: an "active" membership at \$250 per year and a "sustaining" membership at \$500. Both would receive publications. The motion was moved and seconded. Emily: difference in two terms? Members moved to change rename the categories "institutional member" and "sustaining member," and to price the sustaining member category at \$2500 for five years, which better reflects the financial impact of such a contribution. Wynn suggested that the ASEH create a separate organizational membership list. Mauch noted that the Rachel Carson Center offered to feature institutional member activities in RCC newsletter, thereby making the higher level of support more appealing. After further discussion the revised motion was read, moved, seconded, and passed.

The Fundraising Committee also met to discuss how to raise more money. There were several proposals of individuals who should be approached. The aim was to concentrate efforts and to work in conjunction with the education committee initiatives in the Chicago school system. Another idea is to have the chair of Local Arrangements rotate onto the Fundraising Committee, preferably two years before the meeting.

8) Membership Committee

Ellen Stroud reported on the Membership Committee. The committee proposed gift memberships that would allow the journal to be sent to a different address, but there will be a cost to reshape the present website. This was moved, seconded, and passed. The second proposal was to further reconfigure the cost of memberships. The current middle category of membership is not above \$75 (same as FHS). This helps equalize ASEH and FHS revenues on joint memberships, but it is low compared to other societies. Raising subscription prices will require negotiating with the FHS, but it could pull in more money from more senior ASEH members and enable the society to better subsidize junior members and students. Madison noted another idea is to encourage donations automatically. Other societies have websites with popup windows that ask whether a member wants to donate. In the ASEH donations are managed according to the strategic plan, which has for four favored areas: awards, graduate student support, diversity, and operations. Further discussion emphasized that the ASEH just raised membership dues, that we are making money as is, and that we might put that advantage in jeopardy with another change. Conversely, any new rate must be negotiated with the FHS because of its implication on shared revenues, nor did a change have to be enacted immediately. The motion was rephrased as a template for discussion with FHS with a timeline for implementation to be revisited at the next meeting, then moved, seconded, and passed.

BREAK: 3:28.

RETURN: 3:38

Mighetto returned to the meeting.

9) Diversity Committee

Kathy Brosnan presented the Diversity Committee's proposals to create a dissertation fellowship to encourage diversity and a poster fellowship for a local undergraduate to cultivate interest by local groups and to encourage diversity. Discussion led to a change in the language of the first fellowship to emphasize scholarly achievement by a member of an underrepresented group. The second award was amended as two \$500 awards to increase attendance. Both will be activated in time for the November 2016 application deadlines. Both motions were then moved, seconded, passed. Further discussion noted that these awards are premised on the assumption that people are out there, but the ASEH needs to develop capacity to bring these groups into the ASEH, and to help award winners prepare and present posters.

10) Sustainability Committee Proposal

Teresa Spezio entered the meeting to present the Sustainability Committee's proposal to have the ASEH to sign a petition on sustainability and to commit to calculating and lowering its carbon footprint. Discussion noted that the presentation differed from the printed proposal. Spezio noted

that conversations with members revealed pushback, so she had limited the proposal to signing petition and conducting a member survey.

Spezio left the meeting.

Member discussion revealed that other organizations were not endorsing this petition, and that signing it could divide the membership and invite IRS scrutiny by engaging in political activities. An alternative to signing the petition would be for the ASEH to craft its own statement regarding climate change and sustainability. Members also discussed ways to reduce carbon by facilitating teleconferencing for individual panels. This was more likely to be accommodated if part of the initial panel proposal, but teleconferencing has implications on the business model of meetings. The ASEH will have to consider the potential impact on conference registrations and room and meal minimums. The World Environmental History Conference is currently dealing with these issue in terms of the Global South. One idea is to accommodate PowerPoint presentations with audio coordinated to the time zone, but members noted that technology for these presentations is very expensive and remote presentations are not often interactive. The assumption that these approaches lower the carbon footprint is also problematic. The idea of simply not meeting, of going back to the biennial meeting schedule, also poses fiscal costs to the ASEH budget because the meeting is such a large part of the annual society income, and the loss of intellectual interaction cannot be monetized but will annoy many members. Madison noted that the ASEH changed and grew because of its annual meetings, and the diversity awards would be in non-compliance if we went to a biennial schedule.

The proposal by the Sustainability Committee was motioned but not seconded. Members then directed the Sustainability Committee to develop smaller proposals and not to bundle them.

11) Distinguished Service Award

Sarah Elkind nominated Carolyn Merchant for her long service. Moved, seconded, and passed.

12) Distinguished Scholar Award

Kathy Brosnan raised the question of whether this should be awarded on an annual basis. The central concern is whether it will be financially sustainable. Madison suggested that we table a decision until next year. Further discussion suggested halving the monetary award and making it an annual award beginning in 2018. This motion was moved, seconded, and passed.

13) Internship Proposals

Lisa Mighetto reported that the internships with the National Parks Conservation Association (research on congressional appropriations) and 321 Innovations (mobile app development) have been secured, and that she is ready to announce the positions. 321 Innovations will share the cost

of the internship and NPCA will supply office space for its intern. Madison expressed the hope that we publicize these internships widely.

14) Letter to EPA

Kathy Brosnan raised the question of whether the ASEH should urge the Environmental Protection Agency to re-open its history program. The History of Science Society has proposed a joint letter, but further discussion favored ASEH sending its own letter. A motion to send a separate letter was moved, seconded, and passed.

15) Grad Student Liaison

Rachel Gross reported that 25 to 30 students attended the grad liaison event. The Graduate Committee had organized panels on writing and applying for jobs, a grad reception, and a grad caucus meeting. All were well attended. Students particularly appreciated the publishing event on Wednesday, and overall there was good feedback from the students about the meeting. Looking forward, however, the mentoring program has had an uneven response, and the reasons why are not clear. Scheduling may be an issue, but response by students and potential mentors is also uneven. The idea of a blog on the ASEH website is not supported by students. Instead, they would want graduate student profiles on the ASEH website, and a short space in the newsletter for the grad caucus. Mighetto noted that the latter is already in place. Discussion favored facilitating a profile page, but it could become a dead area without maintenance. Someone would also have to figure out who would maintain the site and how to ensure enough entries to make it worthwhile. Others noted that basic pages could be automatically populated by membership data, but there are other sites, including at NiCHE and the Rachel Carson Center, where students already have websites.

16) New business

Kathy Brosnan advised that, under the new endorsement policy adopted by the Executive Committee in 2015, she gave the ASEH's nonmonetary endorsement to the 2016 meetings of the WHEATS conference. Brosnan also advised that she chose to submit ASEH's endorsement of an AHA policy on the implications of guns on campus for academic freedom. Brosnan also noted that the Education Committee has been "dormant," and that she has asked Megan Jones, Ann Greene, and Rachel Gross to revive it. Brosnan asked members to suggest additional names for the committee. Finally, Graeme Wynn noted that during the presentation ceremony Brosnan will announce a new initiative to cultivate a culture of giving within the organization, and that Sarah Elkind will pass around a hat at the end of awards ceremony as a symbolic gesture to encourage members.

Adjourned: 4:31

Votes on discussion board in 2016:

1. On May 9 the executive committee approved the following language with regard to open access:

Open Access: *Environmental History* does not charge authors to publish in the journal. If an author wishes, or is required by institutional or funding agency mandate, to make his or her article freely available immediately upon publication, the journal offers an author-pays, open-access option currently set at Oxford University Press's minimum fee. Direct questions about the open access fee to editor@environmentalhistory.net.

Institutional Repositories: *Environmental History* authors retain copyright to their articles and may at any time deposit a copy of their original submitted manuscript in their institutional repositories or post them on their personal or institutional websites. Twelve months after publication of their article in the journal, authors may post their accepted manuscript (the accepted version, prior to copy editing and typesetting) in their institutional repository. Authors should include full acknowledgement of original publication in *Environmental History* as well as the toll-free link to the published article, which is provided to the author by Oxford University Press.

2. On December 23 the executive committee approved Columbus, Ohio as the site of ASEH's 2019 conference.