

American Society for Environmental History Executive Committee Meeting
Saturday, 1 April 2017, 12-4 pm
Chicago, IL

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
Cindy Ott
Ellen Stroud
Paul Sutter
John McNeill, Ex Officio, Past President
Lisa Mighetto, Executive Director
Lisa Brady, Editor of *Environmental History*
Zach Nowak, Graduate Student Representative
Harriet Ritvo, Ex Officio, Past President

Guests:

Steven Anderson, Forest History Society President
Chris Boyer, Chair 2017 Local Arrangements Committee
Lynne Heasley, incoming executive committee member
Ed Russell, Vice President elect
Kimberly Taft, Oxford University Press
Trish Thomas, Oxford University Press
Marsha Weisiger, Chair 2017 Program Committee

12:30 pm, Kathy Brosnan called the meeting to order.

After brief introductions, President Brosnan thanked Zach Nowak for organizing the graduate reception, Marsha Weisiger for chairing the Program Committee, and Chris Boyer for heading the Local Arrangements Committee.

1) Approval of 2016 Minutes

The minutes for the 2016 Executive Committee Meeting moved, seconded, and approved.

2) 2017 Conference Report

Program Chair Weisiger thanked committee members Sterling Evans, Kieko Matteson, Ellen Spears, Lissa Wadewitz, Chris Well, and Chris Boyer as ex-officio member. The committee received 109 panel proposals, 95 of which they accepted. The committee also received a large number of individual proposals that they then organized into thematically coherent panels or they slotted into existing panels. There were 116 sessions in all, and only one session had to be cancelled, and only one presenter canceled.

Local Arrangements Committee Chair Chris Boyer thanked committee members Joel Greenberg, Rachel Havrelock, Ben Johnson, Timothy Mennel, Julia Adeney Thomas, Keith Mako Woodhouse, and Joshua Salzmann. The committee met twice in spring and early summer 2016. It developed nine field trips for Friday afternoon plus the Sunday excursion to Pullman. All but one trip filled, and participants offered many compliments. Boyer noted that one challenge was finding trips that would work regardless of the weather. Boyer also thanked the many local activists, scholars, and students who helped organize and lead trips. The University of Illinois at Chicago (\$550) hosted the conference and contributed labor and donated funds for a field trip. Other contributing institutions included Oxford University Press, (\$3,000), Mississippi State University (\$500), University of Notre Dame ((\$750), Northwestern University (\$500), the National Science Foundation (\$12,000), Loyola University (in-kind), and the Newberry Library (in-kind). Boyer finished by thanking Lisa Mighetto for her advice and support.

Boyer and Weisiger left the meeting.

3) Election Results

Mighetto discussed the ASEH election, welcoming Ed Russell as the new president elect, Sarah Elkind as incoming secretary, Mark Madison as returning treasurer, and Lynne Heasley and Conevery Valençius as incoming committee members. Mighetto concluded by thanking Sarah Elkind, Ellen Stroud, and Paul Sutter as outgoing committee members, and Harriett Ritvo and John McNeill, as outgoing ex-officio past presidents, the latter contingent on approval of the bylaw change that limits past presidents to four years of ex-officio service.

4) Amendments to by-laws

Brosnan raised the proposed amendments to the bylaws. Each amendment was explained and discussed by the group, including the interpretation of new language regarding the use of mail for elections. A motion to approve all amendments was then moved, seconded, and passed.

5) Journal Report

Trish Thomas gave the publisher's report for Oxford University Press. The journal is currently in a good business condition. The long decline of individual and institutional journal subscriptions slowed this last year, while the number of consortium subscriptions continued to rise. The issues are coming out on time and within the budget. Kimberly Tapp then discussed OUP's marketing operations. The OUP Blog included a blog from *EH*, which logged 465 users in the first week.

The press also placed *EH* articles in three online anthologies and represented the journal at 12 conferences.

The committee discussed OUP's use of FaceBook and Twitter. Thomas also explained that the European Science Foundation's Standing Committee for the Humanities has reevaluated its practice of ranking journals. Criticism had arisen as a result of the very low and not particularly reflective scores for many non-European journals in its 2008 and 2012 reports. An internal review reviewed structural biases in the ranking process, so the SCH decided to drop the rankings in 2014. It is now strictly a bibliographic resource of journals.

6) Editor's Report

Editor in Chief Lisa Brady reported on journal performance. *EH* received 152 submissions this year, including 128 articles (93 new, 35 revised), 22 graphics essays (11 new, 11 revised), and 2 invited pieces (1 presidential essay, 1 forum). The resulting combined acceptance rate for 2016 was 15.8 percent, the lowest in many years. This meant a lot of rejections, but within the journal world it also signals a high scholarly standard. Brady attributed the rising submissions to meeting many authors at many conferences. Finis Dunaway and Finn Arne Jørgensen are still doing great work as, respectively, the Graphics and Digital Editors. Jørgensen will be moving from Sweden to a new position in Norway. This will add stability to his management of the *EH* digital site. Lawrence Culver stepped down as Book Review Editor. Brady took over the duties for several months, but Leisl Carr Childers and Mike Childers now serve this role. They have been very helpful in reducing a sizable backlog.

Next came an extended discussion about gender imbalance in the journal. Brady noted that gender participation is still a problem, yet the second all-women authors issue was about to emerge. Two contributing factors are that women still submit at lower rates than men, and that fewer women revise-and-resubmit. Ensuing discussion about these lower rates explored where women are publishing and whether stage of profession influences which journals they target. The executive committee also discussed the tone of referee reports and gendered reactions to those reports. Information on the gender of reviewers is available but not analyzed. Brady noted that service obligations are a factor when choosing referees, so the editor's options are sometimes constrained when choosing referees.

The committee turned to the subject of Brady's impending retirement as Chief Editor. This was originally scheduled for the end of 2017, but the executive committee voted last year to extend Brady's contract to May 2019 so it would align with academic year and facilitate overlap with the next editor. Views about the journal's future were positive. *EH* is an established journal, and submissions have broadened its coverage globally for more than a decade. OUP has helped to facilitate participation by non-Anglophonic authors. Ongoing problems include the page budget, with the number of pages actually printed still falling short of the budgeted length. Brady noted that the shortfall reflects structural and experiential problems, and this last year the slow flow of book reviews also contributed to the shortfall. There was no report from the Journal Management Group.

7) Proposed Statement on Diversity and Inclusion

Brosnan discussed the proposed statement on diversity and inclusion, which has been in the works since September 2016. After discussion, the statements was moved, seconded, and passed.

8) WEHN Report and Proposed Survey of Environmental Historians

Brosnan and Elkind gave an overview of the Women's Environmental History Network report prepared by Julie Cohn and Sara Pritchard. The executive committee discussed a number of problems that women scholars encounter and potential responses by the ASEH. One proposal is to survey members to identify problems that exist in the field of environmental history and the ASEH. The Diversity Committee has wanted to do a survey for some time. Wynn met with Cohn. He supports the survey initiative but wants to include as many issues as possible because the cost will be significant. Other members agreed that adopting an intersectional approach will result in a broader perspective. Other comments dwelled on the need to craft survey questions with care. Discussion about a similar survey conducted by the Western History Association in the 2000s revealed that the information did not convert into policy. There's a value in doing surveys for their own sake, but information by itself will not produce change. Other members discussed need to craft conference programs that integrate rather than ghettoize women panelists. The ASEH might also consider redesigning its website to gather more data on members. WEHN members are aware that the ASEH is doing better on gender than ethnic and racial diversity. Wynn broached the idea of facilitating smaller, more regionally-oriented clusters to encourage greater inclusiveness within the organization, rather than just statements about supporting diversity. Brosnan noted that some members do not feel welcomed, and that the growth of the ASEH has not resulted in greater intimacy within the society. The question is whether the survey is the best response in comparison to individual, group, and plenary discussions of the subject, and the basic practice of greeting and mentoring new members. A proposal was made to elicit member responses to the WEHN report and then to organize a workshop on the issue for 2018 meeting, but no motion followed. Instead, next was a motion to share the WEHN report with the membership via email, request responses to three questions suggested by Christof Mauch, and for the responses to be shared with the WEHN. The second motion was moved, seconded, and passed.

Anderson, Mighetto, Taft, and Thomas left the meeting.

BREAK 2:06

RETURN: 2:18

9) Treasurer's Report

Madison's motion to raise the Executive Director's salary by \$2500 was moved, seconded, and passed. Madison next reported on finances. 2016 report was very good because of the income from the Seattle meeting, but income this year will probably be negligible because fund raising was poor and immigration restrictions suppressed conference attendance (70 fewer people). The revised 2017 budget was moved, seconded, and passed. Madison then discussed strengths and

weaknesses of finances. The investment fund has grown well over time, but OUP revenue is flattening and may even begin to decline because of rising publishing costs. Future revenue from grants is not guaranteed under the next executive director, and donations have not been a reliable resource. The executive committee discussed the possibility of adding questions to the proposed survey about member income, professional standing, and age so the ASEH can better understand where membership is and is going in next decade. Such data might help tune fund raising efforts. The inclination, though, was to keep the survey's scope more limited. Another financial concern is that journal print subscriptions are declining, thus shrinking revenues and grants from non-profit and government sources. Declining conference attendance could also undermine the ASEH's future business model. The executive committee agreed that it needs to consider the implications of shrinking and contingent revenue streams. Brosnan suggested developing a new strategic plan, and Wynn agreed to assemble an ad hoc committee to explore these issues.

The executive committee also discussed attendance implications of the ASEH, ESEH, and World conference all meeting in 2019. This has happened in the past without great impact on ASEH attendance, so the feeling was that it was, at least for now, a non-issue. There was also a brief and inconclusive discussion about changing the organization's name to the Society for Environmental Humanities or to the North American Society for Environmental History. The final discussion explored rebalancing the reserve funds, which are now cash heavy. There was support for such a rebalancing, which has been suggested for the past several years. The treasurer's report was then moved, seconded, and approved.

10) Distinguished Service Award for Next Year

Elkind recommended nomination of Nancy Langston. Moved, seconded, and passed.

11) Distinguished Scholar Award

Elkind recommended nomination of Jane Carruthers. Moved, seconded, and passed.

12) Executive Director Search

Brosnan discussed the process for writing the position announcement and search for the next executive director. Brosnan and Wynn nominated Nancy Langston to chair the search committee, and Sarah Elkind, Paul Hirt, Tina Loo, and Mary Mendoza will also serve. Advertisements will be placed in appropriate journals and online fora. The initial list of candidates will be vetted via Skype with consultation from Brosnan, Russell, and Wynn as ex-officios. The finalists will be interviewed at the Riverside meeting. The executive committee discussed the content of the ad and how to rank preferences. There was also discussion about how to phrase the salary range and benefits, and how to strategize the negotiation of a four-year contract. Pending language changes proposed by Brosnan ("fund raising" replaced by "development"; specify that the position is for an "independent contractor"; and add language stating that the position will "start in final quarter of 2018"), the advertisement was moved, seconded, and passed.

BREAK: 3:25

RETURN: 3:35

13) Student Caucus Report

Nowak reported on student caucus. The graduate students view the ASEH's support of them as relatively very good compared to other meetings and is much appreciated. The Caucus also appreciates the ASEH's effort to expand caucus to three positions. The Grad Caucus event was attended by 25 people, and the History of Science Society representative joined the gathering. Nowak suggesting bringing in more students from more institutions and departments around southern California for the Riverside meeting. The Caucus' Twitter account has been really important for recruiting members. Nowak also proposed conducting a survey to gain more data on graduate membership. The current support for grad students is great, but Nowak wants the executive committee to keep an open mind about future expansion. By comparison, the HSS has seven graduate officers.

15) New business

Brosnan reminded the executive committee of the full schedule that evening. There will be a members meeting at 4:45 pm. At 5 pm there will be a forum about the free flow of ideas and people. Following the forum will be the plenary on *Nature's Metropolis*, and after the plenary will be the awards ceremony and the ASEH 40th Anniversary celebration.

Stroud noted that Joint Members do not have stable digital access because FHS provides separate access that is not done in the same way through OUP. Brosnan will contact Steve Anderson to see what they can do.

Meeting adjourned: 3:48

Votes on Discussion Board 2017:

1. January – approval of changes to student caucus, including establishing a president of the student caucus (membership approved amendments to the bylaws in the spring).
2. November – approval of Ottawa as 2020 conference site.
3. December – approval of Boston as 2021 conference site.