

American Society for Environmental History Executive Committee Meeting
Saturday, 17 March 2108, 12-4 pm
Riverside, CA

Attending:

Officers:

Graeme Wynn, President
Edmund Russell, Vice President and President elect
Mark Madison, Treasurer
Sarah Elkind, Secretary

Executive Committee Members:

Emily Greenwald
Christof Mauch
Kathryn Morse
Cindy Ott
Lynn Heasley
Conevery Valencius
Greg Mitman
Kieko Matteson
Lisa Mighetto, Executive Director
Zach Nowak, Graduate Student Caucus President
Kathleen Brosnan, Ex Officio, Past President
Lisa Brady, Editor of *Environmental History* (non-voting member)

Guests:

Steven Anderson, Forest History Society President
David Biggs, Co-Chair 2018 Local Arrangements Committee
Char Miller, Co-Chair 2018 Local Arrangements Committee
Trish Thomas, Oxford University Press
Jenn Saboe, Oxford University Press
Nancy Langston, Chair, Executive Director Search
Camden Burd, incoming Graduate Student Caucus President

Trish Thomas, Steve Anderson, Char Miller, and David Biggs to depart at the first break.
Nancy Langston to report on executive director search later in the afternoon. Lisa Mighetto to depart late in the afternoon before meeting concluded.

12:30pm, Graeme Wynn called the meeting to order.

After brief introductions, Lisa Mighetto thanked David Biggs and Char Miller for heading the conference local arrangements committee, and Diana Davis for chairing the program committee. David Biggs and Char Miller thanked Lisa Mighetto.

1) Approval of 2017 Minutes

The minutes for the 2017 Executive Committee Meeting moved, seconded, and approved.

2) 2018 Conference Report by David Biggs and Char Miller.

The Program Committee received 112 panel proposals for 100 sessions. The acceptance rate was quite high for whole panels, and very low for individual papers. Field trips were well attended and went well. Transit to/from Riverside was the biggest challenge of this conference. 612 people registered for the conference.

The Program committee reported that the low rates of acceptance for individual papers may affect the diversity of conference participants. This could be countered by adding a note to the Call for Papers recommending that scholars use H-Environment to assemble a panel, or by including more thematic lightning rounds to accommodate more individual papers. The Program Committee for the San Francisco conference constructed many panels from individual paper submissions; the rate of cancellation amongst those panels was very high. There were a few all-male panels on the program, but these were mostly the result of cancellations.

The committee discussed adding a very brief panel abstract to the program to help the audience find panels. Christof Mauch suggested adding a “speed-dating” session to the program to help match individuals with specific interests.

The committee discussed reserving space in the program for targeted initiatives (i.e. teaching or diversity committee) or to add panels to respond to current events. Conevery Valencius moved that the Program Committee set aside five sessions for special initiatives, at the discretion of the President. Seconded, and passed.

3) Journal Report

Trish Thomas and Jenn Seboe gave the publisher’s report for Oxford University Press. The journal is currently in good shape: it looks good, runs smoothly, and is on time because of the good working relationship between Lisa Brady, the press, and the other editors.

- a. Circulation in 2017
 - i. institutional: 225 (131 online only; 39 print only; 55 print and online)
 - ii. consortia: 2482
 - iii. traditional (ASEH; ASEH-FHS; FHS): 1314
 - iv. Institutions in developing countries: 1127
- b. New registration for email alerts in 2017
 - i. new issue alerts: 1590 (up 23.6%)
 - ii. article alerts: 650 (up 7.6%)

The press does not expect library subs to recover because of constrained library budgets, and because users have gone to online sources.

The journal's impact factor rose this year, but the press feels that the impact factor is not a terribly useful measure for a history journal. The marketing strategy for the journal focuses on cross-marketing with other journals in OUP's *History and Technology Collection*. Cross-marketed articles do spike usage. Revenues are expected to remain flat for next 5 years because subscriber base is plateauing.

Environmental History online usage is up from 54,000 to 80,000 (this large number may be partly a product of access testing). Usage cycles with the academic year. OUP is developing a new platform that includes search engine optimization which may increase traffic. The new platform should increase ease of use, searchability across books and journals. The Press is interested in new ideas for digital humanities and new journal products such as podcasts, interviews, and visual materials. OUP remains committed to paper production as long as this is still desired by membership because this is still used, and a good visual reminder to readers.

Wynn thanked OUP for their stewardship of the journal.

Thomas, Saboe, Miller, Biggs, and Davis left the meeting.

4) Editor's Report. Lisa Brady.

Editor in Chief Lisa Brady reported on Journal performance. Brady's goals for 2019 include maintaining article quality, and beginning to transfer the journal to a new editor.

During the past year, she curated the fourth EH virtual edition, and she promoted the journal and solicited submissions at the ASEH, ESEH, and the Israeli and East Asian EH conferences. Brady also gave presentations about the journal at universities during these travels.

Leisl and Mike Childers, book review editors, have worked through the backlog of book reviews, and have many reviews in the pipeline. The journal is increasing the number of reviews per issue; this will also permit faster turnaround on reviews.

Finn Arne Jørgensen had to put digital projects on hold briefly, but will pick them up again soon. The journal will publish a Digital Humanities project soon that will include

a live digital map. Finis Dunaway has been curating and cultivating Gallery submissions; he also curated the journal's first film forum.

The committee discussed adding exhibit and museum reviews to the journal. The journal would need an editor for these reviews. Such reviews should be proposed by reviewers, because the journal editor will not know all the exhibits are appropriate for reviewing. The journal may not be able to publish visuals along with reviews because of copyright, privacy, and cost concerns. The journal is doing well at representing the diversity of the field, and at timely publication of articles.

Submissions and acceptance rate:

- Articles submitted: 126 (84 new; 42 revised). Acceptance rate: 13.5%
- Graphics essays: 20 (7 new; 13 revised). Acceptance rate 25%
- Invited pieces: 9 invited reflections essays
- Reviews: 123 books; 4 films

The journal had slightly fewer submissions in 2018 compared to 2017.

Brosnan left the meeting.

5) Journal Editor Search Report. Graeme Wynn.

The search committee has made a decision. A final letter of agreement with the host institution will be formalized before the results of the search are publicly announced. The committee received 7 applications; 3 candidates were interviewed at the conference. This was an exceptionally strong pool of applicants. Taking into account levels of institutional support, editorial experience and promise of the candidates, and their vision for the future of the journal, the search committee recommended that the position be offered to: Mark Hersey, as editor in Chief, with Stephen Brain Associate Editor, with the institutional support of Mississippi State University
Motion to accept the committee's rankings: Moved. Seconded. Passed.

Anderson left the meeting.

Break to 1:55 with field trip to the Mission Inn chapel

6) Executive Director Search Report. Nancy Langston.

The Board thanked Lisa Mighetto for her long and extraordinary service. The committee received 21 applicants, of whom 5 were ABDs, 2 had backgrounds in Environmental Humanities, and 2 applications came from conference organization companies. The balance of applicants were strong environmental history candidates. The committee did not compile statistics on the demographics of the pool, but did make diversity and

inclusion central in the job advertisement. Zoom interviews narrowed the field to three finalists, 3 of whom were interviewed at the conference.

After careful consideration of the candidates' fundraising, fund management, and administrative experience, the committee recommended the position be offered to David Spatz.

Motion to accept the Search Committee's recommendation: Moved. Seconded. Passed.

Next steps: Wynn will discuss budgets with Treasurer, and will open negotiations with David Spatz.

Langston left the meeting.

7) Treasurer's Report. Mark Madison.

Madison reported on 2017 finances.

Deficit: The organization has a deficit \$36,000. Of this, \$20,000 is due to late payment for 2017 NSF travel grants. ASEH submitted an invoice for those travel grants in 2017, but did not receive payment until January 2018. That payment will appear on the 2018 books. Flat OUP revenue, and the fact that the 2017 conference lost money account for the rest of the deficit. ASEH continues to have high fixed expenses, so the deficit remains in spite of falling costs. A portion of the 2017 deficit is the result of late payment for NSF travel grants.

Strengths: We have a good conference, strong membership, and a good editor. The organization has \$560,000 in the bank. The Riverside 2018 conference is expected to make some money.

Weaknesses: All revenue sources are flat. There is not reason to expect conference revenues to increase, partly because conferences expenses are rising, and many of the things that make ASEH conferences unique, such as field trips, lose money. Donations, beyond membership dues, are relatively low compared to comparable organizations. ASEH has increased prizes and travel grants, but fundraising for these has largely stalled. The prospect of increasing revenue from the journal is also limited.

The executive committee discussed the transition plan for the treasurer. Madison's term as treasurer ends in 2021, but there is no succession plan. It is recommended that the Board appoint a treasurer-elect with enough lead time for the new treasurer to shadow Madison for a smooth transition. A full audit should also be scheduled for the

transition period. Brosnan will draft a bylaw amendment to permit creation of “treasurer elect” position.

The executive committee also discussed the possibility of raising dues, and conference revenues. There was brief discussion of conference revenues, fundraising by local arrangements committees, and reducing conference administrative and overhead costs by reducing the number of field trips. The idea was raised that all those presenting at the conference, including grad students, should be required to be members of ASEH; discussion was inconclusive.

The questions of 2019 membership rates, graduate student and non-member conference registration, and comparison of ASEH dues to those of comparable organizations was referred to the Membership Committee.

Madison presented the 2018 budget. This budget is higher than 2017 because it includes paying two EDs for a several-month overlap period. ED compensation is estimated at \$60,000. The budget includes a \$6400 deficit (before new ED contract negotiation).

Treasurer's report was moved. Seconded. Approved.

8) Distinguished Service Award for next year

Mighetto recommended nomination of Stephen Pyne. Moved, seconded, and passed.

9) Distinguished Scholar Award for next year

Mighetto recommended nomination of John McNeill. Moved, seconded, and passed.

10) WEHN Report. Graeme Wynn.

Wynn summarized finding from an informal survey posted alongside the WEHN report on the ASEH website. This survey received very few (about 15) responses, highlighting issues of underrepresentation in publications; possible marginalization in conference programs; the importance of diversity beyond gender; problems of overt and covert sexism and racism; and the challenge of creating opportunity without imposing unfair burdens on underrepresented groups. In moving forward, Wynn noted that ASEH has a limited capacity to frame and implement new strategies for addressing complex, society-wide discrimination. Nevertheless, the WEHN report serves as a reminder to the whole membership to be aware of discriminatory behaviors, to work to be more inclusive, and to build a broader base for ASEH. In lieu of conducting new (and complex, expensive) surveys, ASEH can rely upon the findings of and models devised by other organizations addressing these issues of diversity and

inclusion. Wynn also noted that all of these initiatives will require commitments of time and generous donations.

Wynn reported that ASEH has several specific actions planned or in progress:

1. Conference Childcare assistance: Liability concerns make it impossible for ASEH to serve as childcare provider. As a pilot, ASEH has committed to reimburse individuals/families at a rate of \$10 per hour for a total of up to ten hours of childcare per family during the conference. This initiative will be reviewed and adjusted as necessary and possible in summer 2018.
2. Revamped Mentorship Program: We envisage mentoring groups of three or four students and one established scholar (or professional from beyond the academy). Mentoring conversations will focus on career advice, professional advancement, and facilitating contacts rather than reading student work.
3. New protocols for responding to harassment/ discrimination piloted at the Riverside meeting.
4. Encouraging diversity and inclusion at grassroots: Developing local and regional nodes of environmental history activity should, among other things, facilitate greater integration of people of various cultural, racial, ethnic, demographic, professional, and educational groups.
5. Editor of *Environmental History* to write a piece for the newsletter "demystifying" the submission process.
6. Continue analysis of submission-publication processes and patterns in *Environmental History*, and seek similar data from other journals
7. Make changes to ASEH Website: Add new section to "Course Outlines" section and encourage, via Newsletter, submission of syllabi dealing with "Race and Gender in Environmental History"
8. Add an optional question to the online ASEH membership form asking for gender identity
9. Continue to acquire data for evidence-based engagement with issues raised in the WEHN report
10. Encourage colleagues to be mindful of the need to include junior and female scholars (and people new to ASEH) in activities and conversations
11. Provide "funding opportunities not just for research and travel, but for writing and editing" as recommended by one respondent to WEHN report.

Motion to accept Engaging WEHN report and publicize this report on the ASEH web page along with WEHN report. Moved, seconded, passed.

11) Strategic Plan. Graeme Wynn.

Wynn presented the draft ASEH strategic plan. The plan will be posted on ASEH.net for membership comment in April 2018 with comments due by June 1, and then returned to the Executive Committee for review and approval by September 15.

Members of the Executive Committee are encouraged to review and comment on the plan.

A motion was made to make the document available for comment and review by the membership before final Executive Committee review. Seconded, passed.

The Executive Committee discussion raised a number of issues and suggestions including:

- ASEH Mission statement: remove the mission statement from the strategic plan, and conduct a separate process for reviewing and possibly revising the mission statement. Add an explanation of the ASEH name to the vision or mission statement to clarify that this is not an organization interested only in the history of the Americas.
- how should ASEH respond to the growth of environmental humanities centers and initiatives.

Mighetto or Wynn will make necessary changes and circulate to Executive Committee for approval before posting the draft strategic plan to ASEH.net.

12) Student Caucus Report. Zach Nowak and Camden Burd.

Nowak and Burd reported on student caucus. The student caucus organized a pre-conference twitter conference, one interdisciplinary panel, one writing workshop, and 3-minute slam, an increase from 2 to 5 graduate student events. The Grad Caucus meeting was attended by about 20 people, and resulted in the following conclusions or suggestions: child care assistance would be helpful; increase number of lightning rounds because lightning round presentations are more meaningful than posters on a CV; schedule live interview practice; hold a panel about the conference location; they recommended combining the diversity and membership committees to permit more aggressive efforts to expand membership and increase diversity at the same time. The travel grants are making a real difference, but recipients need more assistance for travel to small cities like Riverside. The caucus is creating how-to documents to pass on organizational knowledge, and proposes to expand from 3 to 5 officers.

Wynn and Ott thanked Nowak for his service and his attention to the future of ASEH and the Student Caucus.

13) Review of Executive Director's Performance. Graeme Wynn.

Motion to recognize Lisa Mighetto's amazing service, thousands of hours of uncompensated labor, and her efforts to steer us to a solid economic future by

establishing the **Lisa Mighetto Award for Enhancing Diversity, Inclusion, and Collegiality in ASEH.**

Substitute Motion: That we rename Distinguished Service award as the **Lisa Mighetto Award for Distinguished Service.** Moved, seconded, passed.

The committee also agreed to provide Lisa Mighetto with an honorarium to mark her own devoted and distinguished service to ASEH over many years

14) Statements on Discrimination and Harassment. Graeme Wynn.

Motion to approve Statements on discrimination and harassment contingent upon developing a specific proposal for constituting a review committee. Seconded, passed.

15) ASEH sponsorship of symposium celebrating Carolyn Merchant's career. Mark Madison.

Madison reported Carolyn Merchant's request that ASEH support travel to a symposium in honor of her career. Discussion noted that ASEH receives individual requests for contributions from time to time, and leaves these to the discretion of the President. However, the ASEH contribution policy requires that ASEH contributions benefit membership of ASEH. This symposium does not directly benefit the ASEH membership. Motion that ASEH not accept this sponsorship. Seconded, passed.

Mark Madison reported that Unite Here has requested that ASEH join its FairHotel program, "book meetings at union facilities and avoid labor disputes." ASEH already books only at union hotels, avoiding those with labor conflicts pending. Motion to table, pending further research. Seconded.

16) New Business:

The status of WEHN within ASEH is unclear as yet. WEHN will bring forward a formal proposal this year. WEHN is aware that WEHN-specific donations are burdensome for the Executive Director, so WEHN will develop a plan to reduce that burden.

Major award nomination process: For the 2019 agenda, the Executive Committee should discuss changing the major award nomination process so committees can nominate and the Executive Committee vote 6 months rather than a full 12 months before awards are announced.

Meeting adjourned: 5:00pm.