Minutes of the 2012 American Society of Environmental History Society Executive Committee Meeting

Saturday, March 31, 2012, 12 pm-5 pm

Madison, Wisconsin

In attendance:

Officers:

**John McNeill, President**

**Greg Mitman, Vice President and President elect**

**Mark Madison, Treasurer**

**Ellen Stroud, Secretary**

Executive Committee Members:

**Lisa Brady, Ex Officio, Associate Editor of *Environmental History***

**Sterling Evans**

**Sara Gregg**

**Marcus Hall**

**Tina Loo**

**Lisa Mighetto, Ex Officio, Executive Director**

**Harriet Ritvo, Ex Officio, Past President**

**Nancy Langston, Ex Officio, Past President, and Editor of *Environmental History***

**Louis Warren**

**Graeme Wynn**

**Kara Schlichting, Ex Officio, Graduate Student Representative**

Guests:

**Steve Anderson, Forest History Society President**

**Tom Dunlap, Journal Management Group**

**Jay Taylor, Journal Management Group**

**Lawrence Culver, Conference Program Chair**

**Trish Thomas, Editor at Oxford University Press**

**Erin Ganley, Marketing Manager at Oxford University Press**

John McNeill called the meeting to order.

Lawrence Culver, Greg Mitman and Nancy Langston were all thanked for their hard work on putting together a great conference, including the film festival.

Graeme Wynn, Louis Warren, Sara Gregg and Kara Schlichting were welcomed as new committee members.

**Louis Warren moved the approval of the 2011 meeting minutes, Lisa seconded**

The minutes were amended to reflect the correct year in the heading, and Graeme Wynn’s election to the executive committee, and then **approved unanimously**.

Lawrence Culver gave a report on the Madison conference from the Program Committee.

213 proposals including roundtables, sessions, and papers, led to a total of 95 sessions, which meant a 40% rejection rate. He reported that support from Nancy and Lisa helped tremendously, and that things went as smoothly as they could. Lawrence reported good feedback on sessions, the plenary, and the facilities, with no negative feedback so far, and an overall very positive experience.

He raised a several issues for the Executive Committee to consider:

\*The conference may have reached such a size that we may need more concurrent sessions or more session times.

\*Software might be able to help the scheduling process.

\*It could also be helpful to think more about the composition of the program committee. It doesn’t need to be bigger per se. The Urban History conference has a committee of the same size, but half the sessions, while the Western has fewer sessions than we do but 10 members, so there are more people to delegate to.

Nancy Langston gave a report on the Madison conference from the Local Arrangements Committee.

She thanked Lawrence Culver and the program committee for a really exciting, vibrant program.

She reported strong income from conference registrants and visitors, and strong income from fundraising ,with support from OUP, the Rachel Carson Center, Nelson Institute, Enviro Tech, and the City of Madison. The conference was likely to show a modest profit after expenses, which contributes to the compensation of the executive director. Also, Nancy emphasized that it is crucial to recognize the heavy reliance on volunteer efforts of faculty and graduate students at the host institutions. An online submission system could cut down on labor required. Gregg Mitman added that the in kind contributions of the Nelson Institute staff were also critical to supporting this conference, and couldn’t be depended on in future years or at other institutions.

As local arrangements chair, Nancy suggested the following motions:

We pay for an online submission system for proposals

We charge more for registration fees to cover the true cost

Charge spouses no less than as grad students

**Motion:**

**Harriet Ritvo made the motion that spouses be charged the same rate as graduate students for registration. Sterling Evans seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

The committee discussed the other two recommendations. Registration fees are not set by the executive committee, but by Lisa Mighetto and the conference organizers. John McNeill asked Lisa to look into the question of fees. The question of the cost of an online submission system was discussed, but at Mark Madison’s recommendation was tabled until discussion of the operating budget.

John McNeill again thanked the Madison Conference committees, and all joined in.

Trish Thomas presented a report from Oxford University Press.

Initial hurdles have been cleared, and things are moving forward well. She and Erin Ganley reported that they were working on increased dissemination, especially to underserved parts of the world.

Jay Taylor from the journal management group offered a preliminary report, and thanked all members for their efforts and many volunteer hours.

He reported that the current primary goal of the group at this point was moving toward an annual evaluation of journal operations with clear benchmarks. He reported four issues that the committee has been working on:

\*Completion of author surveys, getting them on line, and working with ways to use them to generate useful data

\*Installing a conflict of Interest form on Scholar One, which is now part of the submission process

\* Continuing to work on the journal design

\*Membership Management, which is on going challenge, with members in different categories having uneven access to online resources, for example.

Tom Dunlap added that the initial challenges of the transition have been met, that Oxford has done a fine job, and that the journal management group has worked out its own policies in a productive way. Either ASEH or FHS or the OUP can bring concerns to the JMG, which will involve the full committee if need be, or bring in the boards if need be, but co-chairs will take care of things with as little bureaucracy as possible. That’s been working. The membership management question is a lingering concern, and when the 5-year contract with OUP is up for renewal in 2015, that could be natural point of revisiting that, though we may need to wait in part because of changing technologies.

Concerns were raised about the citation index factor, and about confusion over membership and journal subscription renewal processes.

Nancy commented that some production issues had been addressed at OUP in the past year, and the press has been really responsive, for which we are all grateful.

Harriet Ritvo and Tina Loo then gave a brief report on the project of creating a membership directory. An ad hoc committee was formed and began discussions in January, but technical and logistical issues as well as questions of privacy and control of information remain challenges. In discussion it was acknowledged that FHS and ASEH are different kinds of organizations with different kinds of memberships, with different expectations for sharing of information. The sense of the discussion was that it is crucial for ASEH to be able to have a complete list of its members, including its members who have joint memberships with FHS. We are working toward a way of achieving that without imposing undue burdens on either society.

Lisa Brady then submitted a proposal as associate editor of the journal to change the platform and design of the *Environmental History* website. She proposed that ASEH contribute $1000 toward migrating to WordPress, and explained that the FHS board was being asked for the same amount.

**After discussion, Louis Warren made a motion to approve the allocaion, and Sara Gregg seconded. After some further discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.**

Nancy Langston then offered the editor’s report for the journal.

She reported that she had accepted an offer to move to another university, and would not be taking the journal with her. She explained that she expected to pass leadership to a new editor in 18months or so, which is a little earlier than expected, but still enough time for a smooth transition.

She reported high and increasing rates of submissions, and success in getting more global submissions. She also reported a focus this year on journal redesign, keeping the branding but simplifying some of the elements and enhancing the visual component of the journal. In addition, the submission process has been simplified and made more clear; Scholar One has been very helpful.

The committee continued earlier discussion about impact factors, which are important measures, but not as effective a measure in the humanities and social sciences because the humanities in particular have such a long citation tail.

Steve Anderson of the Forest History Society then reported that FHS was finishing up the fundraising campaign for a national fellowship that they hope to have in place for 2013, for funding a masters or PhD student. He asked committee members to be in touch if they had ideas to offer about the fellowship.

At 1:25, John McNeill thanked the guests of the meeting, and dismissed them, and the committee took a short break.

The committee reconvened at 1:35.

The committee continued discussion on the importance of a membership directory. An option of an opt-in directory was proposed. The sense of the meeting was that for the time being, that would be the best way forward, asking people to opt in through email and the newsletter. Tina and Harriet were asked to let FHS know that this seems simplest. The committee agreed to also keep the conversation going, and asked a subcommittee of John McNeill, Lisa Mighetto, Sara Gregg, Mark Madison, and Marcus Hall to keep investigating more formal solutions.

Discussion turned to the selection of a new editor for the journal. Associate Editor Lisa Brady emerged as the leading candidate, since she had been a top candidate in the previous search and has become even stronger and more experienced since. It was confirmed that by-laws allow for making such a decision in situations such as the current one. In discussion it was reported that FHS seemed likely to agree with the choice.

**Ellen Stroud motioned that Lisa Brady be recommended as the new editor of the journal, pending FHS agreement. Sterling Evans seconded.**

**Discussion about term of appointment ensued. Graeme Wynn offered a friendly amendment that she begin a 5-year term in July 2013. Ellen accepted the amendment, and Sterling seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Nancy commented that this would solve the problem of beginning a term in the middle of an academic year, and would allow Lisa Brady to begin as editor elect in January 2013, to help with transition.

Mark Madison then offered the treasurer’s report.

He reported a good year overall, though contributions need to be better. He also pointed out that $25,000 had been allocated for digital improvements last year, which hadn’t yet been spent.

Discussion returned to moving to an electronic registration system for the conference, which would come from the conference budget, not the operating budget. After discussion, John McNeill explained that no motion was required, and that the committee could simply direct the treasurer to move forward on including an electronic submission system in the conference budget, which the committee did.

**Harriet Ritvo made a motion to approve the 2012 budget. Tina Loo seconded, and the motion was approved unanimously**

Discussion turned to the performance evaluation of the executive director. She received high praise all around, especially from John McNeill and Harriet Ritvo.

Mark Madison reported that it continues to be the right thing to move toward making the position one of employee rather than consultant, but that we need a place with overhead of less than 5%, and haven’t found it. Lisa Mighetto is sort of grandfathered in, but we need to keep working on it, and definitely have it in place for the next ED.

The formula in place for a raise is COL plus 2.5-5%. A raise of 8.5% was suggested.

Discussion continued about difficulty of recruiting and retaining executive directors, and also about gender equity in executive director compensation. Sara Gregg suggested forming a subcommittee to investigate gender equity. Harriet Ritvo underlined the importance of Sara’s point. Nancy suggested making sure we charge enough for the conference to compensate the executive director fairly. After a discussion of expenses, John McNeill directed the treasurer to reimburse the executive director for her expenses.

Nancy suggested putting real travel and equipment budgets in place for the executive director as well.

**Nancy Langston made a motion to increase Lisa Mighetto’s salary to $57,000, which would be a raise of approximately 8.5%. Tina Loo seconded. The motion passed with one negative vote, from Marcus Hall, who explained that he wanted the raise to be larger.**

Discussion continued about the need for an equity increase in salary.

**Sara Gregg and Marcus Hall agreed to spearhead an effort to change the fact that our executive director is grossly underpaid. John McNeill asked Sara to chair the committee, and she agreed. John directed Sara and Marcus to be in consultation with Mark, John and Gregg.**

At 3:40 the committee took a short break, and reconvened at 3:50, with Lisa Mighetto rejoining the meeting.

Lisa Mighetto presented a streamlined version of the strategic plan that had been presented at last year’s meeting, emphasizing that having such a plan would help with programming, fundraising, and other issues of prioritization.

She explained that John appointed a new digital communications committee to investigate how best to spend funds for increasing our digital presence: Sean Keraj and Mark Hersey. They thought that we should coordinate with the journal and see if there could be special forums or issues we could feature on the website, coordinating with the journal. This kind of initiative would be more straightforward with a strategic plan in place emphasizing, for example the need to improve the organizations digital presence for both marketing and the development of teaching resources.

**Nancy Langston moved to approve the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. Tina Loo seconded. Ellen Stroud offered a friendly amendment to change “increase” to “improve” in goal 4, which Nancy accepted. The motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion then moved the next item on the agenda, creating an advisory board for professional development and public engagement. Lisa asked for approval for going forward, with the intention of developing a plan over the next year .

**Graeme Wynn moved such approval, and Ellen Stroud seconded. The motion passed unanimously.**

Discussion then turned to the distinguished scholar and distinguish service award. Richard White was to receive this year’s distinguished scholar award, but could not attend. It will be awarded in Toronto instead. Discussion followed of the nominees for the distinguished service award.

**Gregg Mitman moved that the award go to Kathy Brosnan. Graeme Wynn seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Jay Malone, Director of History of Science Society then gave a brief presentation to the committee, in which he proposed that ASEH join in a consortium with HSS.

After Jay Malone left the meeting, the committee concluded that the proposal was not clearly in line with where we think our strategic plan is heading, and so it didn’t seem to be the right use of our limited resources. John McNeill agreed that he would communicate the committee’s decision to Malone.

The committee then turned to the Modern Language Association’s statement about the importance of language learning.

**Sterling Evans proposed that we endorse the MLA’s statement. Tina Loo seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

The committee then turned to discussion of new business. Possible future sites for conferences were discussed. John McNeill reported that the sustainability committee would like to have a voice in the site selection process. It was agreed to do that informally with Michael Smith at the moment, and to consider a formal proposal in the future.

The meeting was adjourned at 5 pm.