

The Society: Minutes of the Women's Caucus Meeting

2001 HSS Annual Meeting, Denver

Pamela Mack, co-chair of the caucus, called the meeting to order. The session opened with the traditional introductions of those in attendance, numbering approximately twenty-two.

As the first order of business, co-chair Amy Bix reported on the annual HSS job survey, results of which were published in the last newsletter. Sally Kohlstedt suggested the idea of conducting a separate survey of departments, as the ACLS does. Jay Malone noted that as part of the process of putting together a new HSS guide, the HSS office would be sending out questionnaires which might shed light on such matters. Amy will talk with Jay about that development.

Pam Mack reported that the HSS Women listserv is going strong; in addition to reaching scholars in the US, it has attracted substantial international participation.

Pam then addressed the subject of the HSS Women's Prize. The good news is that last year's effort by the caucus and HSS succeeded in raising \$7,291; the disappointing news is that due in part to the downward national financial trend, another \$3,000 will be needed in order to maintain the prize. Pam will send out another appeal for donations. Sally Kohlstedt suggested that HSS might want to consider encouraging people to make multi-year pledges, a technique common among other organizations; Jay responded that he could raise the issue with the HSS development committee. Leslie Burlingame suggested that HSS might also want to undertake publicity to encourage members to donate gifts of stock. Pam indicated that for now, any necessary decisions about how to cover the gap in prize money could be made informally, staving off any immediate threat that the award would need to be reduced.

The next item on the agenda was the election of a new Women's Caucus co-chair for 2001-2003. Pam Mack nominated Sylvia McGrath, Sally Kohlstedt seconded. No other nominations appeared, and Sylvia was elected by acclamation.

Pam mentioned that there had been some discussion of the issue of named prizes, a subject currently before the Committee on Honors, but that there was a clear intention to rename the women's prize for Margaret Rossiter at an appropriate point in the future.

The next subject was the question of a new, updated bibliography of women in science, technology, and medicine. Rima Apple noted that several previous bibliographies had been compiled through the University of Wisconsin library, but that so many publications had appeared over the last five years that a printed bibliography did not seem worth the effort. The library would be able to put together a website bibliography for about \$3000. Pam mentioned that there was the HSS Special Projects Fund, but that project would probably require more volunteer effort as a starting point. Rima offered to put together some form of proposal.

Jay Malone reminded people that HSS still had copies of the HSS syllabus sampler and the women's syllabus sampler available for sale.

Pam indicated that co-chairs would appreciate receiving suggestions for a Women's Caucus-sponsored session at the next HSS meeting. Sally Kohlstedt suggested reaching out to put together sessions at other conferences (such as the AHA, OAH< Berks), and Pam recommended using the listserv to call for participants. Peggy Kidwell raised the issue of whether women's history was getting into history of science textbooks; Leslie Burlingame raised the question of whether HSS should encourage the writing of such comprehensive texts. Pam suggested that the caucus might want to try to develop a workshop around such issues for the next HSS meeting.

In the time set aside for announcements, Ida Stamhuis, president of the Women's Commission of the world history of science organization, noted that their last conference in Mexico featured a special session on the history of women in science, with a number of papers by South American participants. The group will organize an "in-between" meeting for 2003 in Prague around the theme "Women and organizations," and a call for papers should appear on the listserv.

Pam Mack mentioned an opportunity for members to consider, that the post of the director of NSF's Science Studies program will be open in August 2002, a two-year rotating position formerly held by Michael Sokal. Applicants should have good administrative skills and also be able to communicate across scholarly communities. Margaret Rossiter has expressed interest in seeing women apply for the job; a call should appear in about one month.

Pam mentioned that HSS has been receiving Dibner money to fund postdoctoral fellowships, for which an institution has to put up fifty percent of the money, but found no institutional volunteer this year. There is a plan to advertise the opportunity without requiring an institution to put up matching funds; anyone interested should contact John Servos.

Jay mentioned that \$1600 was available to compile a women's directory, and that HSS would like to see that money used. The University of Chicago office could output women members' names in any directed format. Sally suggested that an online directory might be better than paper copies. Rima indicated that to be of maximum value, such directories should include women working in history of technology and medicine as well as history of science. Debby Warner emphasized the need for the caucus to reach out to graduate students and other new people, drawing more participants to meetings. Sylvia McGrath warned that new female scholars didn't always realize that they were welcome at the annual caucus meeting; such problems reinforce the importance of placing some type of invitation in the newsletter or on a flyer inserted in registration packets. Sally suggested that a breakfast meeting on the second day of HSS was not an optimal time; Jay mentioned that there might be problems moving the caucus meeting to Saturday, when it would conflict with the Forum for the History of Science in America. Peggy Kidwell emphasized that the caucus should put up a notice on the HSS meeting bulletin board. Jay indicated that a description of the caucus might be published in the annual July newsletter, along with the preliminary program. Finally, the group closed with thanks to the co-chairs, the HSS office, and others who facilitated the morning's meeting.

Amy Bix, outgoing Women's Caucus co-chair, November 17, 2001