

History of Science Society Business Meeting
11 October 2020
11am-noon EDT
Virtual Meeting

Minutes

Officers attending: Jan Golinski (President), Karen Rader (Vice President), Alix Hui (Editor), Gwen Kay (Treasurer), Luis Campos (Secretary), Jay Malone (Executive Director), and Bernie Lightman (Past President)

The meeting was called to order at 9:01am EDT.

President's Welcome (Jan Golinski)

Jan welcomed everyone and asked everyone to sign in on the webpage for the session. If members were interested in volunteering and being more active in the Society, they could indicate this on the sign-in form. Jan also announced that anyone wishing to ask a question should use the participants panel to raise their hand, and he would call on them in order.

Secretary's Report (Luis Campos)

The Secretary noted that his report was to request approval of the Business Meeting Minutes from July 2019. These minutes had been posted online in advance of the Virtual Forum. Jan asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Gwen moved; Mary Mitchell seconded. The vote was called. There were 44 votes in favor were noted, no votes against, and no stated abstentions.

President's Report (Jan Golinski)

Jan noted that he had assumed the presidency in January 2020, just before the threat of the new coronavirus began to emerge. "The months since then have been an unusual and difficult period for everyone. In the circumstances of a global pandemic, no institution can simply carry on with business as usual. The pandemic has disrupted our lives at work and at home. Some of our members have suffered directly from the virus, while others have found their economic security imperiled. The difficulties have been particularly great for those in precarious employment situations or just embarking on professional careers. The Society has tried to respond to these circumstances by—among other things—launching the Pandemic Appeal to meet some of its members' most urgent needs. We anticipate continuing the appeal until we see the pandemic receding and can get a sense of what life will be like thereafter."

Jan noted that the past few months had also witnessed "political mobilization around issues of racial justice, in the United States and other countries" which has "foregrounded

demands for a reckoning with institutional racism and exclusionary practices in the profession. On this front, there can be no return to the antecedent situation. The demands for greater diversity and inclusion are justified and will not go away.”

Jan noted that “the emergency of the last few months has disrupted the Society’s normal way of doing things and elevated demands for change that can no longer be suppressed.” He proposed discussing three aspects: meetings, organization, and fundraising.

“Meetings are the most obvious way in which the Society has been forced to adjust, since for many years we have prioritized a four-day gathering in a large hotel in a North American metropole. Fairly soon after the pandemic struck, we realized we could not go ahead with the planned meeting in New Orleans and began with our partners in SHOT to negotiate a postponement. The operation to organize the Virtual Forum followed—a fast-paced process that demanded hard work and considerable intellectual agility from everyone involved. I offered thanks, in my remarks at the opening plenary, to many of those who contributed. And we can now measure the success of their labors in the remarkably vibrant and creative meeting we have just witnessed. The distinctive features of the Virtual Forum—especially its broadened international reach and increased diversity of participants—suggest we should include a virtual component in subsequent meetings, even if we revert to hosting them in a single physical location.

“Second, the planning of the Virtual Forum demanded an organizational flexibility that suggests ways of improving the Society’s operations in general. We wanted the planning process to be as inclusive as possible to give many constituencies within the Society ownership of the event; at the same time, procedures had to be properly deliberative and transparent. This was consistent with the goals of the Inclusive and Transparent Governance Review, established in July to examine the Society’s organizational structures and procedures, and which was discussed in the Futures III session yesterday. In addition to the ITGR, which will examine long-term governance issues, the Council has now declared its intention to initiate an independent process of fact-finding to investigate issues of governance and procedure that have emerged in recent months.

“Finally, the Pandemic Appeal has raised and disbursed about \$27,000 so far in two cycles of applications and awards. This has implications for our broader fundraising and development efforts. While some development initiatives have been put on hold until in-person gatherings can resume, the success of the Pandemic Appeal suggests a need to reexamine priorities. Funding travel to meetings, for example, may not be as important a goal as it once seemed if fewer members are attending meetings in person. It might be more appropriate to direct funding toward members who cannot travel to meetings because they lack institutional support or are prevented from entering the United States. On the other hand, the generosity of the fund’s donors reaffirms the strong commitment of our members to the Society as a community, where individuals lend mutual support to one another in common pursuit of our mission to foster interest in the history of science.

“Knowing there is a deep well of community feeling in the Society is comforting, but we should be wary of idealizing the community of our members. Of course the Society serves its members, but we have to continually broaden our sense of who those members are and should be

if we are not to suffer institutional decline. We need to reach out to graduate students, to individuals in contingent faculty positions or pursuing careers outside academia, to people marginalized by institutional racism or exclusionary practices, to historians of science in the global south, and so on. And we can only draw them into the Society and keep them as members if we demonstrate that we are serving their needs, that they will gain intellectually and professionally by taking an active role in our organization.

“In recent months, some of the ties that bind us as a community have been broken because we cannot meet in person; but others have been forged through different modes of communication. As historians, we know how difficult it is for people to grasp the full extent of historical transformations while they are living through them. We do not know what awaits us on the other side of the changes we are currently experiencing. I nonetheless hope that, when its centennial arrives in 2024, the History of Science Society will be able to look back on 2020 as the year when it met severe challenges and responded by committing itself to institutional reform and renewal.”

Executive Director’s Report (Jay Malone)

Jay reported that of the two biggest things that happened in the office this past year, one was a complete financial revision where the office was “finally able to employ an accounting company that helped us streamline all of the finances,” so that the budget matches the charter accounts, from Quickbooks. “This has been a seachange. Not only did it prepare us just in time for doing all of our accounting remotely--it now allows us to all have monthly reports be shared directly with CoF. It also makes for easier pulling of quarterly P&Ls [profit and loss], so we have a much better sense of how the finances are operating than we had in the past.” The financial review will begin in two weeks, and Jay said that he and Ryan agree that “we are in the best position yet for this financial review. We are very optimistic that it will be a very streamlined and efficient process.”

Regarding the Virtual Forum itself, Jay reported a total of 843 registered, 530 HSS and 313 from SHOT, 63/37% ratio. There were 174 first-time attendees, and 380 HSS members, representing 26 countries. While more analysis would have to be done of the meeting’s demographics, it appeared that 49% of attendees were in the 18-39 year age range, which Jay felt “speaks volumes for the future of the Society.”

Regarding the postponed annual meeting to be held in New Orleans, Jay noted: “Even the pandemic has a silver lining--had we not had a pandemic, we would have had to cancel the meeting in New Orleans.” He noted that our dates for next year will fall in November, which is “outside the height of the hurricane season so we are cautiously optimistic that we won’t face at least this difficult again.” Negotiations are underway to finalize the contract with the hotel, with the particular challenge of a *force majeure* clause. “I think we have to be fairly optimistic to think that everything will reach a stage where everyone is comfortable traveling to New Orleans next year by late November,” so it will be “extremely important that we have a *force majeure* contract that will allow some kind of out, so that the Society does not suffer crippling financial losses.” He noted that given this is a joint meeting with SHOT there are other considerations to

bear in mind. It was a difficult but excellent collaboration this year. Jan Korstens and Sonja Brentjes were “marvelous to work with,” and he was grateful for their support.

Jay has been thinking about the future of a possible hybrid meeting, but from speaking with colleagues and the American Council of Learned Societies, “a full hybrid meeting is a very difficult financial proposition. It’s not even clear that it is possible in a hotel setting,” due to streaming requirements and the high cost hotels set for AV and especially for wifi (typically AV costs around \$55k and we can easily see it doubling for that or a July hybrid meeting). This is something that the program co-chairs and CoMP in particular will need to look at: ‘What is the best proposition for a hybrid meeting in 2021, recognizing that costs exercise some kind of restraint?’

Finally, Jay noted that Ryan Feigenbaum, “our genius coordinator,” had submitted his resignation and would be departing the Society on Fri Oct 16. Given that the University of Notre Dame, where the Executive Office is located, has instituted a hiring freeze, this may produce further complications. “I think I’ve proven over 20 years that I am not equipped to do the things that Ryan has done,” Jay noted, “but I’m delighted to say that Greg Macklem, who was the Society Coordinator for seven years before Ryan, has agreed to help on a contract basis.” Jay felt that this was “a tremendous asset for us, because it is difficult to know how long this hiring freeze will be in place.” With Greg’s experience, “losing Ryan won’t be as painful as we would have feared.”

Editor’s Report (Alexandra Hui)

Alix shared the HSS Publications semi-annual report, and noted that the editors “continue to match our predecessors’ record of producing issues on time.” She noted that the September 2020 issue production period coincided with the COVID-19 outbreak in the US, and with Joan Vandergriff’s move to another state, alongside multiple disruptions within the editorial office. In February, the book review operation migrated to a system used for manuscripts, which enabled a quick pivot for the Philadelphia and Starkville offices with very little disruption when the pandemic hit and everyone went into lockdown. Further refinements in workflows meant that all is working well, and the editors are now at work on populating the September 2021 issue, with the hard work of a number of people. She noted that the Associate Editors who oversee the *Isis CB* and *Newsletter*, have seen an uptick in engagement, and have begun to innovate in projects, which are welcome signs of the overall good health of HSS publications.

Alix then shared her screen to offer some further details about some tables, one of which compared manuscripts processed in the last six months compared to previous six months period: “new submissions have actually increased since COVID-19 hit the US, acceptances went down, and R&Rs went up. In second table, a spike happened in July, when we received close to one new manuscript a day, which was pretty close to overwhelming.” One consequence of this July wave, “which we actually saw last year as well--though not nearly as large--is a significant uptick in manuscripts under review, which taxed office staff, and also prompted potential referees to decline invitations. Of those who do accept, reviewing has understandably taken more time, and this has led to lengthier manuscript review times. But we recognize this is frustrating to

authors, we also don't want to push reviewers too hard, as we are all struggling to find balance right now. We are now tracking geographical and temporal distribution of manuscript content... as we increase the diversity of what *Isis* covers. By the next semi-annual report, we should be able to track these trends," she noted.

She also addressed the gender report, which she had spoken about in one of the Futures sessions, "because it consumed quite a bit of staff time but also because it is an important conversation that must continue. Original submissions increased overall in the six-month period, shooting way up in July. This is not a scaling-up of the previous demographics. Instead, trends that were noted elsewhere in academic world, that women scholars were publishing at lower rates elsewhere in the academy, were found here as well." While there was parity between genders in the original submissions, the resubmission ratio is between 2:1. "Anecdotally," she reported, "both authors and reviewers we were interacting with after March 1 described being overwhelmed by additional childcare duties and their efforts to move courses online." Female authors were desk-rejected at lower rates, she noted. These trends carried over to book reviews as well. "Projit invited equal numbers of male and female scholars to review: females accepted twice as much as male scholars. After March 1, men accepted invitations at a rate of 4:3. Submission rate was closer to 2:1 since March. This is all to say, the consequences of this pandemic in terms of overrepresentation of male authors in the pages of *Isis* will be felt for some time to come. We've been working on ways to ameliorate this, discussed at futures panels, will discuss this at the advisory board meeting in the weeks to come."

Finally, Alix noted that a new editorial team had been selected for *Osiris*: Elaine Leong, Projit Mukharji, Ahmed Ragab, Myrna Sheldon. She expressed gratitude to Patrick McCray and Suman Seth "for all of their hard work to make *Osiris* a journal for readers and authors alike."

The floor opened to questions. Audra Wolfe asked: "Has the society begun a discussion on potentially changing the name of the journal, as its association with an international terrorist organization presents barriers to participation for some scholars (for instance, through algorithmic homeland security risk assessments)? If not, what would be the process for beginning that conversation?" Alix noted that Alex Csiszar was the head of CoP, and that these discussions have begun in an informal way, but that it "depends on you want to measure it, to highlight that *Isis* is an Egyptian goddess in this case, not an anglophone acronym for a terrorist organization." Alix noted that making this distinction clear was part of the reason why the previous editor, Floris Cohen, had a parade of goddesses on the cover of the journal, and there was also an effort to change the capitalization of the title so that it was a proper noun. "These are seemingly little things to combat this. We have talked about, briefly and informally, potentially changing the name. This discussion would need to be much bigger. I would want the whole membership to be involved. We would also need to be a discussion of the new name. We cannot simply strike this and be the committee to come up with a new name. I would say it would start with the CoP, as a member request to them, but I would be happy to have this conversation. You raise some important points about how this might raise barriers for some scholars. I would be interested to hear more about that as well when people have had problems with a copy of *Isis* carried through security. I know when we were hired as editors, we were instructed not to put '*Isis*' in subject headers of emails, and to refer to it as "*Isis* journal" whenever we can. Approaching the Committee on Publications would be the place to start."

Treasurer's Report (Gwen Kay)

Gwen noted that she “would like to briefly talk about a few items in the budget that might stand out as different this year than previously.” She noted that the format had changed to better align our budget with our accounting software: each tab on the budget looks identical in layout, with appropriate spaces filled in. “For example, under the annual meeting, you can see how much of the Executive Office time is (formally) allocated to this endeavor. Grants for travel that are specific to the meeting, such as the NSF grants that help fund graduate student travel are booked and accounted for here.”

Second, she noted, regarding allocations from our endowed funds: “Council did vote to increase allocations from some funds –notably Dibner and Current Bibliography – as the spends in those categories (for Isis and CB respectively) are far higher than what our draw has been.” She noted that “previously from the Dibner fund we had taken a draw of \$25,000 and \$3500 of the draw is from these funds. However, the CoF and Council had discussion that the reality is that the draws do not reflect actual expenses. The Dibner fund is to be used for production of our journal, *Isis*, and there is \$500,000 there every year and it seems to generate money, so we could consistently draw \$250,000 to fund *Isis*. But if you go to tab, you would see our expenses for *Isis* are far in excess of \$25,000. So we increased our draw from Dibner fund to \$50,000.” She described a similar situation with the CB fund “we have a lot of money... and the expenses to run CB are far greater than \$10,000 so we agreed to double that draw as well.” She reassured the assembled members that “We are still maintaining a draw of less than 5% (as the goal).”

Thirdly, she noted, “we altered our budget significantly for this meeting when we realized we would be meeting in a virtual way. We were unsure if we would be held to our contract with the hotel in New Orleans; this had a potential penalty of \$165,000. We were unsure about attendance at this meeting and registration costs: how much does one charge for a virtual meeting, especially if institutions are not funding travel or conference support? We also wanted to make this meeting affordable to graduate students, and we did figure out a way to do that. So there were other expenses that we had to account for, when we made our budget, to be approved by Council in June. We were also unsure about other costs to run a meeting: we’re not obligated to spend on coffee by the gallon, but we did decide to use a commercial platform which also has real costs associated. We realized early on, looking at another meetings happening over the summer, that we needed to hire an outside commercial entity, to use the platform. So we used OpenWater, and we have paid for their expertise and their platform.”

The fourth item she raised concerned the audit: “we do an audit at the request of Council. We decided this year to have a financial review, instead of an audit. This was approved by the Committee on Finance, and Council. Our plan is to alternate a review with an audit. The same work and examination of our finances occurs; the only difference is the final document, for a slightly lower price. We are also, as noted, doing a search for new auditors, as is good business practice. CoF will review the reports that come in.” With the audit scheduled to take place in two weeks’ time, we will have a report on that by the end of the year, she said. Finally, she noted, “a budget is a plan and also a living document. We try to predict things that we can, but they’re always best guesses. The best example of this is meeting numbers each year. We made a budget

guessing that registration might be \$50 person, guessing how many attendees we might have, but there are always changes and fluctuations. When the editorial offices for *Isis* moved, we budgeted for that, from travel the previous year for the Committee on Publications to visit bid sites to costs for the actual move in the year of. So we can always make changes to the budget as needed. We try to predict as much as we can. Market has been robust and we ultimately had a lower draw at the end of financial year than we had previously or predicted in our budget.”

In the chatbox, Sarah Naramore asked “Do we know how many graduate students were able to have their registration covered by the NSF travel fund?” Ryan replied that “everyone who applied or it got it and it was about 25 for this meeting.” Gwen noted that to process the paperwork for this was a lot of work, and the order of students paying first and being reimbursed was procedurally necessary, but it was great that this all worked out.

Lynn asked “is there carryover from the NSF grant from this year to next year’s annual meeting?” Jay replied that “we did apply for a no-cost extension to the current grant, and that was given to us. NSF said we could convert travel grants to participation grants, and that’s what we were using for students, independent scholars, and recent PhDs. The intent is to apply for renewal of the 9-Societies grant with a February deadline, to begin roughly June of 2021. It is still unclear how much of the current grant we will be able to extend, based on the fact that basically everyone has cancelled their meetings for spring of 2021.”

Michael Barany noted in the chatbox: “I really appreciated Gwen's comments yesterday about budgeting and justice-work in the society. I wanted to hear more explicitly here, if possible, where the sense of austerity or constraint is coming from given the numbers you've shared here?” Gwen replied: “I would say it’s more a sense of caution. Our revenue, as you pointed out yesterday [in a tweet], the major source of revenue is in fact what we get from the UCP, since our membership goes through them. I do worry about things as EBSCO royalties, which have been helpful, that they might be falling as contracts with libraries are being renegotiated, and library budgets are being cut. So it seems that for this year many of those contracts are stable, since contracts were negotiated last year before everything took a turn for the worse. I think we do have money, resources, and the endowment, which is phenomenally fantastic and helpful and will help us weather storms, which is exactly what endowments are to do. I just don’t think we can say we are going to give \$500,000 away to *x* entity or *x* cause. We need to think about what our priorities are, we can find them, we just have to do it in a way that is constantly budgeted and with the values of the Society.”

Committee Reports (Synopsis by Jay Malone)

Jay apologized that in the interest of time he would only be able to focus on the advisory committee reports, rather than the interest groups, caucuses, and other delegations.

Committee on Education and Engagement. Jay praised the leadership of this committee, the awarding of the Hazen Prize to Alison Marsh, the committee’s efforts to organize a website for National History Day in 2021, and the possible conjunction of reenergizing the Hazen Lecture in collaboration with the NYAS.

Committee on Publications. Jay noted that an outside consultant, Raym Crow, had been hired to look at the agreement with UCP and advise whether we might solicit competitive bids from other publishers. The report was now received and being considered by CoP, which will make a recommendation to EC for its November 5 and 12 meetings. “By that point I expect we’ll know whether we will wish to change publishers or renegotiate a contract with UCP. Our editors are pleased with the relationship with Chicago and all aspects of how both journals are run.”

Committee on Diversity and Inclusion. Jay noted that CoDI worked with the Women’s Caucus on drafting a statement on antiracism in response to the murder of George Floyd, and how they have partnered with the Inclusive and Transparent Governance Review that Vice-President Karen Rader was organizing, with the assistance of the WC, the Graduate and Early Career Caucus, and which led to the three-party plenaries on “Futures” in the Virtual Forum. These were well-attended sessions, and Jay was excited to see the future of the Society being discussed in such an intense way. CoDI has met with *Isis* editors and with GECC to discuss diversity issues, and is also meeting with our sister societies and HSS constituents regarding diversity and inclusion in the Society. Jay noted that CoDI was established in the last two years for express purpose having a standing advisory committee with representation across the board from the Society to make sure we are as diverse and inclusive as we could be.

Committee on Meetings and Programs. Jay recounted an anecdote of having shared with Karen-Beth Scholthof his confidence back in February that the pandemic would be over by November in time for our annual meeting. “She did not share that confidence, as a gloomy virologist,” he noted, and “when it became apparent that we would not meet in New Orleans, CoMP did heroic duty in thinking about the meeting, putting in emergency plans, thinking through what would a virtual meeting look like.” He expressed his gratitude to the committee and announced that John Krige and Soraya de Chadarevian would be co-chairs for the 2021 meeting. He noted that John was “especially well-suited to help with program coordination with SHOT, since he is a former SHOT president.” He held special praise for Christine von Oertzen and Soraya de Chadarevian, the current program co-chairs: “I have worked with 22 pairs of program co-chairs and never have I seen such work and dedication and commitment. We asked them to organize an in-person meeting and then asked them to organize a virtual meeting.” Virtual applause ensued.

Technology and Communications Committee. Jay noted that TCC has replaced the THAT Camp with a roundtable session on digital humanities. He noted that TCC has analyzed the SP and the digital components in it, and that the VF has made it clear that TCC will play a key role in the Society’s efforts moving forward. Jay proposed increased interaction between TCC and CoMP, “since I think that tech is going to be a key component.” He expressed gratitude to Kate Sheppard for the effort that she and her committee put into this virtual meeting: “I’ve never seen such activity on twitter feeds and the outreach was so amazing.” He announced that TCC had been working with Ryan on a website redesign, which is so important as the website is “the single most important thing we have to give people a glimpse of what HSS does.” With Ryan’s departure, that work will be paused, but will be continued at some point, perhaps under the leadership of Matt Lavine, one of our co-editors.

Committee on Honors and Prizes. Jay noted a recommendation had been received to create a series of FAQs for prize committees, offering more instructions to help them streamline their prizes. He noted that we have an Operations Manual that discusses the process, but now we have

ten prizes, and CoHP is responsible for maintaining the continuity for prizes, many of them of different natures. Each member of CoHP serves *ex officio* on a prize committee, he noted. They also have recommended for the Pauly Prize, for the “best book on American science,” that we broaden or clarify the intent of the prize for “the history of science in America broadly construed.” Prior language had made it a bit more limited.

Committee on Advocacy. Jay was grateful to Joanna Radin for taking over chair of this committee in the midst of a pandemic. Jay recounted that it is no surprise that Joanna and the committee have found it difficult to embrace advocacy in all aspects, as when the advocacy was formulated in the Strategic Plan, Mike Sokal and Covenery Bolton-Valenčius came up with 65 pages that they boiled down to a few points. Jay reported that Joanna has decided to focus on “internal advocacy,” advocating for matters inside of the Society.

Committee on Membership. Jay reported that the Sponsor-A-Scholar program has taken on new light under leadership of Soma Bannerjee. “We’re adding more and more scholars to this program, which really needs constant curation for it to thrive. They had been collaborating with HSS@Work to expand job opportunities for early careerists, expanding membership in China, working with UCP. More importantly, they are looking at archival access during COVID. Council Member Stephanie Dick has taken lead on this, working with CALM and the Consortium to publicize digital archival resources.”

David Orenstein asked about supporting HSS-BSHS partnerships: “Especially in the age that we are all meeting electronically, that has good potential for further development.” Jan said we would look to the *Newsletter* for word of other societies’ events. Another member asked about the possibility of a joint HSS-SHOT membership. Jay replied “we do have a discounted membership for SHOT members, 15%—that’s as close to a joint membership we have. If the intent is one price for two memberships, then CoM would need to consider it.” Zuoyue Wang, chair of CoM noted, “we will put that on the agenda for the next meeting.” Another member asked “whether it might be possible to allow for members who have not registered for the VF, to listen or watch the recorded program. I found it very useful late at night, I listened and watched a program I had to miss because I was teaching.” Jay replied that the Virtual Forum Committee decided to make recordings available through October 18, so anyone registering for the meeting can go back and look. Most sessions were recorded, and registration will be kept open for anyone not able to attend any of the events live. Jay noted that the virtual platform has also been “a great development tool for us,” noting how some donors were able to attend and see the awarding of the prize they and their family had endowed.

New Business

Jan asked for new business. Hearing none, he moved to adjourn, and said “that concludes the Business Meeting of the Society. I thank you all for attending, and for bringing yourselves here, for a Sunday morning after we have all spent many hours watching sessions of the Virtual Forum. I appreciate the dedication to the Society, which is shown by its members.”

The meeting adjourned at 12:05pm EDT.

Duly recorded by Luis Campos, Secretary