

SHAFR Council meeting via Zoom
Wednesday, January 4, 2023, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (U.S. Eastern time)
Meeting Minutes

Present: Ann Heiss (presiding), Shaun Armstead, Laura Belmonte, Megan Black, Emily Conroy-Krutz, Jessica Gienow-Hecht, Gretchen Heefner, Daniel Immerwahr, Mitch Lerner, Sarah Miller-Davenport, Andrew Preston, Vanessa Walker, Molly Wood, Kelsey Zavelo

Attending: Amy Sayward (ex officio), Faith Bagley, Brian Etheridge, Kelly McFarland, Anne Foster, Petra Goedde, Elizabeth Ferguson

Introductory Matters

Ann Heiss started the meeting with introductions. Amy Sayward reviewed the motions passed since the last meeting in June: approval of minutes from the June and September 2022 Council meetings; approval of Brandon Byrd for *Diplomatic History* editorial board; and tie-breaker for Nominating Committee election. Sayward also highlighted retiring Council and committee members listed in the document packet; Council passed a resolution of thanks through consensus.

Financial Matters

Sayward reviewed the fiscal-year-end financial reports, including the Profit and Loss statement, a detailed Profit and Loss statement, and the Endowment Spending Report. She also reviewed the financial report, highlighting revenue and expenditures for the organization in each of the headings. Mitch Lerner and others expressed concern about the stock-market losses to the endowment. Lerner stated that he was dissatisfied with the fund manager's report to the Ways & Means Committee in November and requested Council permission to talk to the endowment liaison and the investment manager to discuss on-going concerns and report back to Council. There was appreciative consensus supporting this request.

Laura Belmonte, chair of the Ways & Means Committee, reviewed the recommendations of the committee to Council and echoed the concern about endowment losses stated earlier in the meeting. In regard to amendments to the contract that Oxford University Press has requested, the Ways & Means Committee opposed such amendments ahead of renewal/renegotiation of the contract at the end of 2024. The committee also thought that—to a large degree—the desired outcome of the second contingent faculty manuscript workshop proposed by former SHAFR President Andrew Rotter could be achieved without cost by shifting it to a Zoom workshop rather than reimbursing conference travel and attendance costs. This venue also holds the potential to make the mentorship more broadly available to precarious faculty. The Ways & Means Committee recommended a pay increase for SHAFR's Conference Coordinator and IT Director. Andrew Preston moved, Daniel Immerwahr seconded, and Council voted 13-0-1 in favor of an increase.

Electronic Communications

Brian Etheridge and Kelly McFarland, the Electronic Communication Co-editors, joined the meeting to give an update on the website. They had reached out to several web designers and settled on one, but the big question is how to best integrate the MemberClicks and shafr.org websites. Etheridge shared some examples of sites that use MemberClicks and some that just connect to MemberClicks. MemberClicks has limited templates, but SHAFR can use a web designer to customize one of the templates for the SHAFR website. Etheridge and McFarland recommended building the website within MemberClicks to make it functionally easier for members and to limit expenditures. Council questions led to clarification that some areas of the website can be public and others reserved (via password) to members. There was also a request to update some of the photographs (perhaps at the 2023 SHAFR Conference) that illustrate the current website. Etheridge and McFarland then left the meeting. Belmonte moved and Immerwahr seconded a motion that SHAFR unify its website under MemberClicks at the \$750 design expense specified; Council approved the motion unanimously 14-0.

Sayward mentioned IT Director George Fujii's report, which documented our website traffic, as well as former SHAFR President Mary Dudziak's report about Twitter. Sayward mentioned that SHAFR has downloaded and archived its tweets in case the platform implodes and highlighted Dudziak's recommendation to wait and see what happens since there is not currently a comparable platform.

Conference Matters

Sayward offered a short summary of Conference Coordinator Kaete O'Connell's report to Council, highlighting the cruise of the Potomac for the 2023 conference. She anticipated a great event but pointed out that tickets might be a bit higher than the norm in order to be more revenue neutral. For 2024, she highlighted affordable campus housing at the University of Toronto and anticipated a hotel contract in the near future. And she reminded Council that proposals to host the 2026 SHAFR conference were due in February and would be reviewed by Council in June.

Sayward also provided updates on the external ombudsperson who contracts with SHAFR to manage code-of-conduct transgressions. Sherry Marts had handled SHAFR's original training and guided policy development at a very affordable rate, but she retired. Last year, SHAFR used the services of her successor, which were much more expensive. As a result, with support from SHAFR's President and Vice President, Sayward had negotiated with her colleague, Ashley Valanzola, to provide these services for a third of the previous cost. She also clarified that SHAFR's options remain open in the case that an external investigation is required: SHAFR could negotiate with Valanzola to conduct the investigation or employ a different investigator. Sayward also clarified that during the American Historical Association (AHA) meeting, SHAFR is covered by the AHA code of conduct and procedures.

Heiss then initiated discussion about the future of SHAFR events at the AHA, including the luncheon and the reception. Declining attendance and the difficulty of planning off-site events has characterized recent AHA conferences and resulted in high costs for SHAFR. Heiss proposed that beginning in 2024 the Stuart L. Bernath Memorial Lecture be delivered at

SHAFR's conference rather than the AHA, which was what had happened for the past two years (during the virtual conference in 2021 and at the in-person SHAFR conference in 2022). Heiss argued that this would provide a larger audience for the Bernath Lecture and would limit expenses, by both eliminating the luncheon at the AHA and the need to pay a second luncheon speaker for the conference. There was general consensus in support of this. There was some concern about whether there would be a node for SHAFR historians at the AHA to socialize together, and Sayward suggested the possibility of SHAFR-arranged small-group dinners by SHAFR members attending the conference or the possibility of setting a general meet-up off-site. Sayward also mentioned that the Bernath family's concern when making the endowment was that it would reach a large audience, and Heiss shared that this desire had led SHAFR to move the lecture from the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) meeting sometime earlier.

Publication Matters

Diplomatic History (DH) editors Anne Foster and Petra Goedde joined the meeting to discuss their report. Things are going well, with production issues having been seemingly ironed out. Submissions are down for the first time in several years, which they expected was largely the result of the COVID pandemic's impact on research access. Resubmissions from authors are also taking a little longer than before.

Sayward mentioned a previous issue raised by the editors of securing additional editorial support for international submissions and asked if it might be helpful to have Zoom workshops or other resources/help for those authors. She also mentioned the possibility of a more general workshop, open to all SHAFR members, on transforming your conference paper into an article. The editors thought this might be helpful, especially in building authors' confidence for submission. There was discussion about the role of the editorial board and of access to relevant, scholarly, secondary literature, which is becoming a broader issue in the profession in general. There was further discussion of how the Archival Sharing Committee and/or the Internationalization Task Force might be a further resource in helping Council think through these issues.

Elizabeth Ferguson joined to present Oxford University Press (OUP) Publisher's Report. She highlighted a slide showing "Visits with Content Engagement over Time," which showed a dip from 2021 in the number of downloads for articles. The reasons for this included a 2021 glitch that made all OUP articles free for an eight-week period and a special issue that year, so the lower numbers this past year are not concerning. She also highlighted the "Impact Factor Trend," which showed that 2021 was the second highest, indicating a higher rate of citing *DH* articles published in the last five years. The slide "Institutional Subscriptions by Subscription Type" showed a decline in conventional academic subscriptions due to library cuts, which has resulted in OUP trying to move those conventional subscriptions to collections, which are more financially prudent for libraries. The number of articles published open access was only three in 2022, which was down from 2021. Ferguson highlighted a new portal that helps authors choose their licensing and shows whether there are funds available for open access publishing. Finally, she showed the slide "Online Publication Speeds," which shows most production is under the thirty-day target, which is an improvement after earlier production issues.

Ferguson also addressed the impact of growing inflationary costs, which included a 15% increase in the cost of printing and distribution. This has meant that SHAFR's current per member pricing does not cover the cost of producing the journal, which will likely result in increased prices in the future. She also highlighted a new feature that allows OUP to anonymously collect aggregate demographic information on authors. Sayward raised a question about members not receiving their issues—or replacement issues—in a timely manner. Ferguson asked that she be included in all email requests for those issues so that she will be more aware of the problem from the beginning and better able to gauge the scale of the issue and to troubleshoot whether the issue is internal to OUP or more related to the U.S. Postal Service. Sayward thanked Ferguson for this suggestion on how to improve the situation. Ferguson, Goedde, and Foster then left the meeting.

Sayward then explained that *SHAFR Guide* editor Alan McPherson had asked for a reaffirmation of SHAFR's financial support for new section editors, which had already been written into the budget that Council had previously reviewed. Belmonte moved, Lerner seconded, and Council unanimously passed this resolution of reaffirmation.

Council Matters

Heiss discussed the possibility of a changed policy on proxy votes, which have previously not been allowed by the rationale that not being part of the Council discussion means that that member cannot generally register an informed vote. The consensus was that a change in policy was not needed.

Sayward then asked Council its opinion on whether the June Council meeting should be at the conference or virtual. Council members commented that in-person Council meetings at the conference have required members to travel early and to miss the starting session of the conference; they have also sometimes had to rush to complete the agenda in the allotted time period. Additionally, the virtual conference meetings have been efficient, accessible, and cost-effective, although others did state that virtual meetings can become tiresome. Vanessa Walker suggested the possibility of a short breakfast meeting to meet one another and perhaps to discuss more philosophical or controversial issues (compared to the standard Council meeting agenda). There was general consensus on the desirability of both a virtual Council business meeting as well as a less formal breakfast meeting at the conference.

Development Efforts

Sayward discussed the limited development efforts for 2022, which consisted of the year-end appeal that was mailed to all U.S.-based members and emailed to all SHAFR members. To date, it had netted just over \$5000, which is about half of the overall budget goal for this fiscal year (November 1, 2022-October 31, 2023). Heiss mentioned the need for a new chair of the Development Committee and asked for suggestions about qualified and interested members. Sayward also clarified that SHAFR's specific 501(c)(3) status was that of a "non-operating foundation"—which did not mean that it did not operate but that it did not disburse a high level of its income each year to the public (but rather to members, especially graduate students). As a result, up to 30% of donations to SHAFR are tax-deductible, while up to 50% of donations to "operations foundations"—like the United Way—are deductible.

Committee Matters

Sayward presented the request from Hogan Foreign Language Fellowship Committee chair Katherine Marino that the eligibility be formally expanded to include not only graduate students but also early-career faculty who would benefit. This suggested change came in the context of having received a small number of applicants this year and in previous years, despite having previously expanded the award to support research in foreign-language archives as well as foreign-language training. There was Council consensus to support this change.

Sayward then raised the question of the gender qualification for Myrna Bernath awards. Having reviewed the correspondence about the awards between Council and the Bernath family, it was clear that the family's goal was to assist "graduate students and needy scholars" in general. It was SHAFR Council in 1991, when this award was created, that specified the focus on women, who were significantly under-represented in the organization at the time. Council therefore made the eligibility requirements very specific in order to increase SHAFR's gender diversity, but the family wanted the eligibility requirements to have flexibility so that the prizes could reflect the needs of the times.

The question before the Council was whether it wanted to expand the eligibility requirements in order to explicitly welcome trans and non-binary people to apply for these awards. There was some question about what the difference would be between the Stuart and Myrna Bernath fellowships and the Stuart/Ferrell and Myrna book awards if the eligibility requirements were expanded. But consensus developed around the shared goal with the past eligibility requirements of expanding SHAFR's gender diversity while modernizing those requirements by expanding the language around eligibility for these awards. Council empowered Sayward to consult with the Committee on Access, Representation, and Equity (CARE) as well as SHAFR members who might have expertise in this area to develop appropriate, inclusive language that would then be formally reviewed and voted upon by Council.

Molly Wood reviewed the Teaching Committee Report, which she had written, and Shaun Armstead and Kelsey Zavelo provided an update on the work of the Graduate Student Committee. They focused on the outgrowth of their survey of the impact of COVID on graduate students (including an upcoming session at the Organization of American Historians), ideas about fostering connection, and ways of making the mentorship program more robust. Sayward also highlighted the National Coalition on History's report on the recent omnibus budget bill's positive impact on historical organizations, especially the National Archives and Records Administration.

There being no new business, the meeting adjourned at 1:40 p.m. (U.S. Eastern).