

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the New Chaucer Society
July 15, 2014**

Hannersarholt, Reykjavík, Iceland

In attendance: Alastair Minnis (President, 2012-2014) [AM]; Susan Crane (President-elect, 2014-2016); Trustees [SSC]: Candace Barrington (2014-2018), Alcuin Blamires (2010-2014) [AlcB], Ardis Butterfield (2012-2016) [ArdB], Alexandra Gillespie (2014-2018), Frank Grady (2010-2014), Thomas Hahn (2012-2016), David Matthews (2014-2018), Larry Scanlon (2010-2014) [LarryS], Lynn Staley (2012-2016) [LynnS], Sarah Stanbury (2014-2016)[SStan]; Ruth Evans (Executive Director); Jessica Rezunyk (Administrative Assistant and recording secretary) and for individual items: Glenn Burger (Co-Chair, Reykjavík Program Committee), Holly Crocker (via Skype, Co-Chair, Reykjavík Program Committee), Stephanie Amsel (NCS Bibliographer), Sarah Salih (Editor, SAC) [SSal]

The meeting was opened by president Alastair Minnis at 11:05 am.

1. **Welcome** (AM)

2. **Minutes from the meeting of July 22, 2012:** 2 requests for revisions, concerning information relating to the 2010 Siena Congress, and Project MUSE and the DOI.
Action: RE to rewrite minutes with these changes.

3. **President's Business**

i) Endowment and spending: There were 15 responses by members to email asking for suggestions for how to expend funds, as the endowment closes in on \$500,000: money for a postdoc position (the most popular, with 8 endorsements from both graduate students and professors), book or essay prizes, travel to NCS meetings, money for research. The trustees voted unanimously in favor of establishing an NCS postdoc position, to be held at Saint Louis University, to be put in place in 2015.

Action: RE to work out details of the postdoc position with admin staff at SLU and submit to trustees for email approval.

ii) Off-year activities of NCS: suggestions from the off-year committee included: a graduate conference; some involvement with the London Chaucer Conference; an NCS plenary lecture with a capped donation for any Chaucer conference taking place in the off-years and not restricted to the London Chaucer Conference, especially smaller localized conferences that would benefit most from NCS support, e.g. the Chaucer Canada Seminar 2015; encouraging growth of the society outside of the USA through conference funding. The Trustees voted unanimously in favor of support up to 5 conferences outside of the USA per year, up to \$1,500 per conference. All were in favor of approving funds immediately for the London Chaucer Conference.

The Trustees clarified in a subsequent vote by email that NCS will support up to **three** congresses held in the off-years, **outside of the United States**, with each congress receiving \$1,500 in return for designating a lecture or major event at the congress as sponsored by NCS.

Action: RE to advertise this resolution to members and to send check to 2015 London Chaucer Conference immediately.

1. **iii) Matters arising from the minutes:** Civic engagement: Larry S reported that of 50 organizations 15 were involved in some sort of civic engagement. When the MLA proposed cutting the medieval English division, RE announced his letter of disapproval to the membership, and that turned out to be a key moment in getting the word out and receiving support. It was then suggested that NCS create a mission statement that reflects its core values. In general, the actions of NCS should be transparent, all members should have their concerns heard, and NCS leaders should respond to these concerns.
Action: RE to draft a mission statement and to distribute to Trustees report submitted by LarryS.
 - iv) **Transparency and transitions:** It was noted that a summary of annual deadlines and a schedule to ease future transitions (ED to ED, President to President) would be of value. AM and RE have recorded some guidelines to be used for future transitions.
2. **Finance Committee Report** (ArdB)
 - i) **Income:** from Project MUSE has increased, as has the income from memberships.
 - ii) **Expenditures:** Howard Scholars and new website.
 - iii) The financial health of the society is strong. Finance Committee to advise further on NCS's investments.
 - iv) RE noted that some funds were used to establish an NCS archive of a full set of SAC volumes in the USA, which are needed for Project MUSE and JSTOR.
3. **Report by 2014 Chairs of the Program Committee** (GB in attendance, with HC via Skype)
 - i) **Report:** GB thanked the members of the Program Committee as well as RE and AM for their support and assistance. 70 suggestions for threads and topics (56 for threads alone) came in and were discussed at the October meeting. Organizers tried to create a balance in content between interest in Chaucer and the location (Iceland). There was a desire to continue to experiment with alternative formats: seminars (with guidance) along with the poster session (under AG and Anthony Bale: this featured 15 posters at the 2014 Congress). This desire resulted in a record number of seminars (8) at the 2014 Congress. The organizers then received suggestions for session titles in the threads and the CFP was posted online and released in the newsletter. All submissions were ranked on a list for acceptance or rejection. Organizers received over 700 proposals from participants, 200 of which were multiple submissions. Due to the sheer volume of submissions and proposals, there was no room for open sessions at this Congress. GB and HC tried to shuffle those who placed multiple submissions so to maximize participation in the Congress. As a result of this process, 3 sessions were dramatically altered. Session organizers were consulted at all times during this process. Withdrawals due to lack of funds were evenly distributed between graduate students and faculty.
Recommendations: A strict rule regarding multiple submissions must be put into place and enforced. Increased enthusiasm for NCS Congresses has resulted in more work for the Program Committee; 2 co-chairs are most definitely needed. The Trustees might consider limiting the number of participants at the Congress as it continues to grow. Seminars are certainly a viable new format and there should be a push to expand the number of poster sessions. HC reiterated the need limit the number of thread sessions to

leave room for open sessions.

ii) Discussion: RE thanked GB and HC for their work on the program. The publication of seminar materials on the website provides an excellent start to the sharing of educational resources online. Benefits of the poster sessions include: increased congress participation, incorporation of methods used in the Social Sciences, format is well-suited to manuscript studies. There was some discussion regarding the place of Skype in sessions. The current policy (not written down but established by precedent) does not allow papers to read on behalf of others at NCS Congresses. General consensus is that Skyping in for sessions should not be encouraged in any way. Some discussion regarding multiple submissions followed where HC suggested allowing for two submissions if they are to different types of sessions, with no requirements on which types. Those who submit more than twice should be asked to pick which two submissions to consider. Motion was put forward for NCS to allow a maximum of 2 different kinds of submissions for future congresses. All Trustees voted in favor of the motion. It was also suggested that funding be made available to assist meetings of Program Committee Co-Chairs in the future.

4. Chaucer Bibliography (SA)

SA reported a total of 35 contributors to the Chaucer Bibliography, 18 of whom are new recruits. The Bibliography for SAC 36 is now complete. SA proceeded to express concern for the contributors for moving to an online-only version, as had been suggested. RE reported on the survey sent to members regarding an online-only Bibliography, which indicated that the majority of members would be in favor of the move. SA emphasized the importance for the contributors to be acknowledged in print. The question of cost of including the Bibliography in SAC came up. FG (former SAC editor) stated that it costs \$6-\$7 per page to include the information, with the Bibliography no more than 50 pages in total. The printed version of the Bibliography allows (new) scholars to see the trends in research, which is not possible with the online version. It was proposed that both the online and print versions of Bibliography remain in place and there were no objections. SA noted that Mark Allen is solely responsible for maintaining the online entries. RE said any discussion for changing the interface would go through Mark Allen. Overall, the number of entries in the Bibliography is up from 208 entries in SAC 35 to 272 in SAC 36. *Action: RE to let members know that we will be retaining the printed annual Bibliography.*

5. 2016 Congress

i) Biennial Lecturer: 35 members provided nominations. In a secret ballot, the Trustees ranked their top 5 choices of members' suggestions. Stephanie Trigg was selected as the Biennial Lecturer for 2016.

ii) Program Committee: Nominations for the Program Committee were discussed. It was agreed to ask Emily Steiner (Penn) to be chair, given her recent experience with the *Piers Plowman* conference, and to ask her to choose a co-chair. Deadline for nominees for the rest of the program committee is August 15 2014. RE to announce a request for nominations at the Business Meeting.

iii) London bid: 2 main issues: venues in London and institutional support. Discussed importance of budget-price student dorms. Suggested dates: July 11-16 [now 10-15],

2016 – earlier than usual because of a Norman Conquest conference in London beginning July 20. Venue for 2018 likely to be in North America.

6. Items from the President, Trustees, and incoming President

i) Memberships are up while endowment contributions are down. Many endowment contributions come from graduate students in the form of \$10 donations added on to membership fees.

ii) **Outreach:** RE stated that one way of increasing international outreach can be through a greater international presence on the NCS blog. LynnS mentioned that many of the high school teachers who participate in NCS events tend to be teachers at private schools; suggested targeted invitations to high school teachers.

iii) **2014 Congress numbers:** 445 delegates in attendance, over 500 if guests are included; 272 attending the dinner; 307 signed up for a half-day excursion; 203 for a full-day excursion; 160 registered for the manuscript exhibit.

iv) **SAC:** The relatively expensive costs for copy editing of the journal are well worth it, DM agreed and noted that the wider availability of SAC through Project Muse was another justification for the expenses of editing - the journal is now much more than the house publication of NCS and it is appropriate that standards should be more rigorous accordingly.

RE reported that JSTOR has approached NCS; they will put both current content and back issues of SAC online. Project MUSE is working on putting all volumes of SAC online but the process will not be done until 2018. JSTOR may be able to complete the process sooner. RE noted that Project MUSE recently altered the terms for royalties; she is in negotiations with Project MUSE to make SAC available to all current NCS members, including those who do not have access through their institutions. RE will check with JSTOR as well about open access to SAC for NCS members.

v) **Howard Scholars:** RE reported that there were 62 applications and 59 accepted funds (ranging from \$200-\$675). 30 Howard Scholars were given places on the Graduate Workshop. SC requested a committee to look into best way to support graduate student attendance in future through the fund.

Action: Committee members TH, AG, DM, and JR will review operation of Howard Scholar funds distribution and report by December 1. RE will include a question regarding use of funds on the survey to be distributed after the Congress.

vi) **SAC contract:** The SAC author's contract out of date and needs to be revised.

Action: RE to redraft SAC Author's contract.

vii) **Paid ads in Congress program?** All were in favor of using ads in the program to generate revenue for Congresses.

7. SAC (SSal)

i) Submissions to SAC

N.B. Submissions counted at first entry during this period only.

- Acceptance rate: **27%**.
- US submissions: **46**; UK submissions: **5**; Israel: 2; Australia 1; Canada 1; China 1 = **5**.
- Essays sent out for review in this period have gone to **61** different readers.

- For comparison: 2010-12: 67 received of which 11 accepted; 2008-10: 51 received of which 10 accepted.
- ii)** SSal brought up the possibility of a graduate student essay prize to encourage submissions from graduate students. AM formally thanked SSal for all of her work on SAC.

Meeting was adjourned at 6.05pm.
JR 07/24/2014. Emended 08/24/2016