

From the Secretary: Minutes of the 2020 Executive Committee Meeting



Sean Guynes

July 30, 2020 / 2pm EDT / Via Zoom

Attendees: Gerry Canavan (President), Sonja Fritzsche (Vice President), Hugh O’Connell (Treasurer), Sean Guynes (Secretary), Keren Omry (Immediate Past-President), Katherine Bishop (Webmaster)

The Webmaster

- Gerry: Thank you to Katherine Bishop for her work as webmaster.
- Katherine Bishop discusses the need to end her tenure as webmaster and outlines the key webmaster duties going forward. Of principal concern is Wild Apricot -- poor user interface that is clunky to work with, not easily editable, allows privacy overrides so that Wild Apricot can own our content, there were members who did not want to renew memberships because of the end-user license agreements. Overall this creates a poor digital brand for SFRA. We are considering using a WordPress website and using the WordPress Business account to manage membership, payments, and other services Wild Apricot offers. If SFRA does want someone to build a website from the bottom-up, Katherine suggests (after Pawel’s suggestion, several years before) that the person who takes on the website rebuild be paid a one-time design fee for services. As of the end of this meeting, Katherine’s tenure as webmaster will be ended and the executive committee will need to find a new webmaster. /Katherine leaves the meeting.
- Discussion: What order should the webmaster and website redesign take? We want to ensure continuity so that a website redesign is potentially separate from the webmaster position, so that future webmasters don’t necessarily have to have HTML and web design experience. Moving forward, then, we will advertise a webmaster position that will be slightly more discursive than in previous years, with the intent to formalize a 3-year position. We will move forward with the webmaster before the web design so that we can have their input. Keren notes

that we also want to have the next generation of the SFRA website part of a larger rebranding, including of the SFRA's award trophies, logos, etc.

General Discussion

- Award committees for 2020-2021 are set
- The Support a Scholar grant search will be begun shortly
- There will be no student paper award given in 2020-2021
- There are remaining logistical questions re: the 2021 conference as a result of the pandemic; the SFRA community and Executive Committee will need to think actively about the 2021 conference and possibilities for digital conferencing should the pandemic continue to disrupt academic conferencing.
- We have two great recent examples of digital conferencing we can build on for 2021 if necessary: Lars Schmeink's asynchronous cyberpunk conference (a large conference featuring videos, live Discord chats, and an archived website of the conversations/videos; pro -- low participation burden offered by the asynchronous format across 3 days; con -- conversations suffered intellectually and length-wise when compared to in-person conference) + Rebekah Sheldon and David Higgins's synchronous "zoomposium" of SF scholars (a smaller conference of 16 folks who knew each other rather well, allowing a bond that kept folks together for 8 hours x2 days; pro -- conversation is deeper and more engaged; con -- burnout and exhaustion). Other models include specific "feeds" of papers and events that participants sign up to, but this limits what folks can do.
- Sonja suggests we can expand the recognition of SFRA and virtual conference engagement (if it comes to that in 2021) by leveraging the new SFRA Country Reps; we will want their inputs to make sure that we have broad global participation if the pandemic continues to disrupt academic conferencing

Committee Member Reports

- Keren: the issue of the trophy redesign is still outstanding; we would like an update on Beata and Yoshinaga's Support a New Scholar Grant projects (Sean will reach out to them for the *SFRA Review*)

- Sonja: will be responsible for the upcoming round of the Support a New Scholar Grant call and applications in September (with a late October deadline for applicants)
- Sean: nothing to report from the Secretary
- Hugh: we will likely go in the red by between a thousand and several thousand dollars, since memberships are stagnant this year as a result of the conference cancellation and because membership costs mostly go to pay for members' journal subscriptions
- Meeting adjourned at c. 2:40pm EDT