

Minutes of the Meeting of the Steering Committee held on 14 February 2015

Institute of Historical Research at 11 a.m

Present: Dr Andrew Dilley Co-Convenor (Aberdeen), Dr Marcus Collins Co-Convenor (Loughborough), Dr Daniel Grey, Secretary (Plymouth), Dr Heather Shore (Leeds Beckett); Dr Andrew Roach (Glasgow); Dr Jamie Wood (Lincoln); Professor Maureen Meikle (Leeds Trinity); Dr Ariel Hessayon (Goldsmiths); Dr Richard Hawkins (Wolverhampton), Dr Karin Dannehl (EHS), Dr Daniel Gordon (Edge Hill), Dr Philip Ollerenshaw (UWE Bristol), Dr Bill Aird (Edinburgh), Dr Charles Insley (Manchester), Professor William Whyte (Oxford); Dr Rachel Bright (Keele)

1. Apologies for Absence

Dr Peter D'Sena (IHR), Dr Joan Allen (Newcastle), Dr Mark Clapson (Westminster), Dr Paul Corthorn (QUB), Dr Lowri Ann Rees (Bangor); Prof. Rainer Schulze (Essex/Treasurer), Dr Meg Arnot (Roehampton), Dr Sarah Bastow (Huddersfield), Dr Rosalind Crone (Open), Dr Richard Gaunt (Nottingham), Dr Katie Hill (Lincoln), Dr Robert McNamara (Ulster), Dr Jason Peacey (UCL), Dr Rebecca Rist (Reading), Dr Kay Schiller (Durham), Dr James McConnell (Northumbria), Dr John Young (Strathclyde); Professor Matthew Hughes (Brunel); Dr Charlotte Alston (Northumbria); Dr Rachel Lock-Lewis (South Wales), Dr Sara Wolfson (Canterbury Christ Church)

2. Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting of 18 October 2014

Amend Bill to Dr Aird from professor

p.5 Richard Allen discussion – replace helpful with frank and full.

3. Matters arising from minutes

Future of History forum – nobody has heard more about that as yet.
PGT fees – discussion with Arthur?

Open Access – HEFCE has now published a report on open access for monographs. Andrew can forward link to the document. To summarise in a sentence, they have decided applying this to

monographs is difficult and must be approached with caution – this is broadly good news for us and we must watch this develop.

4. Convenor's Reports

1. Firstly, Andrew Dilley attended on 2 Dec. 2014 a liaison meeting with the AHRC, ESRC, and various discipline subject associations via the Economic History Society. The committee plays a role in facilitating dialogue between discipline and research councils. History seems to be relatively successful of securing a larger share of a relatively shrinking pot of money for PhD funding, but it is clear there is less money available. Much discussion of the transformation of AHRC fellowship schemes. AHRC does not think of research leadership as being management- but they also don't seem to know what this is, and do not explain much about it. That said, some of these awards known to have been given were explicitly on the grounds of creating future HoDs. Another meeting will be June/July, and Andrew will produce a summary of the non-confidential material after this. Both funding councils seem to be formulating strategic plans.
2. 2 posts in SC will become vacant soon – Andrew is coming to the end of his 3 year term as co-convenor, and cannot renew this. Handover will be next October. We will need a new convenor this year, so anyone interested should get in touch with Andrew and Marcus. Rainier Schulze is also unable to continue to serve as Treasurer – if someone can step up almost immediately this would be supremely helpful, as otherwise this falls on the convenors which is neither good nor sustainable.

Thanks to Andrew Dilley for acting as convenor from the SC

William Whyte: Do we not need to protest more regarding concentration of research funds?

Rachel Bright: Do we want to do a Freedom of Information request about this?

Karin Dannehl: Can we double check whether these research council documents are indeed not meant for circulation?

4. Treasurer's Report

We superficially have healthy cash in the bank, but for this organisation to function effectively we need about £9k per year. The main thing to note is the high number of outstanding subscriptions. Some of the problems from this come from the way HUK's requests articulate with finance departments of subscribers. We only have 19 subscriptions at the moment.

Philip Ollerenshaw: Is there any facility to pay by Standing Order? This would solve a lot of problems at one swoop.

Marcus Collins: This is why we need the SC members to investigate whether or not this is an option – each university has different regulations, and if we can find the cheapest and most effective way of bringing in money, then we can streamline the payment process.

5. Secretary's Report

Dr Jamie Wood (Lincoln) has been co-opted to the SC as someone who can help with our social media concerns.

6. Website and Social Media

Marcus Collins: Communications and profile are a major issue for HUK. There was a great difficulty in putting up a website of any description over the last couple of years – what we now need to do is produce a better one. Jamie and M met last month to discuss options. We have now set up a Twitter account, posting regularly. We have acquired a number of followers and got some SC members asking if they could be involved. The Twitter feed is intended to fulfil one of the functions of the organisation: informing historians in HE about what is going on.

Jamie Wood: The website as it stands is hosted by the IHR. There are a number of issues here – the look, the lack of images, the lack of control over content, and the inflexibility of making any changes. The previous person working on this had massive problems making changes, and any request to make changes is met with requests for additional payment (Rachel notes that putting one image up would have cost a couple of hundred pounds). We really need to try and use a website building service which gives multiple users access and gives inbuilt interactivity with Twitter etc., that will give us a set of drop-down menus copying over a lot of the content we already have but allowing further development. With the success of our Twitter feed, we may not need a lot of interactivity to start with, but this could be built up later. The website acts as a file store at the moment, but not much more than that. Moving providers will be cheaper, more flexible, and less hassle. We need to try and buy the URL because people know about it, but that is a relatively minor point. We really want feedback before we move forwards now.

Daniel Gordon: More important to have a functioning website than to have Twitter – 90% of the UK population doesn't use Twitter. Having stuff going up regularly is important.

Heather Shore: When setting up a website with AHRC money, we ran into lots of issues going through institutions. Websites and Twitter are not mutually exclusive. Bear in mind the problems for copyright uploading images – even those out of copyright can be expensive. Security is also a really big issue.

Marcus Collins: One of the things about the website is not to just create a less good version of the RHS site. We also need to be careful about how we actually get content – we cannot spend too much time writing page after page of content for the website. The current content is rather static and insular – we would like something less so, that produces information on a regular basis. We want the best stuff on history blogs – reposting content with permission would also improve interactivity.

Heather Shore: What about getting the whole Steering Committee to write blog posts?

Rachel Bright: Craig spent much time in frustrating conversations with the IHR, and I am very aware that when we first approached him we said we would give him a £500 gratuity and he has only received half of this.

Agreed: To move to a web publishing service from the IHR

7. Steering Committee Role and Format

Marcus Collins : We need to make the meetings as attractive as possible to members, a must-attend event. How can we improve rates of attendance and so forth? At the moment being on the SC is mainly about turning up for the meetings – we realise this organisation is only going to be as effective as the members are active. This is also relative to where we meet physically – how much of our business needs to take place in person? Would it be more helpful to have people write reports we can discuss at the meetings?

Philip Ollerenshaw: A huge amount of time and effort is required of convenors etc., and relatively little of most people on the SC. There is a case there for a more equitable division of labour. If the finances improve, we can envisage a more proactive remit for the organisation. If our work falls fairly naturally into 4/5 boxes, given the size of the SC, we could reasonably expect to have 6 or 7 people on each of these. Whether this would elevate the SC meetings to a must-attend status isn't clear, but it may help.

Daniel Gordon: I think moving the venue away from London sometimes is very helpful indeed – 4 Saturdays a year is quite a big ask for some people coming outside of the city, although it doesn't bother me personally.

Andrew Sloane: Thoroughly endorse the idea of spreading the workload a bit more. I actually feel – though would welcome the ideas of Scottish and Welsh colleagues- that getting to London is much easier and cheaper for me from Glasgow than, for example, Bristol. Do we want to avoid meetings which manage to combine Scottish and English half terms and Valentine's Day??

Karin Dannehl: The email exchange on feedback turnaround in December was really helpful – this sort of thing is really good, and the SC lends itself to this really well.

Andrew Dilley: We used to do more of this, but it has rather been swallowed by Open Access etc. This is why we need more people to take a role

William Whyte: Do we really need 3 meetings a year plus the Plenary?

Andrew Dilley: Asking for a paragraph on reports from regions and associations would be really helpful, from the next meeting onwards. Also could provide copy for Twitter!

Marcus Collins: I think it would be great if the SC meetings were less about HUK organisation, and more about issues of common concern for the History profession. We could bring in speakers for issues such as impact case studies, digital archives, changes in the school curriculum and so on.

To be returned to at next SC meeting- formulate more concrete proposal. Secretary to ask for written submissions from regional members and association members.

8. Teaching History in HE

Andrew Dilley mentioned the importance of running the teaching in HE conference. Marcus Collins notes that Peter D'Sena is effectively trying to fill the vacuum left by the implosion of the HEA, and is keen to have the conference he is running badged as a HUK event. This would take time and effort and possibly some cash in the future, but it would potentially be an excellent way to raise our profile. Andrew

notes we likely need something more concrete regarding this to present to the main SC meeting.

9. REF 2014

Andrew Dilley: The most useful starting point in reflection on the results is the panel and subpanel reports which makes useful reading, providing a lot of insight into what played well and what played badly. Virtually nothing in the subpanel reports was surprising or contradicted what had been heard from Chris Wickham before the REF. The History Subpanel had been as active as possible in making the REF transparent. The History Subpanel approved 99.1% of requests for double-weighting, and 66% of those double-weighted were graded at 4*. This defends to monograph as the form of publication central to our discipline. The Subpanel has also been more flexible on the question of potential overlap between an article/chapter being part of a monograph than many institutions have feared. The Subpanel very much followed the guidelines as they had been laid out. Reading the main panel B report as well as the history subpanel report is very important to gain the fullest picture.

Observations on the report:

William Whyte: Chris used to be our Head of Department, and one of the key points is that he noted almost every department produced 4* work: that research concentration clearly does not work. Nor are there research superstars who produced four 4* submissions – most people, even those who got 4* rating, are ALSO getting 2*. This is really important for History UK to reinforce. Strategy for the next REF is firstly to work on what we are interested in, and secondly, to encourage people to work on really good monographs.

John Young: Reiterate the importance of the transparency of REF. That really benefited us as institutions. For the next REF, we need to aim for everyone having a double-weighted monograph, a big hard hitting article.

Charles: This is really important, and institutions need to have this disseminated.

Karin Dannehl: To support that, to give people the clout for the new guidelines being applied.

Daniel Gordon: Research bureaucracy is a problem – how do we get round this?

Andrew S: Glasgow paid for research managers to go and listen to Chris Wickham

William Whyte: Is there a virtue in Andrew producing this digest for dissemination?

Andrew Dilley: Do we want to demand compulsory submission for the REF?

William Whyte: Flexibility is really important – really good work takes longer than the REF cycle, and so potentially carrying over people who did well in REF2008 can be beneficial

Bill Aird: The danger is when departments start thinking exclusively in REF cycle terms.

Charles Insley: I fully endorse this – there are both Russell Group and post-92s where managers would relish the opportunity to performance manage people into Teaching Fellowships.

Agreed: Opposition to 100% submission to REF, we want to keep selectivity

10. Plenary 2015

Andrew Dilley: After RAE2008, the chair of the subpanel gave an excellent intervention on the shape of the forthcoming REF. I suggest we ask Chris Wickham back, and try also to get one of the impact assessors?
AGREED by SC

11. Reports from Representatives

We are still waiting to hear how the Scottish funding council will allocate funds. Could we have a written summary for current Scottish developments?

12. Reports from Associations

Need to contact the HA representative, and the Postgrad representative

13. AOB

Marcus Collins: Thanks to everyone who has sent in photos and bios for the website of the SC

14. Dates of future meetings

9 May 2015 at the University of West of England Campus

Plenary 14 November 2015