



Minutes of the meeting of the Steering Committee held on 7th October at 11 am in Wolfson II, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London

In attendance: Heather Shore; Richard Hawkins; Neil Fleming; Martin Johnes; Andrew Roach; Sara Wolfson; Ariel Hessayon; Charles Insley; Kate Bradley; Karin Dannehl; Sarah Miller-Davenport; Charlotte Alston.

1. Apologies for absence

Sarah Barstow; Rachel Bright; Sabine Clarke; Paul Corthorn; Peter D'Sena; Juliane Furst; Daniel Grey; Alison Hems; Kate Hill; Robert MacNamara; Simon Peplow; Lowri Rees; Pippa Verdee; Jamie Wood

2. Minutes of the last Steering Committee meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were approved. It was noted that the names of some members who had attended the last meeting had not made it on to the list of attendees: this list will be updated.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

4. Confirmation of new Steering Committee members and Executive Officers

The appointment of three new officers was confirmed: Neil Fleming as Research Officer; Charlotte Alston as Secretary; and Simon Peplow as ECR representative. They will take up their new roles after the AGM in November.

Lucie noted that she had contacted HistoryLab about nominating a representative on the SC, but had not yet received a response. There was also currently no representative from the Historical Association.

5. Convenors' Report

5.1: Academic Bootcamp. Lucie thanked all those who took part in the Academic Bootcamp in May. Despite some logistical issues the event received excellent feedback from participants. Those who took part had commented particularly on how useful Sara Wolfson's 'Top Ten Tips' for job interviews had been. Participants had found the process friendly and engaged.

One participant remarked on the lack of feedback on the written documents (job application) they had prepared for the event. The SC discussed ways of delivering some feedback on written applications, without generating significant additional work for panellists. There were three suggestions: 1) that a few minutes in the interview panel be devoted specifically to feeding back on the written applications; 2) that some generic advice on what to do/what not to do, based on applications submitted, be delivered as a presentation so that applicants could take away tips and reflect on their own application; 3) that a separate room could be set up in which drop-in advice on applications was offered – this could be manned rotationally.

Lucie asked SC members to send her any further feedback they had in advance of next year's event. She would start advertising the event earlier, so that participants could book cheaper train fares. There was also a question about the cost of rooms at the IHR: this year the Institute held the prices down for us but next year we are likely to have to pay the full cost of room hire. Should we aim to organise 'pocket' events around the country instead?

Participants at the IHR event were largely from SE England. It was agreed that the executive officers would come up with some proposals for discussion at the SC.

5.2 Timing of October SC meeting: Lucie asked whether, given the number of apologies, the SC should reconsider the timing of the October meeting. There are generally two meetings (the October SC meeting, and the November AGM/Plenary) in quick succession: this generates a lot of work for the convenors, and the clash with open days / start of term may be impacting on attendance in October. The SC discussed a number of solutions, including combining the SC meeting and AGM; holding both on the same day; holding the SC meeting earlier, in September; holding SC meetings mid-week. Charles Insley noted that SC meetings are a valuable means of meeting colleagues from institutions across the sector and having conversations that wouldn't be possible on email. It was agreed that we would trial a move to three rather than four annual meetings (AGM in November; SC meetings in February and May). Whether it was necessary to extend the November AGM (say from 1 hour to 9 minutes) as a result would be decided later.

5.3: AGM/Plenary: Lucie suggested that it was unnecessary for the Secretary to minute papers presented at the Plenary in November, and SC members agreed. SC members might instead volunteer to write short blog posts about the presentations as a means of generating material for the website and giving a flavour of what the presentations were about. Karin Dannehl volunteered to write one of these; Sara Wolfson offered to write a summary of her own presentation. The text would be checked with the speakers before publication.

Heather asked SC members to advertise the Plenary as widely as possible amongst colleagues and networks. The poster has been circulated and it looks a really good programme.

5.4 Nominations for membership of the SC: There are presently 8 vacancies on the SC, and so far we have 9 new nominations. Lucie emphasised two points: firstly that the constitution states that if a member misses three meetings it will be assumed that they have left the committee; secondly that when a named representative cannot attend the SC, they are encouraged to send a colleague from the same institution in their place. Lucie will reinforce these messages to SC members by email, with reference to the constitution.

There is also a common assumption that people who step down will be succeeded by a representative from the same institution, and this is not the case. There are a finite number of places on the SC (30, plus representatives from RHS, EHS, HA, History Lab etc). The SC discussed some of the factors that might be considered in deciding which new representatives to elect if we have more nominations than vacancies (diversity of types of institution, geographical location, career stage, types of history represented). Charlotte noted that she had asked all those nominating for short supporting statements that might help in this process.

Heather and Lucie are preparing a document that explains the benefits of membership of HistoryUK for subscribing departments. The SC discussed the question of including attendance at the AGM/Plenary in the membership fee (by raising the membership fee slightly) and it was broadly agreed that this was a good idea.

5.5. Call from HEFCE for REF sub panel chairs. If anyone on the SC has the necessary experience to fill one of these roles and wants to go forward, HistoryUK would send a letter of support (the person in question would need to gather multiple letters of support). Andrew Roach noted that in the last cycle there had been good coordination between the different history associations on this issue. Heather noted that the issue was complicated by the fact that HistoryUK hadn't received a letter indicating that we were a nominating institution, or it had gone astray: we were a nominating organisation in the last cycle.

5.6 Collaboration with TNA. Heather reported on an initiative that she and Jamie are working on with the National Archives. They met yesterday (October 6th) with Matt Greenall, head of academic engagement at TNA, and several of his colleagues. They were working towards a collaborative arrangement and an event on access to archives, which would aim to engage dissertation supervisors and students. There were also further possibilities in terms of coordinating National Archives and HistoryUK events. It is a really positive thing that TNA are so keen to work with us and this collaboration presents some excellent opportunities.

6. Treasurer's Report

Richard reported that HistoryUK had generated a surplus last year. There were still a few outstanding subscriptions from last year, but Sue expected some of these to be resolved by the time of the AGM.

Last year's Plenary generated a surplus, but this is unlikely to be the case this year as costs for catering and room hire have gone up. Richard had looked into sponsorship for the Plenary from Gale Cengage, and Proquest, but these organisations will not send people out on a Saturday: they might offer sponsorship if the Plenary took place on a weekday. It was suggested that publishers could be contacted and offered a table at the event in return for sponsorship. Artemis were also suggested as another alternative sponsor. Richard agreed to explore these options.

7. Secretary's Report

Nominations for membership of the SC (see also point 5.4 above). Members were reminded to encourage colleagues at other institutions not represented on the SC to nominate members. Heather, Lucie and Charlotte agreed to look into the issue of SC members who had not attended several meetings in a row. If the 'three strikes and you're out' rule is rigorously applied this might create further vacancies.

8. Education Officer's Report

Lucie read a report from Peter d'Sena in Peter's absence.

8.1 New to Teaching Event. The New to Teaching event at the IHR in early September went really well. There were some excellent papers and it was well-attended. Lucie will circulate Peter's report on the event. An event like this might be useful for those involved in teaching at all career stages, not just ECRs. Peter also raised the question about the cost of room hire at the IHR, and whether this was sustainable. The 'New to Teaching' event was run jointly with the RHS, and that had made the costs easier to bear, but we might need to consider moving elsewhere in future.

8.2 HoC Education Committee. Peter also asked whether the SC wanted to send a statement of their views to the House of Commons Education Committee, which is considering value for money in HE (for example on the use of student outcomes to measure this, the role of the Office for Students, senior management pay, etc). Do HistoryUK members want to send their own statement, or collaborate with RHS?

Andrew Roach noted that the RHS is planning a substantial response. He wondered whether HistoryUK offered a slightly different voice, and ought to send its own statement. Lucie and Heather commented that if we want to make these kinds of responses to policy, we need more input from the SC on them (as with our response to the Stern review). This was an area where SC members who have interests in particular dimensions of our job might decide to take something forward as a smaller working party.

8.3 Transition / Retention Event. HistoryUK is organising an event in spring on 'transitions' and retention: it will focus on the transition from A levels to university, and on retention and progression from year 1/level 4 to year 2/level 5. If SC members know anyone who works on transition or retention in their institution, or has examples of good policy in these areas, suggestions would be welcome. We would also try to get some related material on to the blog.

Charles Insley mentioned a similar initiative at Manchester on ‘resilience building’, which was related to student retention. He also suggested how useful a mid career teaching event might be: something that focused on new pedagogical developments and ideas. Kate Bradley raised the issue of mid career staff moving institutions having to undertake PGCerts or go for HEA fellowship.

9. Media Officer’s Report

Lucie read a report from Jamie Wood in his absence. We are always looking for more content for the blog. There has only been one new post since the last meeting of the SC. How can we create a more vibrant digital platform? Volunteers are always welcome. Posts only need to be around 500 words.

Charles Insley agreed to write something about the experience and pressures of the mid-career stage in HE.

Kate Bradley agreed to write a post about the process of going for Athena Swan recognition.

Neil Fleming raised the question of having some anonymized blog posts. There might be issues where individuals could come under pressure from their employers if they wrote about them publicly.

SC members’ profiles on the website have been updated: please could members check they are accurate.

The most visited part of the site is the list of UK History departments. We have finally reached the top 4 of things that appear when you type History UK into Google. Our twitter followers have also grown in number.

10. Reports from

i. Northern Irish Representatives

There was no report from our Northern Irish representatives.

ii. Scottish Representatives

Andrew Roach commented that it had been interesting to observe which Scottish institutions entered themselves for the first round of TEF: some had been predictable but there were some surprises. Higher education had moved off the political agenda a little in Scotland, so life was otherwise relatively quiet.

iii. Welsh Representatives

Martin Johnes commented that most things were on hold until the publication of the Diamond review on student funding was released. This should have been published already but was on hold.

11. Reports from:

i. Historical Association

There was no report from the Historical Association.

ii. Royal Historical Society

Andrew Roach said that the RHS is gearing up for its 150th anniversary celebrations, for which there will be a programme of regional and national events. RHS is feeding into the nomination process for REF sub-panel chairs, and also into the House of Commons Education Committee response.

iii. Institute of Historical Research

There was no report from the IHR.

iv. History Lab/History Lab Plus

There was no report from HistoryLab/HistoryLab Plus

v. Postgraduate Representative

There was no report from the Postgraduate Representative

12. Any other business

Lucie mentioned that the British Library are keen to organise a repeat of the digital labs event that was organised in Liverpool. If SC members are interested in hosting such an event at their university, they would need to price up rooms and lunch, and decide on speakers. There were four speakers at the last event – The BL can suggest people who have won digital labs money. This would be after Easter. Heather will send notice of this out to SC members more generally.

Action points for SC members:

- Can you contribute to the website?
- Transition attendance- make people aware its happening | does your university have a system of good practice.
- Do you want to host the BL digital labs event this year? If so how much would it cost.
- Can you do a blog for us for the AGM?
- Please can you disseminate information about the plenary

13. Dates of future meetings

4th November 2017 (AGM, Plenary); Saturday 24th February 2018; Saturday 5th May 2018