

SLSA Minutes 20 Sept 2012

Moot court, New Academic Building, LSE, 13:00-17:00

Present:

MD, AB, JS, GD, AN, JMC, PE, SB, CH, MOB, LM, RH

1. Apologies

MS, CA, JG, KB, SC, NJ, APK, AL, VM

Absent

LH

2. Minutes from the last meeting - AGREED.

2.1 Review of lack of May meeting – no problems identified. People were happy to stay on at the end of the conference for an Exec meeting, although some people would have time constraints in terms of travelling home. Suggested that we start the meeting at 1pm and have lunch at the same time to speed things up - AGREED.

CH to schedule Executive Committee meeting for 1pm and organise lunch in the meeting room for the York conference

3. Reports

3.1 Chair: see report

Conferences

Honolulu conference: financial dividend not yet known. RCSL negotiated an agreement to receive \$5000 regardless of membership attendance.

RH to pursue via APK in regards to what monies are due to SLSA.

RH to write a report on conference or see about members submitting reports; to liaise with MS about this.

REF

The SLSA nominated Fiona Raitt and Lindsey Farmer as potential assessors with expertise in Scots law.

The British Sociological Association has issued a statement concerning selectivity in the REF, and concerns about exclusions and their implications if institutions impose high GPAs for REF entry. RH asked if this is something the SLSA should be concerned with. CH noted that the institution's attitude is crucial as to whether it will impact on individuals' careers. AB raised issues around probation requirements being set quite high but not matching current REF criteria. RH raised the issue of potential adverse impacts on Early Career Researchers. GD raised the broader issue of extenuating circumstances. LM suggested that we conduct a consultation with members via the next Newsletter - AGREED.

RH to draft and circulate questions for the committee regarding this.

Academy of Social Sciences

Affiliation cost is high. RH observed that her membership of the AcSS Open Access Working Group had revealed the small nature of our society in comparison to others. Our society doesn't have a journal so this accounts for much lower annual turnover. RH suggested contacting Steven Anderson to try to negotiate a reduction in our membership rate, given our relatively lower revenues and turnover - AGREED.

RH to find out from LM what current membership fees are, and to put a proposal to Stephen Anderson based on a lower amount per member relative to turnover.

In response to a request from AcSS for a contribution to the Campaign for Social Sciences, we could only afford this if our membership fee is reduced.

AGREED - to offer £500 as a contribution dependent on the above.

RH to include this in her discussion with Stephen Anderson

Nominations of Academicians

CH suggested that the size of the society means we should engage in the nomination process once rather than twice per year. We should aim next for the June 2013 nomination deadline - AGREED

LM suggested discussing this and calling for nominations at the AGM. Suggested that nomination forms could also go in the delegate packs for the annual conference - AGREED.

Also suggested to extend this to the 'Contributions to the socio-legal community' award - AGREED.

LM suggested that Fiona Cownie and Robert Dingwall could contribute to the newsletter about what it is to be an Academician.

MS to contact Fiona and Robert about contributions to the newsletter.

CH to draw up nomination forms and include in delegate packs.

Committee to generate ideas about who to nominate (next June deadline).

Journals issue

RH reported on the meeting of the AcSS Open Access Working Group. The proposals of the Finch Committee have been quickly adopted by government and the Research Councils. She had also consulted with law journals which contribute their revenues to support activities in the (socio-) legal community. There are several forthcoming conferences on Open Access, but they seem more focused on explaining and implementing the changes rather than debating them. The issues that will need monitoring and addressing next are: forthcoming HEFCE consultation; institutional policy development on payment of APCs; and impact on journals such as the JLS and Social & Legal Studies. There were questions about the position of the ALCS and the UCU. AB raised the issue of whether we should be charging for peer-reviewing in an increasingly marketised process. LM suggested a feature on Open Access in the next Newsletter - AGREED.

This could then be expanded into a session at the Annual Conference - AGREED

MS to commission a series of opinion pieces on Open Access policy developments from: ALCS, UCU, JLS, SLS, Stephen Bailey* from Society of Legal Scholars, Richard Hart (publisher) and Rosemary Hunter.

CH to liaise with MS about getting them to speak at the annual conference.

3.2 Treasurer: see report

LM provided a provisional report indicating a healthy balance compared to two years ago. Two successful annual conferences have helped a lot. It was difficult, however, to disentangle the finances for each separate one-day conference, thus

* Originally suggested Hector McQueen, incoming Chair, but have subsequently been informed that Stephen Bailey is leading on this issue for the SLS.

she suggested that the one-day conferences be rolled in together to make reporting easier - AGREED.

Good feedback on these conferences, suggested they should be repeated - AGREED.

Honorary membership to Sharon Witherspoon suggested as thanks for free use of rooms and free catering for one-day conferences providing by Nuffield Foundation – AGREED.

JMC requested that we not charge £20 or £40 for events as it's hard for her to tell whether it's membership fees or other monies when paid in - AGREED.

3.3 Membership: see report

JMC requested advice on how to deal with non-payers or those paying incorrect amounts. Suggested that they be given until December to rectify this or they will be deleted from the membership list - AGREED.

JMC suggested employing a student to help with working out who needs contacting - AGREED.

JMC to write something for the Newsletter regarding this policy.

JMC also indicated that she wishes to step down as Membership Secretary and is looking for someone to take over from her in the next year.

3.4 Recruitment

MD continuing to identify relevant contacts in Criminology and/or Law Depts/Schools across the UK, Ireland and USA to send them emails about membership. She indicated that she was unaware of whether this was having an impact. JMC indicated that there was a tendency for a surge of applications from the same university at once, so perhaps it was having an impact. MD to continue in this vein, broadening focus elsewhere internationally.

MD to send recruitment info to Fiona Cownie for PG conference.

3.5 Newsletter: see report

In addition to proposed contents for the next Newsletter, to include items on:

Honolulu Conference (below)

The 2014 annual conference in Aberdeen (below)

Call for expressions of interest to host the 2015 and 2016 annual conferences (below)

Something on Socio-Legal courses being offered for 2013, as suggested by MS
Relaunched seminar competition (below) – AGREED.

LM to relay information to MS.

CH to collate information about York conference for inclusion.

All - Volunteers needed for the 'Meet your Exec' section.

LM to contact Fiona Cownie to provide a notice about the pg conference.

3.6 Website Editor: see report

Attack on website noted, all services now resumed.

3.7 Webmaster

NJ sent a brief report to RH, which she read to the meeting.

Noted that NJ is intending to retire in the next few years so would like someone to take over as webmaster MO'B expressed a tentative interest. Agreed that in filling the post it would be useful to have a person specification setting out the required tasks, skills and knowledge.

RH to ask NJ to write a person spec for this role.

MO'B to speak to CA and NJ about the role.

3.8 Social Media

CA sent a report to RH, which she read to the meeting. Noted that we have 67 followers on Facebook and 186 Twitter followers. CA asked how we would like to be using social media and what is a priority for us. Suggested focus should be on PGs and ECRs, consultations and events – AGREED.

3.9 Postgraduate Representative

JMC raised the absence of the postgrad rep and the need for PG input on issues such as the above.

Suggested reducing the PG rep's term to 2 years. Suggested two people could be PG reps and work together. - AGREED

We need to make it clear that we pay expenses for attendance at Exec meeting (and subsidise where necessary, e.g. annual conference).

RH to contact LH regarding her continued interest in the role

RH to draft a personal spec for the PG rep for the purpose of future advertising (liaise with PG community; attend Executive Committee meetings to represent PG members; attend and contribute to PG conference; attend and help to organise PG activities at the annual conference; any other initiatives).

3.10 International Liaison

RH urged the need for an International Liaison Officer. This person could make contact with and organise social events for international members attending the annual conference; organise themes of particular interest to international members; target overseas recruitment efforts in consultation with the recruitment officer; encourage and organise newsletter contributions from international members; liaise with Exec Members and other SLSA members travelling overseas (e.g. Phil Thomas, who makes frequent recruitment trips for Cardiff University) to maintain contact with international members; etc. - AGREED.

RH to email committee members regarding volunteers from within the Exec in the first instance.

If no volunteers forthcoming, we will consider who might be co-opted to fill this role.

4. Conferences:

4.1.a RH noted the £25,000 donation received, with thanks, from DeMontfort University.

4.1.b York 2013: see report.

The website is coming along, stream organisers have been contacted, most are happy to be involved again, call for papers to go out mid-October with closing date mid-Jan. Online submission of abstracts to be implemented. Some issues around correlating abstract submission deadline with availability of the early bird rate.

CH to check to ensure abstracts can be submitted and accepted within early bird deadline.

Post grad poster competition to be included, judges will be needed from the committee.

Committee members to volunteer as judges for this.

Daniel Monk has offered to run a book reading session, numbers to be finalised ahead of the event. Author meets reader sessions to be organised too, with a focus on presenting the publication plus one or two discussants. Sponsorship arrangements are underway; Hart has already agreed to a package. The Law School is offering £2000 for the drinks reception. We have reduced our residential accommodation booking to avoid any liability if rooms are not filled, but we should be able to add extra rooms if demand is higher than expected. We need to advertise the possibility of groups of friends sharing clusters of rooms with common space.

Issue around one day rate for Thursday, suggested we drop the price for that day - AGREED.

CH to reduce rate by £25 for Thursday.

Dinner for 200 people provisionally booked at National Railway Museum plus this will need transport, £40-50 a head at the moment.

Current estimates at £17,000 surplus without taking sponsorship into account.

CH noted that it is York's 50th anniversary next year so they are looking to promote that. One possibility would be to make the plenary into a public lecture with more people invited, with a suitable financial contribution from the university. If so, we may need a bigger lecture theatre, and Brenda Hale will have to be consulted. It would still be possible to hold the prizegiving ceremony after the lecture.

CH to discuss further with York.

MS to ensure Newsletter advert is included to highlight the accommodation offer for the conference.

4.1.c RGU 2014: see report.

Suggested dates: 9-11 April 2014 (during teaching break) - AGREED.

Question about where catering (teas/coffees and lunches) will be provided. Will these be in University Street as well? Publishers are keen for catering to be adjacent to their stands to ensure a good crowd.

Queries about the dinner entertainment, particularly the idea of a ceilidh. Will this be appealing to Scottish delegates? Would there be somewhere for people to opt out? What would be the extra cost, given that the dinner is already a very expensive item?

SC to find out costings for this, and also to advise on availability of other, less expensive dinner options.

Issues around plenary and suggested options for speaker - AGREED.

Suggested revise numbers downwards from 300 to 250 as day delegates are likely to be fewer than at other conferences - AGREED.

Need to provide a postgraduate rate and also need to provide affordable accommodation for PGs.

SC to revise budget in light of above, and also by reference to York budget.

We also should emphasise that it is easy and relatively cheap to travel to Aberdeen, especially if booking well in advance.

SC to investigate the possibility of an airline discount deal for conference delegates.

MS to liaise with SC to include a notice about the 2014 conference in the next Newsletter, including travel information.

4.1.d 2015 conference

GD and AN reviewed selection criteria in light of their experience. They suggested more specific guidance re. physical resources: rooms – particularly for plenary, left luggage/cloakroom, affordable PG accommodation, wifi access, internet cafe, and facilitative publishers' area. Also: capacity to promote the conference and have control over the conference website.

RH to revise selection criteria for website in light of these suggestions and convey to MS.

Tentative EOI from Warwick received for hosting in 2015. Suggested that we respond positively to Warwick but put 2015 and 2016 out for bids for purposes of transparency, and by reference to revised criteria - AGREED.

MS to put requests for EOI for 2015 and 2016 in the E-bulletin and the Newsletter.

4.2 Postgrad 2013 conference: see report

All is going well.

4.3 One Day Conferences:

4.3.a Teaching

Programme is underway. More advertising needed to boost bookings. Mailing list from 'Doing' and 'Funding' conferences to be consulted. To be held 31 October.

AB to forward delegate/ mailing list.

4.3.b Exploring the legal – going ahead tomorrow.

4.3.c British Library training day – very positive response from previous events; LM expecting to be contacted in next couple of months re. a second event. Suggested John Sim be offered honorary membership - AGREED.

JMC to offer John Sim honorary membership.

MS to ask John Sim to contribute a comment from the perspective of the BL for the Open Access feature in the Newsletter.

5. Prizes and Competitions

5.1 Book

Nominations are coming in; deadline 1 October. MD, GD, SB volunteered for sub-committee.

RH to email around non attendees for one more sub-committee member.

5.2 Article

As per book prize, although fewer nominations so far.

All committee members to participate in judging (with exception of book sub-committee members if they wish not to be involved in both)

5.3 Contributions to socio-legal community

2 nominations received. RH put it to a committee vote. Phil Thomas won on a show of hands.

RH to inform Phil of award of prize.

JMC to ensure honorary membership is processed.

5.4 Small grants

31 October closing date but no applications received so far. Committee discussed a query put to JS about funding additional elements of research. AGREED – no change to rules as they are clearly set out.

5.5 Seminar competition: see report

PE, GD, MO'B suggested revisions in some areas:

Require that all applicants, not just lead applicant, be paid-up members - AGREED.

One annual competition deadline – AGREED.

PE, GD and MO'B should continue as the Seminar Competition sub-committee - AGREED

Feedback to unsuccessful applicants should be provided by members of the sub-committee - AGREED

One member of the sub-committee should be named as contact for receipt of applications and communications (remove Nicole Busby from lead contact details) – AGREED.

JMC suggested setting up a gmail account for applications and correspondence, which would provide continuity when sub-committee membership changes.

The minimum award is currently £300, this felt to be too low, suggested raise to £500 minimum – AGREED.

It was suggested that invitation-only events not be eligible – NOT AGREED. Rather, in judging the seminar competition, the sub-committee should take into account whether the proposed seminar/s is/are invitation-only or more open.

Suggested revision to the wording of the competition rules about capacity building in an international context – AGREED.

Suggested particular encouragement to early career applicants – AGREED.

Suggested revision of competition rules to make promotion of the SLSA a requirement for successful applications – AGREED.

Suggested change to the rules to make some form of published output a requirement – NOT AGREED. A report for the SLSA Newsletter to remain the minimum requirement, but dissemination proposals should be another factor for the sub-committee to take into account when judging the applications.

Suggested wider communication of information about the seminar competition, e.g. through social networking and via the international liaison officer – AGREED.

Closing date to be the same as small grants in future years, but 1 December 2012 this year - AGREED.

Rules to be redrafted by sub-committee and details sent to MS as soon as possible, to enable her to advertise the competition and closing date.

5.6 New prize from Mavis Maclean

After winning the prize for Contributions to the Socio-Legal Community, Mavis indicated her intention to use her prize money to enable young researchers to travel to meet and consult with a senior researcher. RH reported that Mavis had already organised for two junior colleagues to visit her at Oxford.

RH to contact Mavis to see if she needs any assistance with this from the SLSA

6. Retired Membership Category

RH noted that we currently do not have a category of membership suitable for people who have retired from academic posts but might wish to continue their engagement with the socio-legal community. After discussion as to what form this should take, a one off payment of £65 was suggested – AGREED.

JMC to add to categories of membership. MS to add to Newsletter and website. To be further advertised when renewals are due next year.

7. AOB

Ashgate partnership and members' discount to be flagged up in various arenas.

AN suggested that pictures from previous conferences could be put on the website - AGREED.

AN to send some photos from the DMU conference to MS to begin this.