

2011 Minutes of the Advisory Board of the International Byron Society

The second annual meeting of the newly-established Advisory Board of the IBS took place on Thursday, 30 June at the University of Valladolid, Spain.

Board members present: Bernard Beatty, Shobhana Bhattacharji, Olivier Feignier, Rosa Florou, Itsuyo Higashinaka, Michael O'Neill, and Naji Oueijan

Ex-officio members present: John Clubbe (IBS president), Jonathan Gross and Alan Rawes (IBS secretaries), Eric Wishart (IBS treasurer), and Joan Blythe (IBS corresponding secretary)

Michael O'Neill, Advisory Board chair, called the meeting to order at 1:42 pm. He defined the current situation of the IBS as the "evolution of the revolution." Instead of right now trying to develop a new constitution for the IBS he advised "supplementarity" which could facilitate a framework for solving practical problems. The motto for this transition period should be "Festina lente" – make haste slowly." There needs to be a commitment to transparency about finances and all activities. This should carry over to how the website is handled. He gave an overview of the important issues which the AB needed to address. These included among other matters, clarity on governance. We need to know who does what and who has authority to carry out tasks. Also terms of governance need to be established. Working committees need to be established to work on different areas. Ideally these should be comprised of younger as well as more established members of the IBS. He also suggested that rising younger scholars be appointed to the AB. He urged the AB members to commit to making definite decisions during the meeting since "decisions just don't happen."

For example he recommended that Andrew Stauffer should be appointed to be in charge of the revised website since he has great expertise in the field of computers and the humanities. Some of those present recalled his enthusiastic paper delivered on this subject at the Boston conference last year.

Although John Lytton has expressed something like exasperation to John Clubbe and perhaps others that his recommendations for change have not been acted on with more speed, Alan agreed with Michael that we need to continue "thinking for a year" about any major changes.

Throughout the meeting AB members repeatedly expressed concerns about the website and its funding. Olivier felt it was particularly important to develop a new IBS website, define the role of the webmaster and work out a financial envelope. Jonathan concurred with Michael that Andrew Stauffer should be put in charge of the website. He thought Andrew could be able to enlist help from graduate students. Jonathan also stressed the value of Andrew's already being involved with the Nines project. Shobhana wondered how the new Website would be funded. Rosa suggested that a university such as the University of Virginia should host the website in connection with its existing programs in computer sciences. John expressed the opinion that the IBS secretaries Alan and Jonathan should be involved in website oversight. He also thought the

management of texts which appear on the website needs careful attention. Issues involving Peter Cochran's contributions to the IBS website and texts on Peter's own website were discussed. Jonathan offered help from DePaul in developing ways Byron scholars can make better use of resources on the web and said Steve Jones would help with this project. He said the mechanics were already in place at DePaul to facilitate this.

AB members asked about filling the vacancy left by John Lytton's stepping down from the position of IBS president. John Clubbe reviewed the stipulations of the constitution which state that nominations to IBS officers had to be submitted to the current officers at least 30 days prior to the annual AGM. No nominations had been received. John Clubbe said that he had written to John Lytton encouraging him to remain an officer until the IBS had advanced further in its transition period but that Lytton had declined to do so. JC mentioned that Byron Raizis had also expressed the thought that he might retire from his post as president in the near future and JC reminded the group that he too would be retiring as well, sooner than later.. He then spoke of the need for the IBS when choosing officers to think more globally. Since its inception the IBS has had one president from the UK, one from America, and one from elsewhere which has been Europe. He strongly urged that candidates from non-European countries should be considered on an equal footing as those from Europe. Naji concurred that the management of the IBS in the future needed to be more global in perspective and that to facilitate this perhaps there should be reconsideration about the stipulation that one president should be from the UK and one from America. Perhaps all three should be from different countries and not restricted to include the US and the UK.

Olivier asked how the work of the three presidents was determined. Although John Lytton in the period 2009-2010 had done a great deal of work in trying to establish criteria and operating methods for a new IBS, John replied that in effect over the many decades he had been one of the three presidents, he in essence had done almost all the work which included reading many books each year submitted for the Dangerfield award. He said that this situation had to change and advocated that presidents' terms be established for say five years with single term limits.

With regard to the annual conferences, Michael said he thought they should try to reach out to a larger audience and work harder to appeal to non-academic as well as to academic participants. Discussion ensued about the number of graduate student who had been giving papers at IBS conferences. Shobhana believed this was a very positive trend and that these emerging scholars were vital to the future health of the IBS. Nevertheless some wondered if allowing so many graduate students on the IBS program paper roster might compromise participation in Rosa's very esteemed conference which is restricted to graduate students. Naji passionately said that overlapping between Rosa's conference and the IBS conference was not a problem. And it seems that there has been no diminution in participation in her conference since the participation of grad students in IBS conferences has increased. Instead he thought they increased the health of both conferences. Alan said that although each hosting society would have their distinctive imprint on a given conference, there should be a basic document available to conference organizers which states things which need to happen for each conference. For example each conference should be comprised of an academic program, social events including a banquet, the AGM, and optional tours. The conference in Boston was the only one anyone could recall that did not offer a tour following or as part of the conference. There were people in Boston eager and willing to arrange such tours but the conference

organizers chose not to employ their expertise. This was thought to be unfortunate since many members from abroad expected such tours in Boston. John made the point that it was desirable if possible to have single sessions instead of multiple sessions. Single-session conferences such as the one in Pairs in 2006 promote a sense of a community experience. Also with multiple sessions attendees are often jumping up to rush to another session and others are coming in; this tends to affect detrimentally the discussion period and much else. The question came up as to how it was determined where conferences would be held. Traditionally priority has been given to countries where Byron went or desired to visit, but consideration has always been given to a society of any country which makes a strong proposal. An excellent example was the conference in Japan.

Eric Wishart reported on the financial health of the IBS. Regarding those societies in arrears with dues he suggested establishing an amnesty program. Such a program might include recognition of “unrecognized intellectual capital” which could generate an “uplift factor of 20=1.” Michael interjected that the kinds of memberships need to be sorted out. Ken Purslow has reported instances recently of people who were not able to be in a society who desired individual IBS memberships. Currently there is no definite provision for this. Eric also suggested that copies of the current constitution and copies of Lytton’s proposals be put on the website. It was observed that copies of both were available at the very large meeting of the AGM in Messolonghi.

It was moved and seconded that the following proposals be presented to the AGM meeting on Friday, 1 July 2011:

1. That the website Working Committee be managed by Andrew Stauffer
2. That the line of governance Working Committee be composed of Eric (chair), Naji, and Olivier
3. That the current secretaries be assigned to assist John with the Dangerfield award choice
4. That the Working Committee on conferences be composed of Alan (chair), Olivier, and Naji.
5. That Jonathan through facilities at DePaul establish a Blackboard where there can be discussion and voices heard.

Eric suggested that by Easter all homework should be done.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 pm.