

Sexuality Studies Association Annual General Meeting – June 3rd 2021, 12:30pm

Minutes compiled by garylepelletier@gmail.com via zoom transcript

Attendees.

Cait McKinney (Program Coordinator)
Gary Lee Pelletier (Secretary)
Ryan Conrad (Outgoing Vice-Chair, Incoming Chair)
Dan Irving (Outgoing Chair)
Patrick Keitly (Treasurer)
Mark Lipton
Antonio Carneiro
Rebecca Sullivan
Pat Gentile
Helena Carneiro
Rick Braatz
Jesse Tailor
Djayana Cavalcanti
Jacob Evoy
Ian Tian
Alberto Carneiro
Natalie Kouri-Towe

Summary.

This AGM once again took place online via zoom, courtesy of Covid-19. Last year we, the SSA, cancelled our conference (excluding the AGM), as did most associations, though a few did hold online events with the Federation's support. Additionally, this year the SSA alongside several other academic associations and organizations boycotted the Federation in solidarity with the Black Canadian Studies Association. For context and rationale of the boycott from the BCSA, as well as statements from those groups who joined the boycott, please see:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Y_19HKlQ_Mr9Ya7J3Cvm_r3wgZS9T0uyksmVtbsx_Ys/e
[dit](#). Thus, the SSA hosted their own conference online for 2021, entirely independent of the Federation. At this AGM the SSA reflected on the construction and facilitation of this year's conference, discussed the our financial standing as an association, gave out awards, held steering committee elections, and reflected on the future relationship between the Federation and associations in the humanities and social sciences.

Content.

Welcome: Dan, as chair, began the meeting as well as facilitated it. He started the AGM with a land acknowledgement of treaty six territory (Edmonton), where the AGM would have been taking place in person.

Agenda Item #1 – Approval of AGM agenda. Rebecca moved. Mark seconded.

Agenda Item #2 – Approval of minutes from 2020 AGM. Mark moved. Rebecca seconded.

Agenda Item #3 – Announcement regarding recording by Dan and Cait: this AGM was not recorded, though a transcript of the meeting was saved to aid yours truly in the construction of these minutes.

Agenda item #4 – Steering Committee Reports

Chair's Report (Dan):

- This concludes Dan's term as chair. He reflected on it being a bit "weird" and "a ride" presiding over the SSA during these last two pandemic-altered years.
- Dan also addressed "the systemic racism that the Congress has been called out on" as well as the SSA's response. Dan explained,

And so this year we're on an alternative platform joining the Black Canadian Studies Association, and other critical associations that decided it was necessary to do a boycott to call attention to not only anti-black racism, but also settler colonial genocide and other forms of white supremacy within the Congress. And so, we engaged with Congress up to a particular point and then we veered off after writing an open letter to them.

- Dan cited that the SSA as an association is not immune to these issues, and more work must be continued to be done to decolonize and address systemic whiteness both within our own networks and Congress as a whole.
- It was not lost on Dan that despite the Federation's shortcomings the SSA does indeed benefit from Congress in "terms of logistics and financial," a detail that must be considered in how the SSA navigates its relationship with the Federation moving forward. But, as Dan pointed out, the SSA also benefits from networking with other associations, and "going rogue" this year gave the SSA the opportunity to work with other associations more intimately. The SSA's working relationship with Women's and Gender Studies (WGSRF) continues to be a good one, and the SSA's relationships with Film Studies and Game Studies have strengthened over the past two years.
- Dan also reflected on the SSA's solidarity with Laurentian University: "we urged the university to try to forge a public discussion about cutting of critical programs and

what does this mean for not only those who lost their job and students who lost that access but wider communities.”

- As Dan moves toward his sabbatical, he is ready to step down but has agreed to remain committed to helping out with association in different capacities and he looks forward to the guidance that Ryan Conrad will provide the SSA and he moves into his role as chair.

Treasurer's Report (Patrick)

- Patrick explained how the SSA has nearly consolidated all of its funds into a single CNBC account that has a savings account. Soon the PayPal account and Alterna accounts will be closed, as “consolidating everything into a single account is just going to help us keep track of the flow of cash.”
- Patrick also explained how the SSA is going to launch a new membership payment management and processing software this summer, which will allow people to pay their memberships with credit cards. Members will still be able to e-transfer payment toward their membership dues. The credit card payment will simply be another option.
- The SSA now has more institutional numbers – went from one to “six or something.”
- Patrick helped the SSA to launch a mentorship program for graduate students.
- Registration and individual membership fees were waived this year because of the pandemic. Due to the increase in institutional membership fees, the SSA probably took in more money than usual, but not as much as it would have due to the waived fee for individuals and students. Patrick noted that we don't currently have a program in which we can thank our institutional members, but we will in future years.
- SSA account started this year with \$20,661. Patrick also noted that there's extra \$149 in another account he's yet to consolidate. The current amount in the account is \$30,308. The SSA took in more money than it spent this year. This year's costs were the Emerging Scholars award, the conference tool that allowed us to hold the platform online, the web hosting for the SSA website, and the Leadership Award. Patrick also noted that OmiSoore's honorarium (\$1000) had not been paid out yet. Patrick agreed to get in touch with OmiSoore and ask how she would like to receive her payment.
- There was a question about whether WGSRF contributed financially to the keynote. The steering committee expressed that the WGSRF was supposed to, but the SSA had not received anything yet. Patrick/Dan agreed to follow up on this.
- Rebecca asked if the steering committee had a financial threshold in mind to aim for – what she referred to as a “sustainable bank balance” – to help with future anomalous years (i.e. pandemic). She mentioned the importance of getting something like this in writing so as to protect against undue/frivolous spending. Mark mentioned that in the past (when he was treasurer) there was an informal goal of \$50,000. Patrick explained his personal goal is take in more than is spent every year, which of course depends on each year. \$50,000 will be hit eventually, but in

- the meantime Patrick stressed that as an association with low expenses our financial health is really good. Patrick agreed to work with the rest of the steering committee to put something in writing that reflects this financial aim/policy, what Rebecca referred to as a “directive around deficit.”
- Motion made to approve Patrick’s statement. Rebecca moved. Mark seconded.

Vice-Chair’s Report (Ryan)

- Ryan thanked Dan for his service, particularly during the tricky years of the pandemic, and explained that he is looking forward to assuming his role as chair and continuing to work with both the remaining members, as well as incoming ones, of the steering committee.
- Ryan shared his goals/visions for the SSA. He looks forward to raising the profile of the SSA through building better supports for the field, which includes building up institutional membership and thinking about the ways that the SSA can be of service to those institutional members. Ryan described how during his time as communications officer (one year) and then vice-chair (two years), he was able to help develop some internal guidance documents to help build association infrastructure, but more is needed. Ryan concurred with Patrick’s earlier statements about the utility of flexibility for the steering committee, but also formal guidance is also helpful. He wants to continue working to update governance documents, we’re organized. This is about matching “our inner workings to what we say we do.” This is some important work that Rebecca started years ago. Ryan felt it was difficult/inappropriate to do this sort of work during these past two anomalous years, and so he looks forward to continuing to build such infrastructure for the SSA with the rest of the steering committee during his time as chair.
- Ryan stressed that improving and updating internal governance is not just about increasing the SSA’s financial stability, but also about “following through on our current - and creating new - commitments to anti-racism and decolonization within our association, and then also within the larger field of Sexuality Studies.” This work is about “trying to think through both as a steering committee and in consultation with membership, what that looks like, and what that will mean for us.”
- Ryan is also committed to creating greater engagement with full-time faculty, as a lot of the faculty currently teaching Sexuality Studies are either full time contract faculty or junior faculty – i.e. precarious workers – and so there is a systemic problem within the field of study. Ryan wondered: how can the SSA engage more full-time faculty who are senior, as well as how the SSA can better support part time faculty, contract faculty, graduate students, and people in otherwise precarious positions?
- Ryan noted that next year will mark the 10th anniversary of the SSA, and he hopes that we will be able to mark the occasion IN DA FLESH. He closed his report stressing that he is very open to feedback both from the membership and steering committee about the SSA should move forward.

Program Coordinator's Report (Cait)

- First Cait expressed how this year's conference was obviously unusual, and much of the focus of the conference was on its technological formatting and programming. She thanked Ryan for his help in assisting her with a lot of the background work for the virtual conference. She also thanked Natalie for her patience and for organizing much of the live plenary content on short notice and on a new platform.
- 45 papers were accepted to the conference, and just over half of those were carried over from last year's cancelled conference. 100% of the proposals were accepted, which Cait suggested speaks to the quality of the work in the association. Ultimately, 38 papers were uploaded to the conference site. 27 of those papers were by graduate students. There was a roundtable with six speakers organized by Natalie Kouri-Towe. The proposals were reviewed by Cait and Ryan. Cait explained that a programming committee was not brought together "because we didn't want to overburden graduate students and part time faculty during the pandemic, but we do need to bring that back together next year I think if possible."
- There was great discussion on many of the papers, especially the papers where authors took part in the conference. These discussions can still be accessed and checked out on the conference site.
- Cait explained how it appears that only nine full time faculty registered for the conference events, which reflects problems with the field that were brought up in earlier discussion.
- In terms of plenary attendance, 42 folks attended the keynote, 17 folks attended the round table, and 12 folks attended the workshop. The keynote and roundtable recordings have been posted on the conference site. They are password protected, but they are available to all members. The recordings will be available until the conference tool subscription runs out next spring.

Agenda Item #5 – Awards

- Thomas Waugh Emerging Scholar Award: Chido Muchemwa. This award is an essay prize for graduate student submissions. Dan explained that this year the adjudication committee consisted of himself, Ryan, and Patrick. Chido's winning paper was titled "Telling Impossible Stories: Critical Fabulation, Queer African Studies, and the Archive." Chido is a third year doctoral student in the Faculty of information at the University of Toronto and her research takes a Queer African Cultural Studies approach to archives.
- Academic Leadership in Sexuality Studies Award: El Chenier. This award goes to members of the SSA that are established within the field and have contributed greatly to the field of Sexuality Studies, but also contributed greatly to the association. El was the first chair of the SSA. They are professor in the Department of History at Simon Fraser University. They also serve as the director of the archives of lesbian oral history. They also run a space that offers mentorship and community to gender non-binary people.

Agenda item #6 – Steering Committee Elections

- Before he began discussion on elections, Dan thanked Patrick Teed (communications officer) and Gary Lee Pelletier (secretary) for their work on the steering committee this past year.
- Ryan explained how the candidate for vice-chair on the slate that the steering committee brought to this meeting has recently had to pull out. There is another candidate that the steering committee has been in contact with, but she expressed needing some time to mull it over before she commits to officially putting her name forward. Ryan elaborated about how if there are no contenders or self-nominations from the floor for communications officer and membership coordinator then the SSA could acclaim the individuals up for both positions at this AGM, but for the Vice Chair position if there are no nominations from the floor, his recommendation was to have a vote to empower the steering committee to appoint a vice chair in the near future. Ryan mentioned how the steering committee has been working diligently around this question of equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization specifically with regards to the makeup of the steering committee itself and has been trying to center non-masculine and non-white racialized people. His view was that the potential vice chair under consideration would be a great fit if she agreed to it. For transparency's sake he shared that there has been a very intentional ask of a racialized queer scholar to step into the role so that the SSA "can put our money where our mouth is in terms of diversifying the steering committee."
- Some discussion was had around empowering the steering committee to acclaim this particular position this year and a motion was arrived at: *Be it resolved, in recognition of the uncertainty and extraordinary circumstances of 2021 as identified by the current vice-chair that the steering committee be authorized to acclaim the vice-chair position for this upcoming year.* Rebecca moved. Gary seconded. Motion passed unanimously.
- There was one person who came forward for the position of communications officer: Camille Intson. Camille was unable to attend the AGM. She is a PhD student in the Faculty of Information at University of Toronto as well as a new member of the Sexuality Studies Association. As a queer scholar, practitioner, researcher, and multidisciplinary artist, she takes great interest in the association and wishes to become part of the broader community of multidisciplinary activists, scholars, and artists working around questions of sex, sexuality, and gender diversity. There were no further nominations from the membership. Camille was acclaimed.
- One person came forward for the position of membership coordinator: Carina Guzman. Carina is a PhD student in Faculty of Information at U of T with a specialization in sexual diversity studies. and the school. They are a native speaker of English, Spanish, and proficiency in French. There were no further nominations from the membership. Carina was acclaimed.
- It was noted that both Camille and Carina came to the SSA through Patrick's outreach at U of T's Faculty of information. Both are senior graduate students.

Agenda Item #7 – Future relationship w/Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences

- Dan rooted the discussion in some context. He explained how the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences is the overarching organization that is responsible for governing and bringing together multiple interdisciplinary associations. The federation is obviously well known for Congress, the conference they put on every year that brings together over 6,000 members to one site to exchange ideas. Dan also mentioned, significantly, how the Federation is very much hooked into external grant funding like SSHRC. In this moment the SSA, along with many associations, are at a juncture where “we’re thinking about the meanings of interrogation of systemic racism, we’re thinking about how to de colonize, we’re thinking about different strategies for equity, diversity and inclusion.” This year’s boycott of the Federation’s congress reflects all of this.
- Cait kicked off the discussion with her thoughts. She described how she really took to heart what Dr. Dryden was saying in her keynote about what means to continue to align ourselves with a colonial institution, which Congress has proven itself to be. “I know that they’re trying and I think Ryan can speak to that because he’s been following things more closely,” however Cait highlighted Dr. Dryden’s wonderings regarding what is it exactly that we want to build and do we want to keep reproducing these structures that aren’t working. Cait described feeling really conflicted because while she believes that we cannot ultimately build what we are looking for from within an institution like the Federation, she also acknowledges that we cannot as an association go it alone without the financial resources and support.
- Ryan chimed in about how he attended the consultations that the Federation with with “essentially all the minority groups,” groups like disability studies, women’s studies, sexuality studies, the POC caucus of the Sociology Association, etc. Ryan also mentioned that whatever conversation happens here around these issues need to be brought to the SSA’s membership at large because there just simply are not enough members present at this AGM to productively represent the association and make any meaningful decision about staying or leaving the federation or trying to forge some other way, etc. Ryan suggested the utility of a motion to empower the steering committee to poll past and current membership about this.
- Rebecca raised her skepticism in the alternative models that some associations have been turning to. Specifically she was suspicious over whether such models are actually capable of disengaging with colonial supremacy as these models often rely on the resources of institutions (like our home institutions that we all hail from) that are anything but benign. She explained that she is not opposed to exploring alternative methods and structures but insisted that the conversation is more nuanced than simply working within or without the Federation.
- Natalie spoke next. She observed the boycott as effective because it allows the SSA to redeploy such an action collectively and strategically on an annual basis, specifically as a means to pressure the Federation to do more/do differently. “So withdrawing from the Federation becomes basically, like, removing our kind of collective bargaining power with the body. So, unless like there’s a call for people to

withdraw fully - like associations to withdraw fully, you know - I think that we should stay with the Federation and use it as part of our collective capacity to have power to push for structural change.” Natalie continued, “I think it’s okay for us to continue to remain tenuously complicit with the structure of the Federation by also being part of a process that pushes for more accountability.” She also mentioned that if the SSA decides to pull out of Congress next year in Montreal then she can hook us up re: booking access at Concordia.

- Jacob asked, “have there been any conversations with other associations that have boycotted Congress about possible ways forward?” Other members chimed in that other associations would be doing exactly what we are doing today and presenting these issues to their memberships at their AGMs, which either hasn’t happened yet, or is just in the process of happening.
- Rebecca quickly cited the idea that’s been floating around of the boycotting associations banding together as one “critical studies association.”
- The conversation ended with a commitment by the steering committee to continue to re-assess these issues and continue to consult the membership on their ideas about how best to move forward.