

**Minutes of the ASFS AGM
held at the University of Queensland, St Lucia Campus, 10 December 2013
21st Annual Conference of the ASFS “Distance/Proximité”**

Present:

Executives: Françoise Grauby (President, in the chair), Sonia Wilson (Treasurer), Tess Do (Secretary)

Anne-Bénédicte André, Benjamin Andréo, Béatrice Atherton, Leslie Barnes, Bertrand Bourgeois, Ashok Collins, Peter Cowley, Julianna de Nooy, Annabelle Doherty, Véronique Duché, Jacqueline Dutton, Natalie Edwards, Paul Gibbard, Angela Giovanangeli, Greg Hainge, Barbara Hanna, Joe Hardwick, Amy Hubbell, Hélène Jacomard, Colette Mrowa-Hopkins, Jade Patterson, Sarah Reed, Alistair Rolls, Michelle Royer, John West-Sooby, Carolyn Stott, Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan.

Catherine Hodeir (Attaché, Higher Education, French Embassy)

Apologies:

Raphaël Trantoul, James Cannon, Kerry Mullan

Approval of minutes:

- Copies of the minutes the 28 September 2012 AGM meeting (held at Adelaide University) were circulated to all people present.
- A motion was made by François Grauby and seconded by Benjamin Andréo and Angela Giovanangeli to approve the minutes.
- There was no business arising from the minutes.

Thanks & Recognition:

Françoise Grauby thanks the organizers Barbara Hanna, Joe Hardwick, Amy Hubbell, Béatrice Atherton, Greg Hainge & Julianna de Nooy for their warm welcome. Françoise congratulates the team for hosting a conference of international scope (evidenced by the presence of distinguished keynote speakers and international participants) and most importantly for attracting a strong cohort of postgraduate students (approx. 15) – which is a very encouraging sign. The students have received an ASFS grant to help toward the cost of attending the conference. Françoise thanks in particular Natalie Edwards and Amy Hubbell for organizing a special session for them.

The President's Report:

ASFS website

- The update of the ASFS website started last year. Françoise is grateful that in November 2012 the French Embassy assisted us financially to pay for the service of a web technician and we have twice received the sum of €2000 (the Embassy gives us €2000 annually to help with the organization of our conferences). However, due to budget restrictions, we did not receive any more financial assistance from the Embassy in 2013. In consultation with the executive committee, Françoise has decided that we should reserve this money for our conferences and put on hold the renovation of our website. She has obtained two estimates of the costs of hiring a web technician (one group quoted AUS\$15,000 and another gave a more reasonable price) and is currently negotiating with one of the two groups. The question remains as to whether we would use the money in our ASFS fund to renovate the website because the sum provided by the Embassy is not sufficient.

- Françoise proposes that we create another function in the executive committee, that of a Webmaster to maintain and update our website.
- She raises two issues with the current ASFS website: 1) Carnet austral is available on the website but has lost its format; 2) there is no restricted access to the addresses and emails put on the ASFS website. She hopes that these issues will be resolved once we build the new website. She mentions that Michelle Royer has helped to create a list of criteria for the new website.

Baudin Scholarships

- Françoise thanks the Embassy for the Baudin Scholarships. This year the selection of the Baudin laureates is being carried out by Catherine Hodeir, Alistair Rolls and Françoise. The selection process is highly competitive: there are 80 applications for only 9 scholarships (compared to 12 offered last year) because the Embassy wants to fund other programs, such as the *French lecteur/lectrice* program (which benefits 4 universities).
- Françoise explains that the term 'bourse' could be ambiguous (students may think that once they are in France the 'bourse' will cover their social insurance, etc.) and stresses that the "bourse Baudin" is only a study travel grant.
- Currently this grant is worth AUS\$2,300 per student, but next year we may consider reducing this amount (to \$1500) in order to provide the award to more students.
- This year the recipients of the Baudin Scholarship receive 90% of the grant before they travel and upon their return to Australia, the remaining 10% of the grant once they have filled out a questionnaire about their study experience (that will be sent directly to Catherine Hodeir).
- The Embassy will launch a network of the alumni of the recipients of the Baudin Scholarships. It plans to create a Facebook account to keep this network alive and to have a record of these students' experiences in France. It is also a means to survey the degree of satisfaction of the students with their studies in France.
- Catherine Hodeir says that she was expecting 35 to 50 applications, but not 80. She supports the idea of reducing the sum of each Baudin Scholarship in order to grant this award to more students.

Future AFSF Conference (2014)

- Françoise has received a proposal from 3 colleagues from Melbourne, Kerry Mullan (RMIT), James Cannon and Raphaël Trantoul (Latrobe) to host the ASFS in Melbourne in November or December 2014, in collaboration with ISFAR (Institute for the Study of French Australians Inc, President: Colin Nettelbeck). This collaboration offers 2 advantages: 1) a ready website 2) a journal (*Explorations*) for the conference proceedings. The proposed theme is "Conflicts". The guest speakers have not been determined at this stage.
- Françoise asks whether this collaboration ASFS-ISFAR means that participants in the ASFS conference will have to pay for two memberships (one for ASFS and one for ISFAR - which is \$30)

ASFS membership and Carnet austral

- Françoise has counted 105 potential members for the ASFS from all the French departments in Australia.
- She reports that last year we sent out a public invitation to join ASFS on Ozfrench and also sent messages to individual emails (compiled by Clara Sitbon).
- Carnet austral was sent out last year to all members regardless whether they have renewed their membership or not. But this year perhaps we will proceed differently.

Open floor discussion

- Greg Hainge comments that the ASFS conference fee does not include the fee for the ASFS membership (although this idea has been discussed in the past, and it is a common practice that conference participants also pay for the membership of the organization who hosts the conference). He believes that if we can find a way to combine both fees, and then extract the ASFS membership fee from the conference fee, we would increase our budget.
- Julianna de Nooy asks whether a non-Australian should pay membership for an organization in Australia. Greg does not see why not and remarks that he would be happy to be member of an overseas organization that is in his field of expertise.
- Françoise remarks that ASFS members pay a reduced fee for the ASFS conference.
- The question raised by Greg and Françoise is whether ASFS members will also have to pay the membership of ISFAR, given that ISFAR will contribute financially to host the ASFS Conference.
- Jacqueline Dutton explains that ISFAR aims to join forces with ASFS and does not have the intention to make us pay for its membership. She adds that there is a possibility that Melbourne and Monash will also be part of this collaboration, and not just Latrobe and RMIT.
- Bertrand Bourgeois mentions that in July to mid-November there is the exhibition Victor Hugo 'From Page to Stage' at the State Library that will attract many visitors. If the ASFS conference can coincide with it (in mid-November) and if there is a section on Victor Hugo, the Embassy may support it and we may attract visitors from France who would be in Melbourne at that time. This would give more scope to our conference.
- Barbara thinks that mid-November would not be a good time to organise the ASFS conference because everyone would be in the middle of the examination period.
- Françoise mentions that the first idea was to organize the ASFS conference in July as there was the colloque Rudé in Melbourne, however, it was not possible because the dates did not coincide.
- Sarah Reed also mentions that in July there will be another conference in Melbourne for the FATFA/AFTV (Association of French Teachers in Victoria). These conferences in Melbourne in July would clash with the ASFS conference.

Treasurer's Report (Sonia Wilson)

- Two payments have not been received (\$20,700 from MAE & \$750 from FATFA)
- 44 members paid up end October 2013 and 46 members paid up end August 2012.
- Actions financed 2013: 9 Bourses Baudin; internet site (hosting); Carnets (electronic); Support colloque ASFS.

Carnet austral (Michelle Royer)

- Michelle reports that Kari Hanet has emailed all the Convenors of French for their reports and Carnet austral will be ready in January 2014 but in pdf format, as the ASFS website is still not functional.
- Françoise asks whether we will send out Carnet austral to everyone as we did last year, or just to the ASFS members. Michelle asks whether our members would be happy to pay their membership to receive Carnet austral. Hélène Jacomard asks whether we can send Carnet austral to everyone free of charge.
- Greg raises again the question about the benefit of being a member of the ASFS. Michelle mentions that as member one can participate in the ASFS conference.

Françoise agrees and mentions that this is how we describe the ASFS on the website, a Society that organizes an annual conference. Hélène remarks that people's interest in joining the ASFS will diminish as long as the site is not functional or attractive. Michelle raises again the question of paying someone to upgrade the site. Greg mentions Facebook as another (much cheaper) possibility, a website that could be used to gather a group of people and share information. In the past when we were creating the webpage for the postgraduates there were people who did not like Facebook.

- Françoise mentions that in the workshop that Natalie and Amy organized yesterday for the postgraduates, the latter proposed to create a postgraduates' site linked to the ASFS. Natalie Edwards explains that the students were very enthusiastic, and that they took the initiative to create a forum, a network among themselves. Two students, Sarah and Clara, have volunteered to start creating their site. Greg reminds that there is already a Facebook page that was created in the past (4, 5 years ago) for the postgraduates.
- Françoise again underlines the need to create a new function of Webmaster. Greg mentions that we have to pay (about \$100) to rent the website, so it is a waste if we do not use it, in which case Facebook is a cheaper option.
- John-West Sooby asks whether we can place archives (Carnet austral, past conference topics, etc) on Facebook. The answer is yes. Greg suggests we can limit access to the archives only to members with a membership ID.
- Greg wants to know how the question of the *raison d'être* of ASFS will be thought out and reflected upon in the next 12 months, so that at the next ASFS meeting we can have a discussion about it. Françoise asks whether Greg was not satisfied with the description of the ASFS (an association that brings together people who pay their membership to participate in an annual conference) and whether he expects something more. Greg thinks that this question is worth discussion.
- Hélène remarks that with the creation of other language associations (such as LCNAU, which is a pressure group), ASFS would not be required to assume that function. A member of the audience thinks that one of the (under-valued) functions of ASFS is to create a network that facilitates the exchange of teachers and courses, that allows us to know what is happening in the field of teaching, not just in the field of research. She asks whether ASFS was from the start a network for research.
- Françoise reminds that ASFS is part of and functions within a larger group, FATFA, that oversees and finances it.
- John West-Sooby underlines that it is the responsibility of the new committee to think about the functions of ASFS and for what purposes or activities its funds will be used. The new committee is expected to discuss and make concrete propositions to the members about these matters at the next AGM meeting.
- Amy Hubbell asks whether there is a forum (besides Ozfrench) that would allow us to exchange ideas during the year – so that we do not have to wait that long to keep in touch with each other. Françoise replies that one of the first functions of the site was for communication, and there is a page Facebook on the ASFS website but it was not used much, members do not spontaneously go to the site to connect to each other because it is not very visible, attractive or functional. This is one of the problems of the site. Presently we do not have just one email address on the site where we can send messages to all members (like Ozfrench). With the distribution of Carnet austral we have a list of members that we can use.
- Colette Mrowa-Hopkin stresses the importance to maintain the cohesion, the distinction and the identity of ASFS at the time when all the French departments are being increasingly absorbed into the administrative structures of the universities.

Election of Office-bearer:

- Webmaster:
 - Hélène suggests that this position be remunerated. Françoise mentions that we have some web assistants whom we pay, but their service is not long term, whereas a Webmaster position requires a continuous service. She thinks that it is a good idea but it will entail a large payment.
 - Natalie Edwards and Amy Hubbell volunteer to share this responsibility and are elected for this position.
- Treasurer: Véronique Duché is reelected to replace Sonia Wilson who does not wish to continue in this role.
- Postgraduate Coordinator: Jacqueline Dutton is elected to this role to replace Natalie Edwards.
- Secretary: Tess Do is reelected.
- Editor of Carnet austral: Michelle Royer is reelected.
- Vice-President: John West-Sooby.
- President: Alistair Rolls is elected.

AOB:

- On behalf of the AFSF Barbara thanks Françoise, Natalie and Sonia for their service and contributions to the ASFS in their respective capacities as President, Postgraduate Coordinator and Treasurer.
- As there was no other business the AGM closed at 1:50pm.