

Minutes of the ASFS AGM
held at RMIT, City Campus, Friday 5 December 2014, 12:30-2:00pm
22nd Annual Conference of the ASFS “Conflit, Dialogue et Représentation”

Present:

Executives: Alistair Rolls (President, in the chair), John West-Sooby (Vice-President), Véronique Duché (Treasurer), Tess Do (Secretary), Natalie Edwards (Webmaster)

Members (paid)

Benjamin Andréo, Peter Cowley, Françoise Grauby, Kim Hajek, Joe Hardwick, Chris Hogarth, Hélène Jacomard, Sophie Patrick, Sarah Reed, Clara Sitbon, Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan.

Non-members (unpaid)

Craig Adams, Chantal Crozet, Greg Hainge, Catherine Petillon, Julie Robert, Miriam Saward, Raphaël Trantoul, Caroline Trouseau

- Catherine Hodeir (Attaché, Higher Education, French Embassy)

Approval of minutes:

- Copies of the minutes the 10 December 2013 AGM meeting (held at the University of Queensland) were circulated to all people present.
- A motion was made by Alistair Rolls and seconded by John West-Sooby and Peter Cowley to approve the minutes.
- There was no business arising from the minutes.

Apologies:

Amy Hubbell, Barbara Hanna

Thanks & Recognition:

Alistair Rolls thanks the organizers (Kerry Mullan, Chantal Crozet, Raphaël Trantoul, James Cannon, Jacqueline Dutton) for their warm hospitality and congratulates them for a wonderful conference in terms of size and scope; he thanks the executive committee, in particular Amy Hubbell and Natalie Edwards, for their help and support since his election as President last year, and all the members and non-members for their presence and support; he takes credit for being the only person wearing the promotional ASFS T-Shirt.

The President’s Report:

Activities of 2014

- The new ASFS website is now up and running thanks to Amy Hubbell and Natalie Edwards. Natalie remarks that the 2001, 2002 ASFS calls for papers, abstracts and conference programs are missing in our web archives. She asks if someone has copies of these programs to send them to her.
- The transfer of signatories of the ASFS accounts was much more complicated and time consuming than expected; this has held things up and explained the issue we had with the updating of the membership list this year.

- Alistair represented ASFS and met with the French Ambassador in Sydney (Journée du réseau culturel, Powerhouse, July 16-17, 2014).
- Alistair met with John West-Sooby, Véronique Duché and Tess Do in Melbourne (20/11/2014) to discuss about a) the need for ASFS, the role the conference can play to increase its membership (e.g., the registration fees include membership); b) how to make fuller use of the website (e.g., internet banking for the ASFS bank account and online membership renewal); c) the need for clarity of the committee roles of Secretary, Treasurer, Editor of Publications, Postgraduate Officer, Webmaster); d) initiatives for incentivizing membership (e.g., ASFS prizes, subscription to AJFS for members)

Baudin Grants

- Alistair reports that 10 grants of \$2300 were awarded this year to students from ANU, INSEAD, Melbourne, Monash, Sciences-Po, UQ, UTS, UWA. The selection of the laureates was carried out by Alistair Rolls and Catherine Hodeir. Both felt strongly about the need to encourage more applications from smaller universities.
- Baudin / delay of the Baudin grants.
- Greg Hainge and John West-Sooby suggest that the evaluation of the applications of the Baudin grants can be shared between three people. Copies of the applications that can be emailed to the examiners in a pdf format.

Treasurer's Report (Véronique Duché)

- Véronique agrees to the creation of a ASFS prize (for the best paper presented by a PhD candidate at the conference). She thanks Raphaël Trantoul for the ASFS banner. Alistair notes that the web hosting cost (\$99 this year) will go up next year.
- 19 members paid up end November 2014
- 44 members paid up end October 2013
- Finances: Dec 2013 – Nov 2014 (see the Treasurer's detailed report)
 - Opening balance: \$32, 2676.98
 - Total income: \$24,565.90
 - Total spending: \$27,70540
 - Closing balance: \$29,118.48
- The Treasurer's report is seconded by Ben McCann and Hélène Jacquard.

Open floor discussion:

1) Sustainability of the ASFS conference and membership

1-1) The no-frills conference model & seed funding

- Alistair asks whether we should move to a less expensive, no-frills model, and whether the ASFS committee can play a larger role in organization (providing seeding fund; accepting registration fees directly that includes ASFS membership, meaning ASFS conference participants automatically become members). Free participation for postgraduates is an excellent initiative this year that should be a permanent fixture.
- Julie Robert thinks that this is a good idea because if ASFS is going to operate on the seeding fund model, the organizing committee can use this external fund to ask for a match-up funding from the university where the ASFS conference takes place.

- Natalie Edwards sees two problems, the high conference fees this year and the low membership subscriptions (about 20 as of this morning). She thinks that it is a depressive situation and now with the ASFS website up and running, hopefully membership numbers would increase and our cash flow would be higher; we need to try for the next two years and continue to work on these issues otherwise there is little point for the Society to go on.
- Greg Hainge notes that we have been talking about including the membership fee in the conference fees for quite some time, and if it could be done, it would solve our problems. However, not everyone is going to the conference every year. The difficult remains how people can be reminded to renew their membership, how they can pay. Natalie explains that she and Amy are working on that so that people can pay for their membership and check for their record online via the ASFS website.

1-2) The bi-annual 'frills' conference model + satellite events in the alternate years

- Greg has some reservation about the 'seed funding' and 'no-frills' model. He does not think that it is a good idea for the Society to take care of the registration fees as this implies that it will become the organizer of the conference. He thinks that if we want the people in an institution to organize a conference, they have to be able to do it the way it works in their institution. Even if they have seeding fund, it does not mean that their university is going to match that.
- With regard to the idea of not having conference next year, Greg suggests as alternative the model adopted by the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia: biannual 'frills' conference + satellite events in the alternate years. If one has a big name keynote speaker for the conference, one can expect to make money that can partially subsidy the satellite events where people can come together to do serious intellectual work.

1-3) The current annual conference model

- Natalie Edwards is appreciative and in favor of the current annual conference model that ASFS has adopted, noting that it is not the case with German Studies, Italian Studies. For new colleagues, or those who live far away, it is great to be able to meet once a year and have that intellectual, social connection with each other.
- Alistair agrees with Natalie and adds that the annual ASFS conference would give us more weight and visibility in the eyes of the universities.
- From a postgrad's perspective: Caroline Trousseau is appreciative to have an annual conference as it gives the PhD students like herself more opportunity to attend and present their papers during the 3-year candidature.

1-4) The centralized conference model

- John West-Sooby suggests another model according to which a Conference Officer/Organizer is designated by the Society to work with the local committee at each conference. This model would represent a shift from the local to a more centralized responsibility. He asks whether the local committee would see this model as helpful or as a loss of autonomy.
- Chantal Crozet thinks it is good to have a representative from the ASFS committee to work with the local committee. She appreciates the collaboration between different universities in the organization of the conference this year,

and the fact that the keynote speaker (Lionel Jospin) is also invited to speak at other conferences/departments (in English), as this helps with the costs of hosting the conference.

- Raphaël Trantoul also thinks that John's idea is good. The fact that all the 4 organizers this year are all in the same place to work together really helps. Collaboration between universities could work well if they are situated not too far away from one another.
- Alistair stresses he did not wish to impose his model and welcomes discussion and comments from everyone.

1-5) 2015 ASFS conference

- Alistair proposes to host a smaller ASFS conference with Marie-Laure in Newcastle in 2015.
- John West-Sooby suggests that next year we should have a discussion paper on how to a centralized and a local committee can work together to organize conferences; what will the division of labour be between the local committee and the office bearer; in the meantime the website needs to be set up to handle the administration.
- Hélène mentions the possibility of inviting an online speaker at the conference.
- Greg suggests that the discussion paper be created by the executives, put on the website along with the membership list so that we have a better sense who the members are, find way to increase the membership through the online payment system. Only then that the new executive position (Conference Officer/Organizer) can be appointed next year.
- Alistair comments that the creation of a new executive position will entail the revision of the Society's Constitution. He proposes to pilot this new model for the conference in Newcastle next year, acting both as Conference Organizer/President of ASFS and local organizer. The proposed date for the 2015 conference is late November early December.

1-6) Future ASFS conferences

- Julie Robert asks where ideally should the future ASFS conference be held, after Canberra, Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney. The UWA is mentioned as one possible host of the conference. Hélène Jacomard responds by saying that it depends on the date of the conference and that she will pass this suggestion to her junior colleagues.

2) Clarity of committee roles & Fuller use of the website

- Alistair aims in 2015 to draw up clearer definitions for the portfolios attached to the roles of Treasurer, Secretary, Postgraduate Officer, Webmaster (currently 2); find ways to better maintain membership list, and to link more closely the work of the Treasurer with the website.
- Natalie explains that Amy Hubbell has been trying to create an ASFS listserv but encountered difficulty because the membership list was not up to date. Now that the website and the online payment are up and running there will probably no need for two webmasters.

3) Carnet austral

- Alistair has talked to and thanked Michelle Royer for her long period of loyal service as Editor of Publications. Carnet Austral is now online and the role of the Editor of Publications has been integrated into the duties of the Webmaster.
- Greg stresses that Carnet Austral was not just a news bulletin: it did publish short articles, original works in progress, conference reports; it was a substantial publication, was registered with ISBN and deposit in every copyright library in the country.
- Natalie adds that there is a column for Carnet Austral on the website.

4) Incentivizing membership & Increasing links with AJFS and The French Australian Review

- Alistair is keen to offer some ASFS essay prizes to postgraduates. He asks feedback from the floor on how to do it.
- Hélène suggests that these essays can be subsequently published in the Australian Journal of French Studies (AJFS) or The French Australian Review.
- Alistair continues to work with Brian Nelson to tighten and formalize link between ASFS and AJFS.
- ASFS is now linked to the homepage of AJFS.
- Hélène suggests that ASFS membership could include discount subscriptions for AJFS. Ben Andréo comments that since AJFS is run by the UK publisher this could be a problem.
- John cautions that AJFS can come in on top of ASFS as it exists as a journal.
- Hélène reminds that we can also try to link with another journal The French Australian Review (Elaine Lewis, editor)

5) Election of Office-Bearers

5-1) Election by nomination

John West-Sooby conducts the election of Office-Bearers, adopting the system of election requiring nomination: all the positions are declared vacant and nomination for each position will be proposed by a non-executive ASFS member or the Vice-President and seconded by another member.

- President: Alistair Rolls is reelected for a second term (two nominations)
- Treasurer: Véronique Duché is reelected (one nomination)
- Secretary: Tess Do is reelected (one nomination)
- Webmaster (joint position): Natalie Edwards (two nominations) and Amy Hubbell (one nomination) are reelected
- Postgraduate Coordinator: vacant (Jacqueline Dutton has stepped down from this role)
- Vice-President: John West-Sooby is reelected (one nomination)

5-2) Issues with the Postgraduate Coordinator position

- a. Can two people to share this position?
- b. Can a postgraduate student be elected to serve as ASFS executive?
- c. What is the role description for this position?
- d. Should a postgraduate student be elected as Representative rather than Officer?

- There is an unusual nomination of two people (Clara Sitbon and Sarah Reed) to share this position.
- Clara comments that there was the need for a long time to create a platform where postgrads can meet, communicate and network, and she and Sarah have been working closely with Jacqueline Dutton for the past year on this. As conference fees are waived for postgrads, the postgrads' workshop this year was very successful and attracted a large number of participants.
- Clara asks whether as postgrads she and Sarah can be executive members. John does not see why not as long as they are ASFS members they can be nominated and elected, however, it is unusual to have a joint position.
- Greg mentions the joint position of Webmaster as precedent – something that was not included in our Constitution. Clara and Sarah were elected to this position. However, following Greg's question whether a position that has a mentoring role for postgrads should be filled by someone who is still himself or herself a postgrad, further discussion ensues.
- Clara wonders whether this joint position should be Postgraduate Representative or Officer. Her impression of the role of the Postgraduate Officer is to organize the postgrads day at the conference. While there is no real description of the Postgraduate Officer position in the Constitution, according to Greg, the Officer's role is to set up on going infrastructure, induction and support for the postgrads, on top of organizing the workshop at the conference. According to other members from the floor, this role also includes distribution of seed funding to postgrads to go to the conference, a role that will require more attention if it involves tuition fees.
- John suggests that we reconsider this issue, call for an academic nomination, and envisage a representative position on the committee for Clara and Sarah. Alistair suggests that we can change the name of the position to Postgraduate Forum Convenor. Greg suggests that we leave this position open for the executives to make a nomination and fill it. Alistair comments that the Conference Officer can take part of the part of the Postgraduate Officer's role and will liaise with the postgrads representatives (Clara and Sarah). John and the floor agree to withdraw the earlier election of Clara and Sarah to the joint position of Postgraduate Coordinator and leave the position vacant for the time being.

6) AOB

As there is no other business Alistair thanks the floor for their discussion and feedback. The meeting closes at 2pm.