

Minutes of the ASFS AGM
held at the University of Queensland, 16 July 2009
17th Annual Conference of the ASFS “*Tekhne, Technique, Technologie*”

Present:

Greg Hainge (in the chair), Dominique Boullier, Peter Cowley, Alexandra Dumitrescu, Jean Fornasiero, Anne Freadman, Blandine Guillot, Barbara Hanna, Joe Hardwick, Vladimir Kapor, Louise Maurer, Brian Nelson, Juliana de Nooy, Noel Peacock, Keith Reader, Alistair Rolls, Caroline Sheaffer-Jones, Diane de St Leger, Marie-Laure Vuaille-Barcan, John West-Sooby, Bronwyn Winter.

Apologies:

Chantal Crozet, Tess Do, H el ene Jacomard, Sonia Wilson

1. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated. John West-Sooby pointed out that the ASFS constitution should list the members of the executive as including "the immediate past president" (rather than "a"). Anne Freadman indicated a spelling error on page 4. Peter Cowley asked that Juliana de Nooy's name be corrected in the list of members present. John West-Sooby moved that the minutes be provisionally accepted, subject to proof reading. Motion seconded by Peter Cowley.

Business arising:

1.1 ASFS office-bearers. The positions of secretary and treasurer had not been merged, given the workloads. The secretary had not yet commenced work on gathering the archives and this would be a task for the coming year. The suggestion that the executive should use generic emails had not been pursued since it would simply add to the incumbents' work of checking different email accounts and it is just as easy to forward on email to the appropriate individual after a change in office-bearers.

The new Postgraduate officer position was now official. Acting in that capacity, Peter Cowley had organized a postgraduate/ early career session on publications at the conference. He was thanked together with Bronwyn Winter, who had presented at it, and Noel Peacock who had also contributed.

1.2 Alternative models for Honours. Greg Hainge had updated the ASFS Facebook page with a link to information on Honours at ANU. While the previous year's discussion of the matter had been to some extent superseded by Baudin developments, Honours enrolments continued to be a concern for most universities. Nationwide, Honours programmes were under review through a number of ALTC projects. Given the disparate nature of offerings, it would be hard to create a standardized programme across universities, but we can continue to think about this.

1.3 CHASS. Greg Hainge had the permission of the previous AGM to make an executive decision on institutional membership of CHASS and was reconsidering its usefulness. However, as President of a potential future member society he had recently attended a CHASS event in Brisbane where members assured him that languages are a priority area for them this year. His feeling was we should wait and see what actions were proposed re languages and whether this justified the institutional membership fee.

1.4 ASFS website. The limited uptake of site's capacity to record members' publications was explained by the current complexity of the upload procedure (although the results are then displayed with a consistent format). GH was trying to find someone who could modify the site so that these details could be cut and paste into a text editor box, for greater ease of use by members. John West-Sooby suggested that a message should be sent to Ozfrench and to the ASFS Facebook group at the time of the annual institutional collection of publication data, prompting members to upload their recently compiled data to the website.

1.5 Membership A membership drive had resulted in increased memberships, but this needs to be maintained.

2. Presidential Report

The President's report is minuted here together with discussion arising from it.

2.1 FATFA GH reported that he and Barbara Hanna had represented ASFS at FATFA's virtual AGM. BH and Béatrice Atherton were on the FATFA executive as secretary and president, respectively. Preparations for the FIPF congress in December 2010, to be held at the University of Sydney, were underway. ASFS had put in its usual request for funding to FATFA but had received no response. BH was able to report that the FATFA treasurer had very recently written to the FATFA executive regarding the distribution of funds which would soon be made available.

2.2 ERA journal ranking The final list had been released. Despite its failings, it was much better than it would have been without input from the society and from its members through their individual institutional mechanisms. GH thanked members and others who had contributed to the Society's submission. The ARC had advised that it would not be revisiting the list for the moment. However, a series of pilot review of disciplines would take place, starting with HaSS. In addition to the list, quality would also be measured through some light touch peer reviews, with institutions nominating researchers some of whose work would be assessed by peer review panels.

John West-Sooby indicated the difficulties the ERA system created for French programmes: typically research undertaken in French programmes would be dispersed into different groupings, making it virtually impossible for a language programme to appear at the top of any ranking. He suggested that the convenors of the next ASFS conference schedule a round table on the ERA and the discipline.

2.3 Baudin funding GH thanked Béatrice Chassaing and Richard Dessalinel in their absence for their hard work carried out for the society and for students of French in Australia, particularly in relation to the Baudin grants. Their willingness to listen to the society's view on the Baudin scholarships had led to significant changes, most notably that they were now open to 3rd year undergraduate students. As expected, this had led to a significant increase in demand. In 2008, the Embassy was able to find more money for a second round of grants, given this increase, and provided a total of 22. In 2009, despite the global financial crisis, the Embassy still generously provided 15 grants.

The increase in demand for the Baudin grants had led the Embassy to discontinue the Freycinet grants which had not seen much uptake.

However, the increase in demand had other consequences for the society's finances. Whereas previously some of the unused Baudin money had been redeployed to fund visiting speakers from France, in addition to those sponsored for the annual conference, in 2008 and 2009, the full amount of the Embassy's grant to the society had been expended on student grants and conference support.

In later discussion, the society's role in attributing the Baudin grants was raised by Jean Fornasiero and John West-Sooby, who called for a return to the previous system of a selection committee to advise the Embassy, rather than this being undertaken by the society president. GH proposed a return to the Baudin panel with three readers. This was agreed and Alistair Rolls volunteered to serve on the panel.

2.4 Embassy support for conference speakers The money is provided on condition that the speakers visit a state other than that in which the conference is held, to justify the expense of their trip. This further travel in Australia has to be covered by local sources of funding. In 2008, this condition was not fulfilled for one of our conference speakers. GH reported that in 2009 it had proved impossible to obtain support from any other French programme for further engagements within Australia for our plenary speakers. Funding had been sought and in some cases found from other disciplines and centres. These difficulties were obviously problematic in that the Embassy would like to see their support backed by French programmes in Australia. The society itself does not have the funds to contribute towards the costs of further travel.

Alistair Rolls reminded members that the University of Newcastle was always willing to be the venue in "another state" when possible, given the Kelter Hartley funds which were available to support such activities. He also suggested involving the Alliance Française in events, as a way of building up audience numbers

Anne Freadman and Bronwyn Winter mentioned the logistical problems associated with redeploying visitors who are here during the Australian winter break. GH pointed out that the activity "in another state" was not necessarily a seminar paper but could be a discussion of exchange programmes or

participation in a reading group, which would require less staff on the ground. Vladimir Kapor mentioned that UWA was already starting back and that this difference in institutional calendars might facilitate visits. However, GH and ASF suggested that the timing of the conference (July) needed to be reconsidered. ASF requested that GH report back to the Embassy on the difficulties faced re-deploying visitors between semesters.

The problem was also financial: ASFS was unable to contribute towards the costs of further travel. GH reported on a revenue-raising idea which he had discussed with the Embassy, regarding institutional membership (see below).

2.5 Institutional membership and Baudin funding Institutional membership of ASFS has been considered for several years. GH had discussed with Béatrice Chassaing the possibility of linking institutional membership and eligibility for the Baudin grants. The proposal was that:

(a) Only undergraduate students from universities which had paid the institutional membership fee be eligible for a Baudin grant (at the level of Honours and above this condition would not apply)

(b) Institutional membership fees be set at a reasonably high level (e.g. \$500-\$1000 per annum) with the expectation that this be paid at the university, rather than the programme level

(c) The money be payable to the Society and would be used to finance expenses associated with visits by conference speakers to other states, and, depending on uptake, to finance further visits not associated with the conference.

The advantages of the proposal were:

(a) availability of revenue for supporting visitors

(b) fulfilment of the Embassy's expectation that its funding be matched,

(c) sourcing of these funds from institutional rather than programme budgets

It was suggested that the letter inviting VCs to institutional membership come from both the Embassy and the society, bringing the Embassy support to the attention of university administration. The letter could even suggest that institutions match the Baudin funding provided to students, in addition to paying the institutional membership, effectively reinstating the Freycinet grants. In putting this proposal to the society, GH reminded members that although the Embassy would be interested in feedback, ultimately the decision on whether or not to link Baudin grants to institutional membership was the Embassy's.

Reaction to this proposal was negative. Bronwyn Winter foresaw limited agreement from VCs, who would expect a knock on effect from other disciplines also asking for institutional membership to be funded. Furthermore, since institutional membership didn't guarantee receipt of Baudin grants for an institution's students, the return on the investment was questionable. Her institution, the University of Sydney already provided many scholarships to students. She further stated that the proposal was to the disadvantage of students at universities where funds were not available for scholarships nor, in all likelihood for institutional memberships. Anne Freadman felt that anything

that smacked of coercion would be received badly by VCs and that some students would be disadvantaged for the benefit of the society. The University of Melbourne funded many scholarships for language students and so could well reply to the embassy that funding was already being matched through university mobility grants. She felt that institutional membership would come back to School level, and that individual programmes would not be able to pay. Louise Maurer reported that ANU already matched the Baudin grants for students and would be unlikely to go beyond that.

GH stated that there was a decrease in the percentage of successful applicants because of the increase in demand. There are currently 17 programmes, not all of whom have students who apply.

The majority of members present was opposed to the Embassy's proposal to link institutional membership to the Baudin grants.

However, there was no opposition to institutional membership per se. Advantages for participating universities would be links via the society website to information on their institutions (research expertise etc). John West-Sooby proposed that we test University level reaction to institutional membership, and that the mail out let VCs know of the French Embassy's support. This was supported by Bronwyn Winter, agreeing with the suggested fee of \$500.

2.6 Other sources of society income Diane de St Leger put forward a proposal that we consider alternative sources of funding such endowments and philanthropic funds. Anne Freadman suggested approaching the Potter foundation and the Myer foundation. In Noel Peacock's experience, obtaining sponsorship was not easy. He also reminded members that if the issue was the Embassy's impression that their support was not matched or appreciated, it was important to provide positive feedback.

Diane de St Leger also suggested corporate memberships.

Alumni could be contacted for support as corporate sponsors.

John West-Sooby suggested the Alliance might provide funds for specific purposes.

Noel Peacock suggested that increased conference registration fees could boost income. (\$20 more per person x 50 delegates = \$1000 extra).

3. Treasurer's Report

Sonia Wilson had provided a report on the society's finances and was thanked in absentia.

Noel Peacock suggested that in a membership drive a membership secretary could be useful and offered to pass on the details of the membership secretary of the UK's Society for French Studies. It was agreed this could be given to our Secretary, rather than the Treasurer, given the respective workloads of these two roles.

4. Editor's Report

The *Carnet* editor, Barbara Hanna, apologized that her change of universities in February had held back production of the *Carnet*.

5. Conference planning

ASFS 2010 was scheduled for Sydney, with the theme of "Playtime": dates would be considered in light of earlier discussion . Bronwyn Winter was on the Rudé committee scheduled for 14-16 July. UWA had expressed interest in hosting in 2011, with Vladimir Kapor to consult with colleagues and confirm.

6. Election of office bearers

All positions were declared vacant and then filled as follows:

President: Greg Hainge (Proposed by Alistair Rolls, seconded Jean Fornasiero)

Vice-President: Louise Maurer (proposed Jean Fornasiero, seconded by Greg Hainge)

Treasurer: Sonia Wilson (Proposed by Greg Hainge, seconded by Alistair Rolls)

Secretary: Tess Do (Proposed by Greg Hainge, seconded by Joe Hardwick)

Editor: Barbara Hanna (Proposed by Greg Hainge, seconded by John West-Sooby)

Research and Postgraduate Officer: Peter Cowley (Proposed by Jean Fornasiero, seconded by Alistair Rolls).

7. Vote of thanks

John West-Sooby proposed a vote of thanks to the conference organisers with particular mention of the catering.