ACH Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

July 7, 2014

Swiss Tech Convention Center, EPFL, Room 1C, Lausanne

Present: Stéfan Sinclair (SS), Dot Porter (DP), Glen Worthey (GW), Julia Flanders (JF), Lisa Rhody (LR), Lisa Spiro (LS), Brian Croxall (BC), Kathleen Fitzpatrick (KF), Tanya Clement (TC), Roopika Risam (RR), Jeremy Boggs (JB), Jennifer Guiliano (JG), Mia Ridge (MR), Vika Zafrin (VZ), Geoffrey Rockwell (GR), Susan Brown (SB).

Present virtually and intermittently: Ernesto Priego (EP), Matt Gold (MG).

Regrets: Miriam Posner (MP).

Welcome and agenda-setting

SS opens. Exec expresses support for Bethany during a hard time. Introductions.

Discussion was held regarding whether ACH should continue to have an in-person Executive Council meeting. Consensus was reached: even in the face of constrained travel budgets, an in-person meeting is quite productive and we should continue to have one every year. Plans were made to improve the structure of activities over the course of the year, in order to keep better track and alleviate anxiety in the face of an ever increasing to-do list.

The bylaws changes resulting from last fall's vote shifted Exec terms to the end of the conference, starting with the current (2014) term. Newly elected Exec members are here to participate actively in discussions, but are not voting yet. Outgoing members are voting until the end of conference.

Approval of all minutes from the past year: BC moves, VZ seconds, unanimously approved.

Approval of 2014 agenda: JF moves, GR seconds, unanimously approved.

Another DH amicus brief

GW summarizes the second DH amicus brief: to do with one of the many Authors' Guild lawsuits against Google and HathiTrust. Written in part by Matt Jockers and two legal scholars. Main arguments on behalf of all digital humanities scholars:

• The work that Google is doing enables us to do our work, for which scanning texts is required.
• Scanning is non-expressive (we don't re-express it, re-publish it, re-share it).

We endorsed a similar brief last time as an association. Non-US organizations did as well (CSDH/SCHN in particular). ACH has been the most activist/advocacy-oriented of the COs, so

this aligns with our mission. Previous decision by judge extensively cited the previous brief we submitted.

Ultimately, this isn't about Google, but about establishing the legal principle about copying for research purposes.

Concerns/questions about brief? None. GW moves to support, multiple seconds, approved unanimously.

Finances and existing commitments; LLC

Treasurer's report, TC: she and outgoing treasurer Jarom McDonald are still working on it. In general, more or less the same as last year. There's some money left with which we can do a bit of outreach and backstops.

SS: ADHO meeting yesterday — his sense is that financial situation didn't change much for ACH in terms of revenue coming from ADHO in 2013. Membership models have changed a lot, including the possibility of having a subscription-less membership, something ACH pushed hard for and is pleased about. Many people are taking advantage of subscription-less membership, but the total number has risen substantially (800 individual ADHO members?), which means that, net, we are about the same as before. The number of subscribing members hasn't really changed. Most importantly, ADHO's subscription revenue comes overwhelmingly from institutional subscriptions, so our income won't be hugely affected by individual subscriptions going up or down (which they have not, in any case).

Discussion:

- ACH finances, general
    - Closing balance for 2013 is about $35,500
    - Projections for 2014: spending about the same amount as our income.
    - We have about a 3-year surplus in the bank, and are considering increased investment in activities that matter to the organization (see below)
        - About $1200 from last year is available for outreach
- *Literary and Linguistic Computing*
    - We will aim to step up outreach to libraries in order to increase subscription revenue
    - OUP has infrastructure for promotion, and tends to be responsive to suggestions for inclusion of particular journals on conference display tables
    - We should make sure that LLC is part of the right big-deal packages, both in terms of impact factor and in terms of getting institutions to subscribe to it (not as a linguistics journal)
    - The proposed changes to LLC, most significantly a chance in the journal name to The Journal for Digital Scholarship in the Humanities (DSH), involve challenges: new ISSN, new entry in all periodical listings, links to previous journals. We are assured by many that this has been a long time coming and is being handled with great thoughtfulness.
    - As far as we know, Edward Vanhoutte is staying on as Editor in Chief
    - When the switch is triggered, ADHO Pubs will ensure that we are notified, so that we can send out newsletter to our membership asking them to notify our libraries

Membership

GW reports that membership growth is quite healthy — and large: we currently have 577 members, a net gain of 199 in the last year. Most of the growth is in the joint individual membership category. The large increase is in part due to the newly instituted availability of a "membership-only" option, which does not include a subscription to *LLC*. As a reminder, this option was instituted in 2012 for students, and expanded in 2013 to all membership categories. Because of its obvious popularity, it seems clear that the apparent loss (-19) of "ACH-only" members was far more than compensated by the great gain in the ADHO community as a whole – which benefits ACH substantially.

Strategic directions

Discussion:

- Banking situation of ADHO as vs COs: because of global differences in financial management, benefits of consolidation there are unclear
- We do not believe that attempting to drive ACH-specific membership is beneficial to ACH, and would prefer to concentrate on driving *all* membership (including joint ADHO)
- Balancing individual identities of COs as vs a collective ADHO identity is a live question
    - …including in financial terms: how does regionality and/or CO membership relate to CO funding in the long run?
        - With regard to institutional subscriptions to LLC: Total funding that comes in from LLC has a slice (~40%) taken off for ADHO to run infrastructure, conference, and publication subventions (and COs can add to the latter, as ACH does to Digital Humanities Quarterly), and is then attributed proportionally according to geographical subscriptions.
        - Canadian subscriptions are credited to CSDH/SCHN. COs that don't have a regional association are grouped, and the rest-of-the-world subscriptions are then divided equally.
        - For purposes of institutional subscriptions, ACH is a US institution, though our Exec and membership reflect otherwise. CenterNet is viewed as though there were a country on the moon.
        - N.B.: ADHO/CO financials were set up specifically to avoid individual memberships driving income, in order to avoid membership competition among COs. There is benefit, though, in getting people active in DH in our regions to get their libraries to subscribe.
    - CO governance members are elected, whereas ADHO are not; this increases individual COs' responsibility for taking an active interest in the ways ADHO is run
    - For a clear articulation of the relationship between COs and ADHO, please see the ADHO website, particularly the About section
- Current DHQ subventions come from both ADHO and ACH. As more COs join, there has been discussion of not assuming that ADHO publication subventions will continue in perpetuity. (Incubator model?) Perhaps subventions should be used to incentivize publications to get their own funding?

- Establishment of nonprofit status for ACH: we are still waiting for some details relating to ADHO nonprofit status, after which we will once again take up the more local question.

[Break]

Membership Models

The basic outline for the issue of membership has been described. At the moment the OUP form is one awkward page, very long, allows you to be a member of only one or all of the COs. Pros and cons exist for each proposed model. One con for the all-associations membership is: who gets to vote in elections? Should Americans be voting for executive board members in Australasia? To some extent that has been self regulating---which might work.

Funding model has been changed: before, individual COs had received more funding based on solo memberships rather than an increasingly smaller piece of the pie based on joint memberships. This created competition with regard to solo memberships. Proposals were:

- leave structure as is;
- offer a la carte menu allowing individuals to join associations in any combination;
    - perhaps disassociate the incremental cost that the member pays from the funding model for CO payout?

Discussion — ACH cares most about the following:

- Important not to restrict membership at ACH level
- ACH doesn't view itself as a geographically based organization
- We like the opt in model, joining specific individual organizations with intention, instead of a citizen-of-the-world model
- We are sympathetic to the concern that voting doesn't mean anything if you don't follow the affairs of a particular CO
    - We don't know how to follow up on that but want to acknowledge
- We support the principle of avoiding competition between COs in the ADHO structure
- Everyone who has paid the fee should be able to vote for people who represent us
    - There should be a clear democratic chain of representation, or clear disclosure to the contrary
- We support idea of primary/secondary affiliation

We have two perspectives here: one, bureaucratic — how we divide ADHO funds; the other — how constituencies come to organizations.

Primary affiliation makes sense on an effective level. Having CO-specific skins would address the issue. We don't want primary membership in the sense of there being a hierarchy of membership types, though.

The rhetoric of the form should avoid primary/secondary affiliation.

ACH's position statement: ACH supports an open and flexible model of membership where individuals express interest in active involvement in specific constituent organizations. ACH is a geographically diverse organization and is invested in the future of a healthy international digital humanities community.

ACH mission generally

> The purpose of the Association shall be to encourage the use of computers and related technologies in the study of humanistic subjects. The Association shall further this goal by sponsoring regular conferences on computers and the humanities, and by otherwise facilitating contacts and discussion among individuals interested in the goal of the Association. The Association for Computers and the Humanities is formed exclusively for educational, research, and advocacy purposes. It is a founding, constituent member of the international umbrella organization, the Alliance of Digital Humanities Organizations (ADHO)."
>
> -ACH Constitution

Below are results of a breakout session during which we talked about initiatives/directions/ mission. They include ACH priorities as we understand them, and possible directions for moving forward.

- Pedagogy
  - Our role in training/education programs -- making recommendations for skill building and creating assessment instruments, building diverse constituencies. This ties into microgrants, job slam/newcomers outreach, career launching.
- ACH as onramp for scholars who are new to DH. How do we help people to move to the interior, and grow in their understanding of DH? Possibilities:
  - Expand the scope of the conference
  - Expand mentoring and facilitating more into the ACH mission
  - Improve awareness and circulation of new work in the field
  - Expose newcomers to a wider range of scholarship
  - Articulate training opportunities
  - Integrate what ACH already does and bring together our various activities especially with DHQ, DH Q&A, etc.
    - We have long been concerned with promoting inclusiveness in the DH community— and we're painfully aware that not everyone can get to the DH conference. We may consider, through our existing affiliation with AHA, grad student only competitions for AHA conference presentations, which we would review/accept and form into panels. We could investigate that in other targeted disciplines, to get DH practitioners into disciplinary conferences.
- ACH is particularly good on outreach to other communities (galleries/libraries/archives/ museums, other disciplines, THATCamp sponsorship), openness (DHQ, DH Q&A), and advocacy.
  - Should ACH be sponsoring workshops at discipline specific conferences (MLA/AHA/etc)?
- Helping to provide additional revenue for things people care about (like communication venues broadly writ)
- AAUP strategic planning document ([http://www.aaupnet.org/about-aaup/aaup-governance/ aaup-strategic-plan](http://www.aaupnet.org/about-aaup/aaup-governance/aaup-strategic-plan)): we like that it distinguishes between goals and strategies. But it would also keep us transparent about what we're letting slide. (Open agenda setting, for example, is on the website but has been languishing for the past year.)
- We've been discussing financial incorporation; NB this would make us an American organization by default. These issues keep circling sometimes.
- What does ACH do that's unique?

- Microgrants are important in themselves but also because they provide mentorship and connect generations of DHers. Rename them incubator or something, to reflect that?
- New forms of publication? bringing out undergraduate work, tying it into what's going on in more advanced DH?
- Bringing people who don't self-identify as DH (GLAM, "traditional" humanists, etc) into the conversation?
- Meetups / surgeries (clinics) at disciplinary conferences? We'd need to build funding for this into our budget to support refreshments/travel/etc. And we could ask in return for summary blurbs that we could then disseminate (via newsletter?).
  - Relatively inexpensive/effective: symbolic amount of funds for a correspondent who reports back?
  - Supporting in some way micro-regional DH meetups? (Distribution of information?)
    - THATCamp and workshops sometimes raise people's level of expectation about the depth of what it is they're learning, without a clear way forward. It's a model we could continue to improve, giving people a clear next step for after their first THATCamp. So you've done your first workshop; now what?
  - ACH could also do followup questions to people who attended a workshop 2yrs ago: where are you at now, what are you doing?
- Moving this all forward:
  - We need a timeline
  - We need to decide: what is the ACH not doing, by design and declaration?
  - Resolved to take this forward in email

Models for leadership continuity

We need better guidelines for leadership positions: Should there be a prior Executive Council service requirement for officer posts (this would be a bylaws change)? Should there be a warmup period (vice president as president-elect)? Should there be an Executive Director?

One big challenge we've seen: difficulties in developing a slate of nominees with the requisite experience and availability for the P/VP positions (we need four candidates just for these). The slate development question is a perennial problem worth fixing. There's also the problem of workload: if we need an ED because there's too much work, doing away with the VP position doesn't make sense. If the problem is that there are too many things a secretary could do, why not have two secretaries?

So the options, as we see them, are:

- President and Executive Director model, with no Vice President post;
- Vice President as President-elect model;
- Increasing the number of secretaries from one to two (this would also be a bylaws change);
- No change at all.

Discussion:

- Having a VP be President-elect helps to ameliorate the learning curve issue and produce greater continuity.
  - Discussion revealed that a normative requirement for an officer to have served on the Executive Council prior to being elected/appointed would complicate things unnecessarily. We would rather make a clear statement in the nominations language that we expect

candidates to have a clear record of engagement with ACH. We may consider requiring that candidates write that record into their candidate statement.

- ED notion: we would need to think hard about what we would be doing with that position. In many organizations, distinction between officers and the ED (leader of staff) can be oversimplified: board sets agenda, ED carries it out. If we feel that there's a sufficient gap in our ability to carry out the things we're thinking about strategically, maybe we should have an ED or double up on the secretariat. But starting to think about an ED is starting to think about staff for an organization, which is a big paradigm shift and also expensive.
- Recognizing that at times it is useful to provide financial support to people as incentive or to assist them, we may think of giving the President and Vice President a research stipend for a student to help them if things back up or get difficult. This would be in lieu of an ED.
- Recognizing that there's a lot on our collective plate, we will try working differently. Officers will meet more regularly. Officers will take more liberty to reach out to Exec members and ask them to take something on—and Exec members will feel free to respond honestly regarding their availability in the moment. We will work harder to mobilize ACH members who have expressed interest in participating more actively in the Association's activities.

JG moves to vote on whether VP will be president elect. (Down sides: it really should be a bylaws change; it's asking for a much longer commitment.) Passed unanimously; the bylaws change will be included in the winter Association-wide elections slate.

Motion for amendment to bylaws for multiple secretariat: GW, KF seconds, unanimously approved.

In-person meeting

We considered whether an in-person Exec meeting will be effective next year, given the location in Australia and ever-diminishing travel budgets. The constitution requires us to have an AGM in conjunction with the annual DH conference, but does not require an Exec meeting.

Discussion:

- The underlying goal of this meeting is to get a lot of work done in a short time. The in-person nature of the meeting seems to play an important role in how much gets accomplished.
- We considered holding the meeting outside of the DH conference—perhaps at another conference, or as a stand-alone event.
    - This may create several other problems. In addition, DH conference is *our* conference. We are eager to continue expressing our enthusiastic support for it.
- We also considered extending the Exec meeting to 1.5 days, and do committee work as part of the meeting.
- We revisited the question of ACH paying for executive board members to attend meetings.
- It all seems to be coming down to finances. Resolved to revisit this in the budget allocations discussion below.

North American conference

Over the past year we attempted a collaboration with CSDH/SCHN on its annual conference (which occurs as part of the Canadian Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences). It went fine, though we didn't quite communicate the conference presence to ACH members effectively.

We continued the discussion of pursuing this collaboration in a more formal way, expanding the CSDH/SCHN conference to a North American digital humanities conference.

Discussion:

- Yes, we are very interested in doing this.
  - If it's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well. We should commit to an initial period of testing how this would work, before committing on a more permanent basis.
- If we want to have a different perspective/voice in the community, we must pay attention to the voices who can't afford to come to any conference.
  - We should invest in hardware for telepresence, that would travel to the conference.
- We should give serious thought of what specifically this conference will add to the global set of DH conferences.
- While a financial contribution may eventually be necessary depending on the shape a North American conference takes, for the specific CSDH/SCHN collaboration we discussed, what is required of ACH is labor.
- How would holding a North American conference impact ACH's identity with regard to our claim to not be an exclusively North American regional organization?
- Last year there was a mini-DHSI at Congress, which had its difficulties. Next year, if there were a larger DH contingent coming, reworking DHSI might be even more successful. So there'd be an extra-conference 2-day slot beyond usual conference days, in which ACH could (for example) offer sponsored workshops.

Proposed: that we go through with a CSDH/SCHN collaboration and a possible HASTAC sponsorship, and consider our own conference with a bid process.

BC moves that we do a one-year collaboration with CSDH/SCHN, GW seconds: approved.

Finalizing committee appointments

ADHO standing committees (some continuing):

- Awards (TC until 2015)
- Multilingualism (GW until 2016)
- Steering (SS until 2016, BN until 2015)
- Publications (MG, no specified term)
- Infrastructure (JB as webmaster; SS; no specified terms)
- PC 2015 (BC, JB)
- PC 2016 (JG, RR)
- CCC (GW)

ACH committees (some continuing):

- DHSI bursary awards: financial transactions — TC
- DHSI bursary awards: followup — JB
- Nominations: GW chairs, plus RR, BC, DP, MR, and one more non-EC member. GW is asked to spearhead finding the last member
- Communications and outreach group is a new standing committee co-led by JB and MR and including VZ, LS, KF, MG.
- Mentoring: BC point person, with LS and LR members

- Advocacy: LC point person
- Incubator grants: SB chairs, plus LS, VZ, TC

Motion to approve committees, GW moves, LS seconds, unanimously approved.

Budget allocations

Our current budgeted commitments are:

- DHQ $6000
- Humanist $300
- Events at DH $1000 (including Exec lunch),
- Balisage $750
- DHSI 3000 (which we can approach in a more distributed way)
- Total above: $11,050. Backstop has $1,250 left.

On the table are the following proposals and questions, which we have resolved to discuss further and prioritize in the coming months:

- Sponsoring a half day graduate symposium at Congress. (Australia, even with a subvention, will be out of most people's reach.) $500 subvention to 8 students and underwaged folks to attend Ottawa? Total of $4,000.
- Pooling with CenterNet and offering larger subventions for Australia, or else livestreaming more than just the keynotes. Investigating options for the latter now.
- Subvention to graduate student correspondents monitoring social media stream input at DH conference.
- Hiring one or more graduate student ACH communications fellow. Proposal in development.
- Delimit occasional funding awarding structure: fall, spring, summer (as advertised on the ACH website).
- Funding-wise, is there a special relationship between ACH and DHSI? If there is, we should articulate it more explicitly.
- We may consider supporting the annual Executive Council meeting by providing financial assistance to those Exec members who do not have institutional funding for attending it.
- We have $35K in bank cushion, and about a 12K annual operating budget. We should spend it down to about $15K. Proposed: that we should overspend by $5K a year for three years.
    - DHQ support: increased subvention would be great, but a much longer term commitment. Another form of support that would help would be one-time contributions to create specific features or pursue other one-time projects.
    - Resolved to take the spending-down conversation to email
- Can we find ways to increase revenue? You can do it running conferences/workshops/training institutes. We could seek partnership with other funders, like Mellon.

Motion to approve finances for next year (see agenda): JB moves, SB seconds, approved unanimously.

ADJOURN 5pm