Minutes

Officers attending: Jan Golinski (President), Alix Hui (Editor), Matt Lavine (Editor), Gwen Kay (Treasurer), Luis Campos (Secretary), J.P. Gutierrez (Executive Director), Bernie Lightman (Past President), and Helen Curry (Council-Delegate).

The meeting was called to order at 7:30am CST.

In attendance (in alphabetical order): Pnina Abir-Am, Adam Apt, Michael Barany, Marchelle Brain, Nathan Brooks, Kate Carpenter, Tamara Caulkins, Soraya de Chadarevian, Alix Cooper, Maria Elice De Brzezinski Prestes, John Emrich, Pedro Freitas, Abe Gibson, Ben Gross, Rebekah Higgitt, Bruce Hunt, Susan D Jones, Peggy Kidwell, Henk Kubbinga, Julia Kursell, Elaine Leong, Pam Mack, Minakshi Menon, Nicholas Michel, David Munns, Don Opitz, David Orenstein, Ted Pedersen, Maria Portuondo, Marsha Richmond, Alan Rocke, Robin Wolfe Scheffler, Judy Johns Schloegel, Betty Smocovitis, Simon Werrett, and Stephen Weldon

President’s Welcome (Jan Golinski)

Jan welcomed members to the meeting, and noted that anyone interested in volunteering for the Society should volunteer through the website of the society.

Secretary’s Report

- Approval of Agenda

  The Secretary noted that due to different versions of Zoom in existence, where not everyone would have access to a voting function, we would again need to conduct online voting using the “raised hand” feature. This would require that members remember to put their hands down after voting, so that other votes could be taken accurately. Michael Barany moved to approve the agenda; Tamara Caulkins seconded; there were 24 votes in favor; 1 potentially opposed; and 0 abstentions. The agenda was approved.

- Approval of Minutes

  The Secretary noted that his report was to request approval of the Business Meeting Minutes from October 2020, and these minutes had been posted online in advance of the annual meeting. Jan Golinski moved to approve the minutes; Helen Curry seconded. During discussion, David Orenstein added a minor amplification of his remarks; Jan accepted this as a friendly amendment. The vote was called. There were 26 votes in favor; 2 potentially opposed; and 1 abstention. The minutes were approved.

President’s Report
Jan recalled that in “re-reading the remarks I gave to last year’s Business Meeting, I recall how grateful everyone was to turn the page on 2020—the year of pandemic, lock downs, and intensified political conflict—and how hopeful we all were that 2021 would be significantly better.” While he felt that things have been improving, the path “has not been as steady or smooth as we hoped it would be at the start of the year.” He noted that he believed the Society was “fundamentally strong and set on a positive trajectory,” however, with a stable financial situation, thanks to the support of members and volunteers, and noted further that “our publications and meetings continue to be viewed as the preeminent venues for work in our field.” But he also acknowledged “challenges and even some setbacks” including the departure of Society Coordinator Ryan Feigenbaum, former Executive Director Jay Malone, and the required rebuilding of the Executive Office over many months.

Jan noted that the newly hired Executive Director, J. P. Gutierrez, along with a new Office Administrator, Morgan Valenzuela, were “highly competent” and working with “efficient arrangements for them to work remotely.” Among other things, he noted, the Executive Office has arranged to adopt a new membership management system, and has set in motion negotiations for a new contract with our publisher, as well as steps toward announcing a new physical location for the Society’s office, currently sited at the University of Notre Dame. Jan noted the challenges of the continuing pandemic and the impact of Hurricane Ida in Louisiana which forced the Society, for the second year running, to cancel its in-person annual meeting, but that this contingency had been foreseen and prepared for, and “by dint of incredibly hard work by our office staff and volunteers, the meeting has unfolded successfully over the last few days in this virtual format.”

Jan noted that “a significant setback was the resignation of Karen Rader as Vice-President in September,” noting that “I respect her decision and thank her wholeheartedly for her service to the Society.” He noted that her action created further difficulties regarding the presidential succession, however, which must comport with our Bylaws. There are only two options: “Either Council must appoint a new Vice-President before the end of the year, and that person will become president on 1 January 2022; or our Vice-President-Elect, Evelynn Hammonds, will be expected to act as President pro tempore from that date. Evelynn has expressed her preference to be President during her expected term of 2024 and 2025, and Vice-President during the two prior years. The Council is therefore seeking to appoint someone who can serve as President for 2022 and 2023.” Jan noted that the “Inclusive and Transparent Governance Review” was also now in suspension, following the Vice President’s resignation, and would remain so until the resolution of the question of leadership succession. It may potentially resume under new leadership “perhaps with a more streamlined organizational structure.”

Jan noted that development activities were now reorienting “away from the immediate needs of the pandemic and toward longer term priorities” including the Society’s centennial in 2024, which he felt offered “an opportunity to launch a capital campaign” for new priorities for the Society, but that this work required a restaffed committee under new leadership to set the
strategic priorities. Jan expressed his optimism about the Society’s future, despite the difficulties of the past years, and expressed his gratitude for having been able to serve.

Executive Director’s Report

J.P. Gutierrez delivered his first report, noting how pleased he was that the annual meeting had 1,150 participants, with 628 registrants from HSS, and overall had resulted in “a pretty wonderful and I think smoothly run online event.”

Having entered into the HSS whirlwind on July 6, J.P. noted that he sought to address many issues in the past four months. All HR administration has been migrated to a new professional employment organization, allowing the Executive Office to manage all aspects of HR, payroll administration, healthcare, PTO, independently of any university control, which provides both for expanded healthcare options and for the ability of HSS employees to work anywhere in the US. It also allows a better system of control, which aids our external auditing mechanisms. In moving to a more flexible workplace, J.P. was able to conduct a nationwide search for a new office administrator, and hired Morgan Valenzuela on July 25, who is based in the Washington DC area and brings “a bolt of energy and enthusiasm to HSS.” J.P. provided an update on a new website and integrated membership management database which will allow HSS to take these processing of transactions such as membership dues in-house, and will give member a centralized site to access Society resources, such as our journal. Set to launch in mid-January, the new systems involve large data migrations and web builds, but has been undertaken with the advice of the Technology and Communications Committee.

J.P. also provided an update on the issuing of request for proposals for new publishers for Isis and Osiris, and that the Committee on Publications is reviewing the proposals with an eye to a decision by the end of February 2022. A separate reissuing of the request for proposals for a new location of the Executive Office was also announced, with an expected move in the spring of 2022.

J.P. expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to join HSS as its new Executive Director: “it’s been a wild few months, but I have loved every minute of it” he said.

Editor’s Report

The Editors noted with pride that for the first time an issue of Isis was released early, due to the hard work of Joan Vandergriff, Marchelle Brain, and Megan Raby. They noted that they were now populating the December 2022 issue, and discussed the current backlog of the journal, which is as long as they would like. Geographical diversity of content in the journal has increased, while temporal diversity has decreased, which they believe to be an artifact of “how people are identifying their work and the type of science that is being covered.” Time to publication remains delayed to the pandemic, but is improving, even as securing reviewers (and their reports) remains difficult at times. The pandemic wave of manuscripts received has returned to a normal steady stream.

They referred to their gender report, noting that the equity attained six month ago had slipped once again. While more data will shed light on longer-term trends, they speculate that access to
archives and the ability to do research will have a long tail, leading them to “think about what kinds of interventions we can make” so that the pages of the journal reflect the membership.

They also described the creation of an editorial practicum composed of seven interested early career women interested in learning more about the publishing process. They noted that the *Isis CB* continues to innovate, including releasing a new special issue, and *Osiris* is also thriving. They also noted that the proposed report on the future of communications, social media, and public outreach that they had promised was now obviated by the arrival of the new Executive Director, who would be taking these plans forward for the Society at large.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Gwen began with good news, noting that there was now a permanent endowment for the Watson, Helen, Miles and Audrey Davis Prize. She expressed her gratitude for the donation and the work it took to secure it. Regarding the Society’s larger finances, she reminded the membership that the Society now alternates between a financial review and a full audit, and this year we had an audit, concluding: “We were given an ‘unmodified report’ – there are no issues with scope, and no material deficiencies from generally accepted auditing practices.”

Gwen noted that the budget passed by Council in June contained many unknowns, including the costs of the separation agreement with the former Executive Director upon his resignation; the unknown and potentially higher salaries and benefits for the new Executive Office personnel (the incoming Executive Director and full-time office administrator); and the anticipated $165,000 in penalty fees in the event we needed to exit our contract with the Sheraton New Orleans should we need to go virtual. As we have successfully rescheduled the New Orleans meeting to 2025, this latter fee is no longer a concern. She noted that a careful reader of the budget would also see that there were lines for the new location of the Executive Office and the *Isis* office, but that we have good estimates to draw on for these expenses.

**Committee Reports** (synopsis by J.P. Gutierrez)

- *CoHP.* J.P. noted that Council had approved a change in the procedures manual confirming traditional practice that no single book could win more than one prize, and that the Society does not issue honorable mentions.
- *CoEE.* J.P. noted that CoEE ran the nomination and award process for Hazen Prize for the first time, which will be our process going forward, and that they are continuing work on the website for National History Day.
- *CoP* has put out bids for new publishers for our journals, and a call for new editors of *Isis*, with indications of interest expected in 2022.
- *CoMP* is going forward in evaluating what our conferences look like in the future.
- *TCC* has been involved in considerations of the new user experience of the new Society website, and has been looking at brand architecture and how to be more public-facing with our media.
- **Nominating Committee** has been hard at work, filling out the slate of candidates for the 2022 election.
CoDI is still working on the question of demographic data collection. It is hoped this will be in place in time for the launch of the new website and database in the new year.

**Discussion.** David Orenstein asked about variations in the criteria for the Pauly Prize, and felt that its English-language focus was exclusionary. He noted that “HSS is a US society, but it has international aspirations. How do we go about making it significantly international by broadening number of working languages?” Jan noted that the this wording was approved by Council at the request of the Committee on Honors and Prizes, and that one appropriate way to bring this question forward would be for David to contact CoHP. As for the larger question, Jan agreed: “HSS is primarily an American-based society, which in certain respects, in terms of the laws that govern us and in terms of our relations with the national government, is oriented toward the US. But it is also an international society, and it has many members from beyond the US and seeks to serve their needs. That is the situation; you are exactly right in identifying what the situation of the Society is.”

David asked to hear from the editors. They replied that such a linguistic expansion for *Isis* or all publications “is certainly possible” and that it would “require an enormous addition to the apparatus in terms of reviewing and actual manuscript editing—but if this is the will of the Society we are happy to consider it. It would require ramping up a couple more arms of production, but there is no reason it couldn’t be done. Other journals do it.” David said that even an effort to include English, French, and Spanish would be appropriate as a starting point for a North American identity. Matt noted that *Isis* does review scholarship in languages other than English, under the leadership of reviews editor Projit Mukharji. Alix offered a land acknowledgment in the chat. Stephen noted that the CB is engaged in such efforts at diversifying its reach, especially in Italian. Former Treasurer Adam Apt noted in the chat: “Without arguing for or against, I will note that some years ago, as the Society decided to try much harder to become the international organization that Sarton had envisaged, it was a conscious decision to continue publishing only in English.”

Michael Barany raised a question how our solvency depended on “a massive unrealized gain on our investments, and asked whether that dependence “represents a threat for society going forward given that outside of endowment, our revenue outpaces expenses, or how to think about that aspect of the budget.” Gwen noted that the sources of our income have always been membership dues and meeting registration, as well as our endowment, and that “we have been very fortunate with performance of market. We have a very robust endowment.” She noted that we have, over the past two years, increased our draw on certain funds – the Dibner Fund can only be used for *Isis* but our draw has been far less than our costs, so we raised the draw from that (also for CB). However, there are temporarily restricted funds –the spin off from the Dibner and CB funds – that can only be used for these areas, and we felt it was better to use these monies as they were intended. Prize draws are all appropriately scaled at present.

Regarding the rest of the Society’s finances, she noted that while we try to keep our draw under 5%, the budget passed had a very high draw of 7.8%. She anticipated that our draw will probably be “far lower, as our expenses will be less in some categories than expected,” such as in meeting costs and in Executive Office search costs and noted that “historically we’ve drawn less than we anticipated.” Finally, Gwen noted her hope that the Society might use its centennial as a
way to shore up support for either an Executive Office or for annual meetings, so as to have built-in monies to fund these spaces and need to rely less on the general endowment.

Michael asked further questions about the solicitation for new publishers, and the income structures in place with our membership being managed by the University of Chicago (a situation where increasing membership did not increase the income we received). Michael also asked about the question of considering nonacademic publishers, and how considerations of open access have not only a financial bearing on the Society, but bear on other values as well. J.P. replied that the ways in which subscriptions and membership dues were tied together were likely to change as we bring our membership database and systems in-house, and uncouple the two, and that this was part of the proposals being evaluated by CoP. He anticipated that while 2023 will look a bit muddy on this front, due to bookkeeping necessities, it should be clearer by 2024. He thought that having members come to us to serve them will enable us to address other society priorities, such as offering different types of membership to different types of people. (Ben Gross asked about the prospect of tiered membership levels. Luis noted that Council had approved a tiered membership possibility, and that the details of this were what CoM and J.P. would be working out in the future. Luis also shared the link to our Sponsor-A-Scholar policy, https://hssonline.org/membership/sponsor-a-scholar-program/ ) J.P. noted that it is important to have the right committees evaluate proposals, and that the CoP presented to the Executive Committee last week and echoed many of the concerns that Michael had raised, and so these matters were being taken into consideration. CoP will come back to the Executive Committee and to Council, and the publishers will come and present.

David asked a second question, related to his perceived opacity of the Society. He felt that “as far as I can see, even doing book reviews in Isis is a closed circle.” He asked why the editors did not accept offers to review. He also wondered why there was no way to offer a paper at this meeting, noted he had no idea how to get involved with a committee. How can this be improved, he asked, “so members can know how we can get involved?” Matt replied that the editors “make a concerted effort have a reviewership that is reflective of breadth of society and discipline as a whole” and that in seeking to address structural inequalities, under Projit’s leadership of book reviews, there is quite a large circle of people who are approached to write reviews. “There are simply too many people out there to be working from within our rolodex,” he noted, and “this is not an old boys’ network.” He noted in particular that Stephen Weldon’s CB “is a remarkable democratizing tool for reviewers takes us out of networks and membership, instead of just working from within the directory, which was a common practice in the past.” In response to the annual meeting, J.P. noted that that there was an online platform for people to submit papers to this conference. And in response to serving the Society on a committee, Jan noted that Council makes appointments to the committees, and that the Society “very much welcome volunteers volunteering through the website of the society.” David said that the call for papers for this meeting only referred to calls for sessions and not individual papers; Soraya de Chadarevian, as program co-chair, clarified that the call included sessions, individual papers, and roundtables. But she raised the question of how to better circulate the call for papers, and how to make it more visible: “Who receives those mailings? Who looks on website? How can we broaden the number of people who see it in a timely manner?” She felt that reaching out to students is very important.
David Munns noted that it had been a tumultuous time, and that given his administrative experience he was “interested in a fuller explanation of where the Society is going, and what other stresses might be there.” There was no response from any officer or Council member present. David also asked about the CoHP policy regarding honorable mentions, which he felt was at cross-purposes with a tiered membership structure. Jan noted that Council had discussed the matter rather fully, and finally voted to support CoHP’s proposal. Reasons for doing so included the potential effect on decisions about prize winners in subsequent years, for which people could continue to be eligible, and how this might relate to being mentioned or not mentioned in a previous year’s prize decision. Jan noted that there were certainly some on Council who shared David’s views, “but that view did not in the end command a majority on Council.” Jan imagined that this might be something under continuous review. Bernie clarified that the Society has never offered “honorable mentions or runners-up—it is not a change, this is more a request to formalize what has already been for many years an informal policy.” Alan Rocke noted that he had served on the Pfizer Prize committee, and described several concerns that the committee had about how extending honorable mentions might affect eligibility in subsequent years, and that it was also not “not clear what runner-up means” and that these were some factors considered within the Pfizer Committee. Dave added that he felt for early career scholars, non-US scholars, or scholars from nontraditional backgrounds, that “there is substantial capital that comes along with even an honorable mention” and in a world of so many books, increasing awards would be important, rather than “needlessly narrowing a field where we are trying to be broader and inclusive.” He felt the policy was retrogressive. Jan noted that the discussion would surely continue.

Michael returned to David’s first question, and aware of the “major limitations on what you can say in this forum,” he wondered whether there was “anything that came up through those departures, that bear on society governance, allocation of responsibilities, lessons learned, or things learned in context of society governance would be useful to have in this setting.” Jan noted that there may be lessons to be learned about how to improve society governance at a future date. He felt that the question of leadership succession needed to be addressed first, and that the ITGR “or some similar process” might then be resumed. He felt that such a process might “be simplified in certain respects” and noted that “some of the things that the ITGR was considering are issues that may in fact be moot with the new Executive Office that we have, which has for example take over aspects of society communications and that may change potentially the ITGR consideration of that sort of issue. I do think there are things that need to be considered and lessons that need to be learned and I expect the society leadership will proceed with that.”

Susan Jones expressed her thanks “to our fearless leaders who have gotten us through these last couple of years, who have fearlessly persevered despite every problem, despite every challenge, and despite every challenge, despite having a meeting cancelled, and having to quickly pivot, and having to work with not knowing which numbers they were going to be working with… I find it absolutely extraordinary for the society, and I thank you.” J.P. echoed his own thanks: “In my short time, what this EC and Council has done through this period of time, is much to be applauded. Things could have gone not well, but we are resilient and looking at a centennial in a few years, and that has a lot of to do with what this EC and Council is able to
do.” David Orenstein added in chat: “under the recent conditions organisational survival is a miracle!”

The meeting adjourned at 8:45am CST.

_Duly recorded by Luis Campos, Secretary_