NCS TRUSTEE ELECTION 2022
Candidate Statements

Robert R. Edwards (Pennsylvania State University)

I am honored to be nominated and eager to serve as a Trustee, if elected. Chaucer’s poetry has been at the center of my scholarship and teaching. I have written monographs on his early poems and on his relation to Boccaccio as well as articles, essays, and book chapters on individual poems, Chaucer’s narrative techniques, authorship, sources, and reception. Currently, I am editing *Troilus and Criseyde* for the Cambridge University Press edition of Chaucer’s works and co-editing a volume on Middle English poetry for the Oxford History of Poetry in English. My academic service has given me some skills and perspective for serving a large, complex professional organization. I have been the chair of an English department at one institution and the head of a Comparative Literature department at another, the director of a large graduate program, and the director of an interdisciplinary center for the arts and humanities. I served as the program chair of the 2006 NCS Congress in New York. In the near and medium term, it seems to me, the Society must think through several critical issues, most of them generated by circumstances that we do not control. The pandemic disrupted much of our customary patterns of intellectual work. Do we need additional tools, platforms, and arrangements for research and teaching, beyond the journal and online bibliography on which we continue to rely? Many members see the effects of broad shifts in educational commitments, funding, and resources that potentially push our field toward the margins in universities, colleges, and schools. Many recognize climates of intolerance that threaten free inquiry, challenging scholarship, and teaching that confronts received truths. In the midst of a generational shift, do we have adequate structures to support the careers of a diverse membership that brings new questions, incisive and urgent, to the works we have long studied? The Society does not possess the power to solve these issues, but it has the professional standing to affect them while remaining a welcoming forum for scholars and teachers.

Carissa Harris (Temple University)

I’m an Associate Professor of English at Temple University in Philadelphia. My research and teaching focus on Middle English and Middle Scots literature, gender and sexuality, trans-historical connections, rape and consent, and (of course) Chaucer. My first book, *Obscene Pedagogies: Transgressive Talk and Sexual Education in Late Medieval Britain* (Cornell, 2018) won the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship’s biennial prize for Best First Book of Medieval Feminist Scholarship. With Elizaveta Strakhov and Sarah Baechle, I co-edited *Rape Culture and Female Resistance in Late Medieval Literature* (Penn State, 2022), an essay collection that includes undergraduate teaching editions of sixteen Middle English and Middle Scots pastourelles. I am on the editorial team at the journal *Exemplaria: Medieval, Early Modern, Theory* and at *The Sundial*, a public-facing digital publication. My current book in progress is titled *The Poetics of Rage: Women’s Anger, Misogyny, and Political Power in Premodern Britain*. As a scholar and as a person, I am committed to racial, sexual, and reproductive justice. If I were elected as a Trustee of the New Chaucer Society, I would seek to strengthen the Society’s investment in these various forms of justice and to continue the
Biennial Congress’s vital role in fostering innovative new directions in Chaucer scholarship. I believe firmly in the importance of public scholarship that makes the Middle Ages legible and meaningful to broader audiences; in community engagement informed by our scholarly expertise as medievalists; and in making the society welcoming—and, more importantly, useful—for those who have studied medieval literature but are not currently employed as professors.

Aditi Nafde (Newcastle University)

NCS has been the cornerstone of my academic life since I attended my first Congress in Siena in 2010. I served on the Programme Committee for the London Congress in 2016, where I organised the Graduate Workshop and a hands-on manuscript session for graduate delegates with the special collections at Senate House (which involved an intrepid journey on the London Underground). I also served on the Howard Scholars Committee. More broadly, Chaucer has been central to my main priority as a medievalist: promoting inclusive research. I have given public lectures and workshops on Chaucer for a wide range of audiences across the Northeast of England, from primary school children to pensioners. My research funded the development of an innovative app, Hands-On Reading, which connects digital writing with digital reading to encourage a scribe-like slow reading of the Canterbury Tales. As a member of the panel updating the national Subject Benchmark Statement for English Studies, I’m committed to promoting EDI in our subject and access to material that has historically been the preserve of a few. I would be delighted to serve as a trustee and to support NCS’s commitment to inclusivity, collegiality, and academic integrity.

Richard Newhauser (Arizona State University)

I am a professor of English and Medieval Studies at Arizona State University, with research and teaching centered on Chaucer, sensology (or sensory studies), and the moral tradition in the Middle Ages (and following centuries). My main research focus lately has been The Chaucer Encyclopedia (as editor-in-chief), which includes 509 contributors from around the world with over one million words, to be published in 2022. My latest book publications include Optics, Ethics, and Art in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries: Looking into Peter of Limoges’s Moral Treatise on the Eye (co-editor with Herbert Kessler), and A Cultural History of the Senses in the Middle Ages (editor). In recent years, the NCS has taken progressive steps towards becoming a more inclusive academic society by not just talking about matters of inclusion, but vigorously foregrounding occasions that emphasize how globality and racial, social, gender, and employment justice enhance the work we all do as academics. Augmenting these occasions will be beneficial to everyone involved in the NCS. They will help ensure its growth into the future, as we continue to add new methods, new pedagogical practices, new media possibilities, and new archival findings to what we do as scholars and teachers. We all have public-facing work to do as well. The NCS can play a role in countering the anti-intellectual forces now active around the world by also speaking to the general public. I look forward to underscoring these efforts as a Trustee of the NCS as I have done in my research, my teaching, my work on The Chaucer Encyclopedia, and my activities at Arizona State University. At ASU, I have helped develop a biennial Chaucer Celebration that reaches out to the general public as well as to academics. Since 2018, the Celebration has included a contest open to undergraduates and high
school classes for the creation of videos based on Chaucer’s narratives. Support by the NCS for public events like these and many others will only increase our influence in the cultural and intellectual life of wherever we live.

**Sarah Salih (King’s College London)**

I am a Reader in English at King’s College London. I have been a member of NCS since c. 2000 and edited *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* from 2013-18. As SAC editor I had the privilege of surveying the remarkable range of scholarship submitted to the journal and seeing how our members and readers forge contacts between late medieval literatures and other times and places. NCS and SAC have a strong record of rigorous scholarship, theoretical innovation and sheer pleasure: we should be proud of that record and build on it while addressing the many challenges of the present day, including, not exclusively: support for junior and untenured scholars; arguing for the continuing validity of medieval studies in curricula; actively seeking contacts beyond the Anglosphere and globalising our medieval.

**Myra Seaman (College of Charleston)**

I am honored to be nominated to stand for Trustee of NCS. Despite the fact that my work only rarely resides squarely within Chaucer Studies, I have benefitted deeply over the past 20 years from my membership in NCS. Indeed, my participation was made possible by the organization’s deliberate expansion of its scope, during that time, beyond Chaucer and the later fourteenth century. I am grateful, too, for the organization’s responses to the rapidly changing landscape of higher ed, with its decreasing institutional support for tenure-track lines and intensification of demands for graduate student professionalization. NCS has, more recently, begun sponsoring important conversations that contribute to our field’s necessary reckoning with its racist structures. Over the years, NCS has sustained me in such ways, and I have thus far responded by serving as a program committee member for the deferred 2020 congress. I would welcome the opportunity over the next four years to help guide the organization into its future, as Trustee. I would bring to my term the experiences and insights I gained while chairing a large department at a public liberal arts and sciences institution through the pandemic over the past five years. Prior to that, I co-founded in 2004 and thereafter collaboratively led the BABEL Working Group, established as a place of professional welcome, then rare, for graduate students, contingent academic workers, and faculty at teaching institutions. BABEL drew attention to the needs of its members and provided alternative models for academic community in medieval studies and beyond, work now being done by organizations like NCS. I also co-founded in 2010 and co-edited for 11 years the quarterly journal *postmedieval*, which supported new knowledges and previously marginalized voices while redefining the forms access could take. Such work NCS fosters through its biennial congress, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, and now, *Pedagogy and Profession*. I have been inspired by NCS’s active deployment of its resources to address longstanding fundamental inequities in academia and beyond, and to support the teaching and study, at every level, of a reconstructed medieval studies. Should I be elected, I will bring to the position of Trustee my proven commitment to pursuing a more diverse and inclusive medieval studies.