

Past President's Report: 2015-2016

Let me begin my recap of some of the highlights of the SPR year with a confession. I loved being SPR's President! As you'll see below, the year went anything but according to plan, yet it concluded with some efforts that should strengthen SPR into the future and provide greater benefits to the membership. For this experience, and the two years building up to it, I offer you my heartfelt gratitude for allowing me to serve SPR in this role. While memories of the crises and late evening emails fade, my gratitude will remain.

Trouble in paradise.

The SPR annual cycle has many recurrent parts: newsletters, call for abstracts, submissions for the annual meeting and awards, the continual work of SPR's committees, the January and June Executive Committee meetings, all culminating in the annual meeting. This year was no exception, except for the unexpected. Events intertwined the Host Committee's and EC's year in a novel way. It began when December brought us letters from members of the BDS (Boycott, Disinvest, Sanction) movement, urging us to cancel our plans to hold the 2016 SPR annual meeting in Jerusalem, Israel. These individuals, most from the organization *Jews for Justice for Palestinians*, brought their political concerns to our attention, succinctly, that they believed that any international meeting in Israel would provide political support to a country/government that adversely affected the Palestinians in the occupied territories. After consideration, our general reply, which we also summarized in the January newsletter, was that SPR stands for the free exchange of research and ideas which benefit attendees regardless of the city/country it is held. They were not persuaded. In response to their many communications, the EC and Host committees had frequent exchanges dealing with substantive concerns both ethical (what are our obligations, if any, on this issue) and practical (will they obstruct our annual meeting?). One dramatic point occurred when a prominent leader tried to join our organization evidently to access the list-serve for political purposes. For the first time the EC made the decision not to accept that individual's membership application, as the person was already firmly working against our planned annual meeting, one of the principal aims of SPR, as noted in our constitution. Trying to subvert SPR's annual meeting? Who could imagine that so much effort would go to this issue? All members of the EC and Host Committees expressed a sense that we grew as an organization in responding to this challenge. Running concurrently with the BDS interventions, there were the safety concerns that attend visiting the middle east, which sadly lead some to stay away. Yet, terrorist acts earlier this year in places like Paris, San Bernadino, California, and Orlando Florida, reinforced the reality that this concern is not an Israeli phenomenon per se, but a global one. Despite all the above, our annual meeting attendance exceeded our expectations. I offer my profound thanks to all the members of the EC and especially the Host Committee members Gary Diamond, Hadas Wiseman, Gaby Sheffler, and Orya Tishby who provided a calming *holding environment* as the EC weighed all the problems and possibilities these issues presented. We are a wiser

organization for it.

Changes

Change is part of life and an expected aspect of leadership in any democratically run organization. Tracy Ells, our Executive Officer (EO) this past, decade has finished his term of office and Marna Barrett of the University of Pennsylvania, and last year's Host Committee Chairperson, has taken up the EO position. Reviewing everything Tracy has done for SPR brings a sense of wonder. He has left us better organized, more fiscally sound, and provided a record of institutional and constitutional memory, as keeper of the *ABook of Decisions* documenting the EC's actions. While the EO is a non-voting member of the EC, Tracy offered a steadying, multi-year perspective that helped the EC consider the future, while staying true to SPR's history and aims. Many of us feel sad with his departure, but the sense of gratitude for his accomplishments outweighs that. Besides, after an apprenticeship year working with Tracy, Marna is off to a great start as our new EO. We are also fortunate that Bernadette Eells will continue in her important, but often unsung, role supporting the EO's functions.

The EC meeting ended this past June with some additional changes. Jeanne Watson, ended her year as Past President, but *What was she thinking?* will not be leaving the EC entirely quite yet. Next year's annual meeting is in Toronto, Canada, and Jeanne will be back meeting with the EC again as Host Committee Chairperson for the annual meeting. Jeanne, thank you for all your contributions these past 4 years as you traversed the *cursus honorum* of SPR, but also for the sacrifices you are about to make this coming year! Those of us who have hosted an annual meeting know the steep cost of membership in this club! The EC has also seen additional departures. Henning Shauenberg, finishing his term as regional President of the European Chapter. Henning was an effective counterbalance to our wildest considerations, keeping the EC closer to SPR's *gründlichkeit*. Stig Poulsen, who by now has emerged from the tunnels at the 2014 meeting site, and recovered from his role as Host Committee Chairman of the successful Copenhagen meeting, assumes the role of European Chapter President. Mariane Krause finished her term as the Latin American Chapter President. Mariane worked hard to refine our understanding of students and researchers who have greater financial needs than many of us. One result is that we have now altered our World-bank country-based view of financial stresses, which will have broad implications for considering future member eligibility for grants and awards. We welcome Fernanda Serralta of Porto Alegre, Brasil as the new LA Chapter President.

Committees work!

Our committees continued to perform yeomen's duty. With the help of the Communications Committee, Tali Boritz, Chairperson, we switched to the new newsletter format. We hope to take advantage of its flexibility of features and may adjust the appearance as time goes on to. One needed development is that, after a year's hiatus, Katie Aafjes-van Doorn has assumed the chair of the Webinar Sub-committee and we can look forward to restarting that educational effort. At the Annual General Members meeting in June, I forgot to call the Communications Committee members to

give their report. As an act of contrition, let me apologize to the two members who waited patiently until the meeting was over and inquired of my error of omission.

Andrzej Werbart has served as our first chairperson of the *Small Grants Awards Committee* and all who have applied for or received grants can attest to how well this committee has functioned. Andrzej also has offered useful suggestions to improve the committee's functions and the awards themselves, which the EC took up and acted upon (see below). Many thanks to Andrzej and our best wishes to Andres Roussos who is assuming the Chairman's position.

In the *Journal Report*, Editor Wolfgang Lutz informed us that *Psychotherapy Research* is flourishing. Our 5-year Impact Factor has risen considerably to 2.57, which puts us well into the ranks of the better journals. Our thanks to Editors Wolfgang, Jeff Hayes and the outgoing Editor Chris Muran, as well as all the associate and action editors and to those of us who serve as reviewers.

Awards!

One exciting part of the opening ceremony is the presentation of awards. This year the *Distinguished Career Award* went to two members: Paul Crits-Christoph and Jeremy Safran. One judge of how significant the awardees' contributions have been is my reaction to both: I thought they'd received this award years ago! The *Early Career Award* went to Ueli Cramer and Sigal Zilcha-Mano. Our congratulations to both and we look forward to their continued contributions to knowledge and to SPR.

Our thanks to Andres Roussos, Chairman, and to members of the *Student Travel Awards Committee* for their efforts in reading and judging the applications. Our congratulations go to the awardees: 1. Katie Aafjes-van Doorn (Netherlands, Eu-Chapter); 2. Nicolas Suarez (Chile, LA-Chapter); 3. Megnfei Xu (China, NA-Chapter). The EC has also considered the need for additional funds to expand these in the future (see below).

The *Lester Luborsky Student Poster Awards Committee*, headed by Claudio Martinez, read a large number of posters and offered the 3 awards to the following student members: 1. Isabelle Leduc-Cummings, Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology, McGill University, Canada; 2. Anna Babl, Division of Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy, Department of Psychology, University of Bern, Switzerland; 3. Sally Cheung, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Our congratulations to all student awardees are offered with an important proviso: we hope that you stay connected to SPR and make it an integral part of your intellectual life. In addition, we expect great things to come from each of you as a follow-up!

Other initiatives, new and continuing.

Intellectual property. This spring Adam Horvath presented us with a generous offer. He offered to give SPR the ownership of his *Working Alliance Inventory (WAI)* which many of you have used in your alliance research. Rather than see this as a single event, the EC realized that we need a general approach to receiving and administering intellectual property. What a great opportunity for SPR to promote awareness of and

access to intellectual property which may come its way. So, we have started an initiative to determine the best way to administer intellectual property and serve as a library and for our membership and non-members. More on this, this coming year.

Investment. This word carries many meanings. Two of them are highly related in SPR's case. The first is investing in our student's and members, currently through promoting contacts and exchange of ideas at the annual meeting, but also in offering travel, poster and small grant awards. The second is investing to increase SPR's financial resources. They are linked in that successful investing of the second type increases resources for investments in the first category. To this end, the EC has taken several initiatives. First after two years of discussion, we have established an investment committee consisting of myself, Paul-Crits-Christoph and the Executive Officer, Marna Barrett. The EC is still refining its strategic vision for investing, but after that is in place, the committee will begin to invest funds that are in SPR's capital account, currently several hundred thousand dollars. Over time, sound investment should make these funds grow. Also to this end, the EC is exploring whether to create a coordinated charitable foundation (say, SPR Foundation) to accept charitable contributions to be dedicated to SPR's works, for which it could offer tax receipts. Finally, the EC is considering instituting a policy of allocating some proportion (say, 2) of the increase in value of its investments and any profit from its annual meeting toward increasing funds available for travel and small grant awards. While not in place yet, we anticipate a growing commitment to facilitating both attendance at annual meetings, as well as training and research of members. To this end we have revised both travel award criteria, expanded eligibility to include post-doctoral fellows, increased the value of our small grants and and created a new category of grant awards for multi-centered projects. Through these efforts, we hope that SPR will have an increasingly positive material effect on a stable and growing membership.

Your participation.

SPR is an organization made of up members, and its functioning is entirely based on its members contributions of money and dedicated efforts. Our tanks to all of you who participate through volunteering in the various committees, which carry out so many of SPR's vital functions. My personal thanks to those of you who responded to my presidential newsletter requests for ideas for us to consider. Finally, please vote in the upcoming election for General Vice-President. Democratic organizations only flourish when concerned members make thoughtful contributions.

Finis.

This ends my recap of the year, and again thank you for having me serve as your President. I look forward to a more quiet year as Immediate Past President (although Jeanne has warned me that chairing the Awards Committee is not an easy gig), and after that, as a *has-been* president! Thank you.