

The Renaissance Society of America, Inc.
Annual Member Meeting
Friday, 26 March 2021 [convened via Zoom]
12:00 p.m. Eastern

Agenda

- I. Announcements and moment of silence: Mara R. Wade, President
- II. Financial report: James Shulman, Treasurer
- III. Voting for Board of Directors and Nominating Committee vacancies, including announcement of tally of proxy votes: Carla Zecher, Executive Director
- IV. Q&A about Society programs and activities: Mara R. Wade

Minutes

President Mara Wade called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. She asked for a moment of silence to recognize all those RSA members lost in the past year. She then thanked the RSA's Executive Director, Carla Zecher, and the Immediate Past Presidents, Clare Carroll and Pamela H. Smith, for their advice. She also recognized and welcomed Vice President Nicholas Terpstra and newly appointed Secretary Owen Williams.

President Wade explained to the members that she became president immediately following the time of the Philadelphia meeting that was not held due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The subsequent months brought more work than ever before on the Executive Committee and Board of the RSA, which quickly took steps to ensure the safety of its staff and members. The RSA office was closed, and work commenced from home to successfully cancel the Philadelphia conference. Due to the generous response of many members who chose to donate their registration fee, the organization emerged from the conference cancellation in much better financial shape than would otherwise have been possible.

This situation also allowed the RSA to consider how well it was serving its members. Following a survey of the membership to identify areas of need, the Executive Committee and Board created ad hoc committees and working groups to consider and address specific issues. New initiatives included

- a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) working group chaired by Ricardo Padrón which soon evolved into a standing Board Position. Cassander Smith currently serves as the interim chair until the imminent election determines her successor;
- a two-section Membership Committee chaired by Monica Azzolini and James Parente tasked with considering how to increase and retain membership;
- a Graduate Advisory Committee consisting of members Celine Camps, Samantha Chang, Barbara Dietlinger, and Thomas Franke, who suggested modifications to the Humanities Commons platform and convened a series of "lightning rounds" that enabled doctoral candidates to present their work in progress;
- an ad hoc committee chaired by Tracy Cooper tasked with revising the RSA's Mission, Vision, and Values statements;

- an ad hoc committee chaired by Clare Carroll tasked with reviewing the system and structure of disciplinary representation, which follows on the study of the RSA's Associate Organizations chaired by Nicholas Terpstra;
- a restructured Research Fellowships Program to better support early career scholars;
- a new program of discussion groups involving professional development and peer-to-peer mentoring on a variety of topics of interest; and
- a series of webinars that explain the many benefit of RSA membership and introduce members to a variety of resources to advance their scholarship.

President Wade reminded the members that this work depends on the goodwill of the RSA Executive Committee, its Board members, and the general membership. She expressed how impressed she was with the dedication of these groups and thanked those who were in attendance. She also encouraged members interested in the work done by these groups to signal that they would like to join.

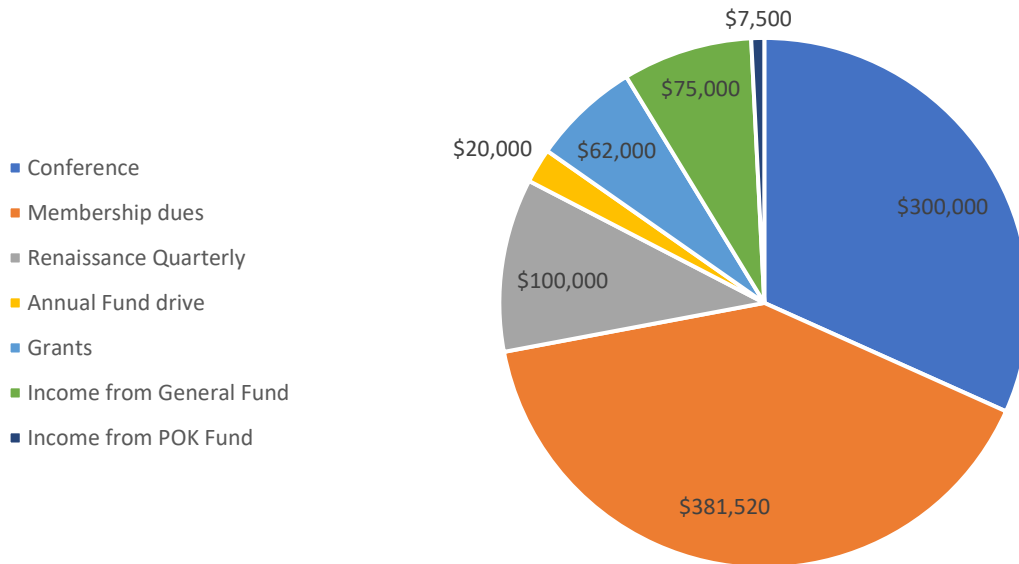
Shifting gears to discuss the upcoming virtual conference in mid-April, President Wade announced that it would host over 600 sessions over six days on a special platform built to accommodate it and to record each session. Recordings will be available for conference registrants for thirty days following the conference. To assist those in precarious positions who are experiencing financial hardships, conference registration fees have been discounted. To expand attendance beyond the usual scholarly cohort, this meeting will welcome classes sponsored by an RSA member. In these and other ways, the RSA is trying to remain nimble during this crisis so that it can emerge from the pandemic with a largely intact membership that builds on lessons learned and articulates a new vision for Renaissance studies.

President Wade recognized RSA Treasurer James Shulman to provide a report on the financial state of the organization. Treasurer Shulman explained that he would review the Society's endowment, the major categories of expense, the major components of revenue, and the underlying strategy to maintain a healthy fiscal picture.

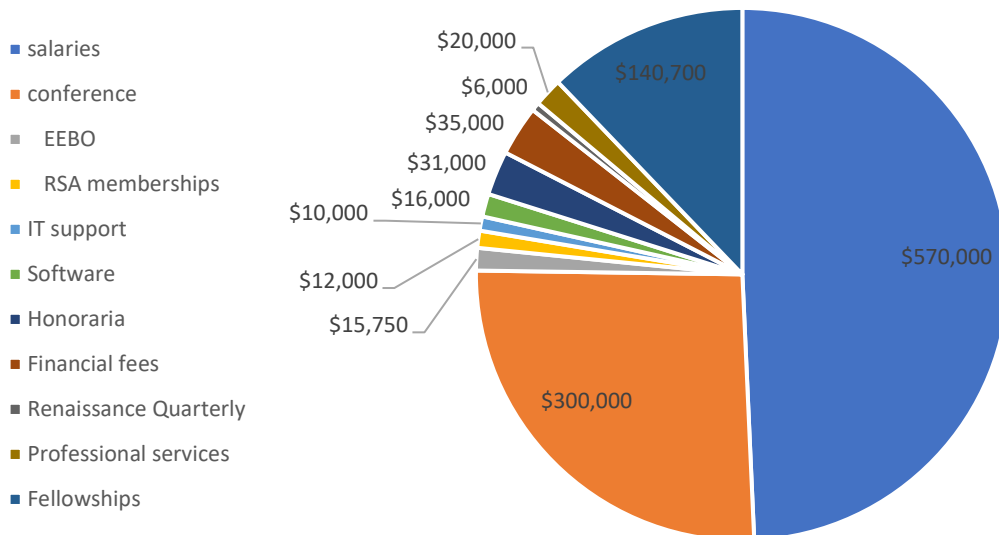
The pool of endowment funds or funds designated by the Board to be managed as an endowment amounts to slightly over \$3.4M, of which just over \$2.3M is invested in index funds and the remainder held in cash reserves for upcoming expenses associated with the Dublin conference. Another endowment fund established in the name of Paul Oskar Kristeller is worth \$339,128 and is used to underwrite fellowships.

Treasurer Shulman shared two pie charts with the breakdown of FY2021 projected expenses and projected revenue.

RSA FY 2021 Projected Revenue



RSA FY2021 Projected Expenses



He explained that the Dublin conference has many unknowns at this point. The RSA recognizes that hosting occasional European conferences is necessary for expanding international membership but these tend to cost more than North American conference sites because university partners are not usually available.

Treasurer Shulman closed his report with a note on membership and explained that reducing the membership fees for this year was a decision made with empathy for those in difficult situations, but also geared toward retaining more members during this pandemic and into the expected recovery. While the RSA has added 800 new members, the average membership fee has decreased from an average of \$95 to \$63. While this creates a near-term financial gap, he agreed that this decision was good for equity and diversity of membership and thus good for the future health of the RSA. Retention and growth of membership is the most crucial engine of a healthy organization. He noted that the level of annual giving is slightly down from the previous year and signaled that calls would be forthcoming to remind those who can contribute to do so.

President Wade next recognized Carla Zecher, the RSA's Executive Director, to share the Board of Directors and Nominating Committee ballot electronically for those who wished to vote during the meeting. As those votes were tallied, President Wade reminded those who were interested in joining ad hoc committees and working groups to contact those groups' chairs directly or to write to the RSA offices to express their interest.

RSA Program and Membership Coordinator Evan Carmouche shared the results of the voting:

Membership Chair: Monica Azzolini (Università di Bologna)
Conference Chair: Blake de Maria (Santa Clara University)
Annual Fund Chair: Hilaire Kallendorf (Texas A&M University)
Emerging Scholar Representative: Hannah Murphy (King's College London)
Student Counselor: Farah Bazzi (Stanford University)
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Chair: Cécile Fromont (Yale University)
Associate Organizations Chair: Timothy Kircher (Guilford College)
Nominating Committee: Stephen J. Campbell (Johns Hopkins University), Christina H. Lee (Princeton University), and Feisal G. Mohamed (Yale University)

He reported that all nominees received over 90% of the vote. President Wade welcomed the new members and recognized those who were able to attend this meeting.

President Wade drew the meeting to a close at 12:45 with thanks to all who work to make the RSA a successful organization.