

November 4, 2007 Board Meeting

AAGT Board Meeting

Present: Ann Bowman, Dan Bloom, Sarah Fallon, Peter Cole, Bud Feder, Phil Brownell, Ansel Woldt, Marcy Stern and Peter Philippon.

Absent: Jack Aylward, Marilyn Myles, Brian O'Neill, Tine van Wijk, Silvie Falschlunger, Morgan Goodlander, and Robert DeVos.

PROPOSED AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Manchester Conference (Sarah) including discussion about booking on website
- B. RCP (Tine)
- C. Treasurer's Report (Peter C)
- D. Committee on our Process – Task Force on Decision Making (Dan)
- E. Annual Meeting Feedback (Peter)
- F. Conference issues 2010
- G. E-newsletter (Marcy)
- H. Brief Report on SW-USA and SE-USA Regional Conferences from those who attended

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING TIME – December 16, 2007 –same times as the November meeting.

Welcome

Manchester Conference

In an email sent prior to the conference call, Sarah Fallon wrote:

Hi everyone,

Things have been SO intensely busy since the last board meeting that it is not possible to convey everything here. It would be physically impossible to type in the detail required in order to do justice to everybody's contributions. In that sense, this month's report will only be a very short summary of all that has actually been happening. I apologies if anyone feels short changed in this.

During this period, most of the established committees have been quiet – as most activity is waiting for the registration facility to go on-line. However, new groups of people have spontaneously emerged out of the need of the time. So, I have begun to carry the conference activity in terms of its current mail "threads" as opposed to my usual awareness of its various sub-committees.

I really want to express my appreciation to some people here, for their willingness to give their energy and make themselves so available, in these impromptu threads. I want to formally, and especially, thank Peter P and Phil for always being there and also for being there on full throttle, when necessary.

I particularly want to thank Peter P for going way beyond the call of duty in helping us with The Thistle negotiations, and the contract and registration issues.

I also want to thank Peter C, for coming in, and staying in, during the current intensity of establishing the fee structure and the various implications of how we pay.

I want to say very clearly that we would not have made the progress we have without them, and it's important to me that I fully acknowledge here the support that they have given.

Programme Planning:

Phil has been working with Susan to help the Peer Review Process, and has been sending out forms to people who are thinking about submitting proposals.

There was a discussion around the issue of asking presenters to sign up for the entire conference, and not just the day on which they are presenting. The decision was to ask presenters to pay the cost of attending the whole conference, and to encourage them to do so, although not to police their actual attendance.

Phil – “As a committee, we haven't been doing much; we have to wait until peer review has concluded.”

Publicity:

Ansel attended the SW-AAGT and Annual Meeting. He took Manchester Conference announcements and Call for Proposal forms, AAGT Membership Applications forms, SW-AAGT Conference Evaluation forms, and Continuing Education registration and certificates for distribution.

Ronnie has set up the database, via a Yahoo account, and we have used it twice now, for mail-outs. This first was a general mail-out and the second was a further prompt re presentation submissions.

Unfortunately, after the second mail-out, the account had been deactivated – possibly due to our sending out too many mails at a time and giving the impression we are spamming. It's looking like Ronnie will have to paste all the addresses, again, into a new Yahoo account.

We have put together a couple of video playlists to attract people both to Manchester and to the UK. The best time to mail these out will likely be after the registration facility is on-line, as a further attractor.

We have placed an Ad in the GANZ Journal.

Peer Review:

Susan has received eight proposals to date:

“ I think many factors contribute to this, one of which may be that we have scheduled such a large number of pre-conference workshops and specially invited presenters, many of whom might otherwise have submitted workshop proposals. I believe this should be revisied for 2010. Anyway, I reluctantly suggest we extend the deadline. “

I support Susan's recommendation to extend the deadline. I do think that one reason for so few proposals (at this stage) is that the registration details aren't on-line. Many people will be waiting to see if they can afford to come before they submit.

I think that, if we extend the deadline, and if we are explicit about why, then people will be clear we're not doing this due to poor responses, but due to requests from those who want to submit.

What do members of the board think?

Finance:

Peter C has set up a Paypal account. This means that we can accept funds in a variety of currencies and maintain those funds in that currency, thereby avoiding charges for currency exchange. So, we can take in Great Britain Pounds and pay our conference fees from those same Pounds. Peter also thinks that setting up a Paypal link to pay for the conference will be easy and straightforward. Sharon has set up a Paypal account for our UK banking, and has also forwarded this month's accounts to Peter C.

Peter C, Peter P and Owen (Peter C's accountant) had a meeting to discuss issues and implications around the conference fees. Further group discussion around these has been long, detailed, passionate and complicated. I cannot hope to summarize the process so hope you will feel satisfied with me just letting you know what we have decided.

Current thinking is that we will have to lose the discount offered by The Thistle for people who book the 24 hour rate. This would have given a saving of £80 over the four days. However, due to how the discount worked, the hotel wouldn't have been able to take individual payments for this and AAGT would have had to process this particular payment option. Due to the risk of a fluctuating exchange rate (and the extra accountability to AAGT) Peter C has recommended that we don't take advantage of it. This means that AAGT will take registration fees through the website and accommodation requirements of the hotel will need to be done separately (and directly with the hotel) by each delegate. We regret that this will not offer the cheaper rate offered to the membership, but also don't wish the decision to cause AAGT financial problems.

(Late news item: Peter P proposed a way of us keeping the 24 hour discount rate that involved us taking fee payments in pounds. Discussion on this issue hadn't yet finished at the time of me sending this report.)

Sharon put together a list of expenses we expect to incur, further divided into notional numbers of delegates, so that Peter C could incorporate them when setting the fee structure. Peter C's suggestion for fee structure is:

Conference	Members (Cost)	Non-Members (+15%)
(not including pre-conference)		
Standard Registration	£244.00 (\$510.00)	£281.00 (\$585.00)
Late Registration (after May 15)	£269.00 (\$560.00)	£309.00 (\$645.00)

Would it be possible to replace the Student category on the booking form with Undergraduate Students instead?

UK Gestalt Students tend to be already working as Psychologists, Counsellors or in related professions. Studies are not full time. This adjustment would clarify this issue for the UK Gestalt Trainees who are new to AAGT. If we're not clear about this on the form, I fear we could lose a lot of money.

I would like to propose that we develop a strict running order in announcing the booking facility. I would like us to let all AAGT members know first (via the members' list, and a mail-out, if Silvie is willing). My worry is that loads of Brits (who won't have to find money for flights and, in some cases, accommodation) will take many places for the pre-conference workshops but won't book the accommodation. In that scenario, we wouldn't fill our quota of pre-conference bedrooms. In addition (one never knows!!) we could fill up completely with Brits/newcomers before we even have confirmation of attendance from any of the presenters they are hoping to see.

Does the board feel that to be ethical, in the circumstances? And, if so, are there any views on how much advance notice of booking-being-open we should give?

Logistics:

Tables - Phil has requested a table at the conference. This prompted a discussion on what to charge. We also wrote to other organizations so we could compare charges:

EAGT charged 300 Euros for a table. At today's exchange rates that's £207 and \$424.

We have made the decision to charge £100.

Linda Brownell and I have spoken about her joining the CPC/Logistics once all the registration stuff has been sorted out and once it has gone on-line. It seems unfair, to me, to bring somebody new into a group during such a chaotic (and tensely fraught!) period. I'd like to be able to give time to welcoming Linda into the group when there's a meaningful amount of space to do that. Linda has expressed her interest in being a hotel liaison person during/leading up to the conference week. I am keen to take her up on this and look forward to her joining us.

The Band:

Danny has booked the band for the Saturday night and paid the deposit for them.

Sponsorship:

We have been discussing the issue of sponsorship and approaching sponsors.

Ansel has approached SAGE about sponsoring the dinner dance.

Peter has approached Karnac about sponsoring the conference bags.

I have approached a business marketing company.

Peter P approached G.P.T.I and they have to give a £200 donation for a reception at the Manchester Conference. They have also passed this fact on to Metanoia and the Gestalt Centre London to see if they will add more.

The Thistle:

Peter P has signed the contracts.

The Thistle are still asking whether they want us to guarantee 50 people for the Tuesday and Sunday, if so they will put aside the rooms, if not they won't. We will ask them to put aside 50 rooms if we take on a

commitment to 30, in the same way that they are putting aside 200 odd rooms while committing us to 100 for the main conference.

We feel there's no real need for us to guarantee any for the Sunday. (Ansel recalled that only a handful stayed on the Sunday in Vancouver.)

Other Thistle issues have been recorded in the financial section.

Scholarship Fund:

Bud reports that applications have started to come in: one from the Philippines and one from the U.S.A.

Audio Visual Recording:

We have approached 4 companies and the costs have proved to be very high. This is because of the format of the invited presenters round. It means that we need to pay for 3 separate cameramen (they are men, honest!) plus 3 different lots of equipment for that day. To record everything we initially wanted (each of the invited presenters, the keynotes and a section of the opening plenary) not only was it a big bill for AAGT, but it would have made purchasing the DVD very expensive for delegates also. Each DVD package would need to contain 4 separate DVDs which makes it expensive. We feel sensitive to the fact that, due to the currency exchange rate, this is particularly hard for our American members.

So we have been discussing just recording the invited presenters' round and we feel that will be the best option – particularly as everyone will have attended the other two sessions anyway. This means that each package will only contain two DVDs which will be more affordable for delegates to purchase. Could I please hear whether this feels acceptable to members of the board?

However, I have a question for Peter C.

If you have incorporated the AV quotation into the fees as an expense (and not as one we need to recuperate) would it be possible to give the DVDs to delegates for free?

Speaking personally, this would make me feel happier about delegates being able to attend only one session of the 3 invited presenters. (I accept the format, btw, but would feel happier with this gift from us.)

If you decided that this WAS possible, then I'd suggest the DVDs only went to those who had paid to attend the whole conference and that partial attenders would have to pay for one.

Finally:

I urgently (even desperately) request that we don't leave the board meeting without our having agreed upon the finalised fee structure (and other fees necessary to the registration form) and without having made a firm and clear plan for how/when it will go up on-line.

Appreciations were expressed to Sarah for the report above.

Peter P – asked Sarah to start off the meeting so that we as a board can give input and the conference registration can be published on the website this week.

Sarah – Peter C has determined the costs for the conference (see table above in the email sent by Sarah). The Thistle hotel offered a discount rate (24 hour rate) which included dinner. This

discount rate would have required AAGT to pay the hotel for those folks who wanted to take advantage of it. This would have placed AAGT at risk because of the fluctuating exchange rate. If folks paid in pounds, this was not a risk but those paying in foreign currencies (like US dollars) could register when the exchange rate was different than it could be when we pay the hotel. It's possible we could lose funds if that happened.

Peter P – Said he did not want to risk holding money in a bundled amount to be paid to the Thistle next summer.

Peter C – liked the idea in general of people paying for the conference and paying directly to the hotel rather than having AAGT hold their money. Also – the 24 hour rate may look like a big number if conference cost and Thistle room and board are bundled together. His recommendation was to have members pay the conference fee to AAGT then have a link to the Thistle so that people will pay them directly. Peter said he has had a lot of sharing of different views on this with Sarah, Peter P and Sharon. He is willing to go with whatever the board agrees today.

Sarah – sorry to lose the discount rate but the idea that we could make this simple – people pay conference fee to AAGT and then pay Thistle for their room and board is very appealing.

Peter P – unless the board has another view, then CPC will decide the fees.

Phil – voiced concern that the CPC would decide this without the board's final approval.

Sarah – suggested we go with Peter C's recommendations.

Dan – asked how difficult it is for American's to pay in pounds.

Peter P – It is not difficult as they would use paypal and the credit card option for payment. They would select pounds which are converted on the credit card for billing to US dollars. If there would be a major change in the exchange rate without using pounds as initial payment option, there would be a potential problem of AAGT if the costs are bundled and AAGT has to wait until next summer to pay the Thistle.

Ann – So is the issue that we would need people to pay in pounds for the bundled charges to get the discount rate but we are concerned they will instead pay in a different currency?

Peter P – people may not want to pay in pounds so if they don't pay in pounds, we would be holding differing currencies and could lose money for AAGT by the time of the conference. This could mean we would need to increase the conference registration rate by the time of the conference which would unfairly burden late registrations.

Bud – how is this different from any other conference where others have used their own currencies?

Peter C – The exchange rate is not the issue. The bigger issue is that we would be holding the money for the hotel and I am not willing to assume that level of responsibility.

Peter C – we could place a note on the website which would read that due to exchange rate fluctuations, we reserve the right to raise the fee if needed if there are extreme fluctuations in exchange rate.

Phil - \$500-600 US is the highest we have ever charged for a conference.

Peter C – talked about how they determined the conference rate. Sharon had a total figure for the cost of the conference and we divided that by 175 (which includes day delegate rate).

Peter P - \$18000 is not including the day delegate rate. It does include the extra meeting rooms but not day delegate rate of \$35 pounds. Day delegate rate includes lunches, teas, coffees, use of large rooms, snacks.

Bud – nothing to do with rooms?

Sarah and Peter C – that’s right.

Peter C – members who do a one time registration of \$510 US includes lunch, snacks, etc.

Bud – that is a lot more than we are accustomed to paying. Especially with airfare, rooms, meals.

Peter P – Strongly expressed his opinion that AAGT cannot do a bundle rate.

Peter P – Bed & Breakfast rate would be: single 70 pounds/night (room sharing =80 pounds/night which is 40 pounds/night per person) A 24 hour rate would include Bed and Breakfast and Dinner (keeping in mind that lunch is included in the conference fee so this would include all meals and room) is 85 pounds/night for single and room sharing=110 pounds/night which is 55 pounds each/night for sharing a room..

NOTE: In an email sent after the board meeting, Sarah talked with the Thistle and they agreed to the following rates which will be posted on the web:

They agreed to SINGLE ROOM Bed & Breakfast is £70 and DOUBLE ROOM Bed & Breakfast is £80(so, £40 each).

They have also agreed to a NEW rate for Bed, Breakfast and Dinner. This offer is now at SINGLE ROOM Bed, Breakfast and Dinner for £75 and £90 for DOUBLE ROOM Bed, Breakfast and Dinner (so, £45 each). So for £5, people can add a 3 course dinner to the cost which is very financially reasonable.

To get this discount, delegates will need to quote the following block-code when they call the hotel to book: –CVC200708. The hotel will then, in the usual manner, take their credit card number to guarantee the room in their name at this reduced rate. They are happy to do this without any further confirmation from us re identity/proof of payment.

Marcy – What if people want to buy meals outside of Thistle?

Peter P – it would be more expensive but there are lots of restaurants around the area.

Ann – So what do you and the CPC need from the board to move forward? Do you need us to look at the figures and also give opinions on the charges and rates?

Peter P –No. It would be good if the board can lend its support to the CPC to set the conference rate and post this on the website. The members would book their accommodation bookings separately from the conference registration and we would offer bookings payment options in US dollars and in pounds.

Phil – are we going to ratify Peter C’s figures?

Peter P – Yes.

Peter C – We did go through these very carefully (Peter P, Sharon, Owen – accounting side, Sarah).

Board – supported this and supported the CPC to post the registration on the web.

Thanks to Sarah, Phil and Linda for all their hard work!!!

Peter P - Who will liaise with Sivilie and webmaster?

Phil – This should be posted on the AAGT website so Silvie will keep track of registrations.

Phil – We need to write up the registration page in an explicit way so that webmaster will post what we want.

Peter P – will all bookings be in dollars or can they pay in pounds?

Peter C – we did get the pay pal account so we can take in pounds and leave them in pounds.

Peter P - Phil and Peter C can you liaise with Silvie and the webmaster?

Yes they both agreed. Peter C also asked Sarah to join in and she agreed.

Peter P – what about extending deadline for proposals?

Sarah – thinks it's prudent to extend deadline for proposals. Someone had said that this may look really desperate

Dan – don't think it's a big deal.

Ann – we have done this often with past conferences.

Sarah – would like to say why we are extending it.

Dan – doesn't want to do this. No need to apologize.

Sarah – how long would American's need?

Phil – we are getting into the holidays.

Dan – how about giving at least a month. Also we have not had much advertising.

Bud and Ansel – extend at least one month to mid December.

Sarah – make a big announcement for the proposal extension and that it is on the website now.

Board agreed to above.

Sarah – video recording. Initially, we thought we would record the intro to the plenary, also the invited presenters and key note speech. If we did this we would pay for 3 cameras (and cameramen) at one time plus the cost of producing the DVD's. This is very expensive. We would like to do a 2 disc DVD that would record the invited presenter's round only.

Peter P – Would like to also propose we produce CD's not DVD's. CD's require only sound recorders not videos.

Phil – not in favor as we have talked with invited presenters about producing the DVDs.

Peter P – did not think the presenters will feel aggrieved if we don't do DVDs.

Sarah – we have already included the DVD production in the cost.

Marcy – if this was anything but a gestalt conference it would be ok just for sound but many of the therapists would prefer DVD's

Dan – Video only gives us a small glimpse of what was happening. We need also consider that there are financial restraints.

Sarah – if I get a new quote, then we delay putting the fees up on the web. 2445 pounds– is the cost for the recording on DVD the invited presenters only. This would be something we could give as gifts for the attendees.

Board agreed and Dan suggested we can also have this on the website.

Sarah – Would like to give the AAGT members one week notice before we announce to others.

Board agreed.

Ansel – recommend that we lower the CEU fee – to \$20-\$25 for each certificate instead of \$30.

Sarah – does the CEU cert look different from Attendance cert?

Ansel – Not appreciatively different. We could put both on one sheet.

Bud – why not drop it to \$20?

Ansel – OK. Ansel will contact Peter C about this.

Peter P – need to have details of what was negotiated with Continental on the web site.

Dan – will do this and see that it is put up on the web.

Peter P – thank you Phil and Sarah – please thank committee members for their hard work.

Annual Meeting and Feedback from the SW and SE Conferences

There was a brief acknowledgment about the issue of the use of “international members” in the Annual Meeting minutes to refer to our members. Some members on the Member's List opposed the use of “international members” as it is redundant at this point and in the past indicated a separation of our members. The preference from the members list seemed to be to drop international and just refer to ourselves as “members.”

Peter P – Spoke about the SW Conference and said he thought it went very well. We were hoping to get folks there interested again in larger AAGT meetings and conferences and received good feedback.

Bud – Has attended many SW Conferences and noticed there was a tremendous difference at this one than previous conferences. This meeting was more AAGT than only SW meeting. Bud thought it was great.

Dan – didn't notice any friction and it was almost seamlessly done.

Marcy – need something for Blog.

Peter P – would you contact Lynne Stadler to contribute?

Dan – yes ask other folks there too to contribute.

Marcy – yes, the report from the conference over the years has been dropped from RCP meetings.

Ansel – Spoke about the SE Conference. Said AAGT has 4 new members as a result and he felt warmly received. There was lots of interest in parent AAGT as well. There were about 26 people there.

Phil – The SE Conference was a very nice beginning.

Dan – recapped the Annual Meeting decisions from Committee on our Process Task Force. It was decided that we drop “international” from all our documents. There also will be a 90 day notice via email and regular mail for any agenda items that will be considered for our biannual meetings (but during the meetings we can also add spontaneous agenda items to be discussed, we just can’t vote on them at that time). It was also decided that we do not need consensus for election of officers but majority vote.

Email and Newsletter

Phil – Marcy has the blog working at this time.

Marcy – how do I get people to contribute to the blog? Over the years, nothing comes in. Sonia Nevis does respond. I need help to get contributions. Do I put something about the Manchester Conference in the blog or do I just make a link to the website?

Peter P – yes at this time put it on the blog even if it is a repeat from website.

Marcy – that’s great. We just need to make sure I get updates for the conference so I can update the blog too.

Peter P – yes but don’t put info like fees on there as there might be changes in those. Do put “the website is now ready for registrations.”

Peter P – Asked the board if we could all make a contract to get something to Marcy for the blog?

The board members agreed to this.

Peter P - Would you (Marcy) get on the RCP call to promote the blog to them and encourage them to contribute to the blog?

Marcy stated she was willing to do this.

The board gave support to Marcy who also said technical issues are tough sometimes with publishing the blog.

Peter P – would it be worthwhile to have someone sit with you to work through some of these issues?

Marcy – Has worked out lots of the issues but now the primary problem is that she has trouble getting pictures on.

Peter P – Since pictures add so much to the blog, it would be worth it to pay someone to help you.

Marcy – OK. Said she has someone in mind to help her with this. She will ask him.

Treasurer's Report

Peter C sent a report to the board regarding AAGT's current finances. This is available to the members on request.

Communication Issues

Phil – There is a need to streamline how we update the bylaws and website. We have a patchwork approach at this time. He has a proposal and will write this up and send an email about this to the board.

Dan – will help with this issue of updating bylaws.

Membership and General AAGT Issues

In an email sent prior to the board meeting, Silvie wrote:

The directory 2007 was mailed to all aagt members.

We had some new comers – I count 213 members as of today.

Sarah, Sure I can send out an email to the membership once the registration is up – just let me know.

I just checked the aagt website – I will send and update of the executive council to Steve & tell him also to take off the Oct. conferences;

The page on the 'interest groups' is not updated & I have no information on that.

Any other questions? I'm around, will check emails later in the day & will check the minutes.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING – December 16, 2007 at the same time as the November 2007 meeting.