

December 16, 2007 Board Meeting

AAGT Board Meeting

Present: Ann Bowman, Dan Bloom, Sarah Fallon, Bud Feder, Phil Brownell, Ansel Woldt, Peter Philippon, Tine van Wijk, Silvie Falschlunger, Brian O'Neill (partial), .

Absent: Jack Aylward, Marilyn Myles, , Morgan Goodlander, Peter Cole, Marcy Stern 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. E-newsletter (Marcy)
- E. Communications (Phil)

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING TIME – January 13, 2008 –same times as the December meeting.

Welcome

Manchester Conference

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

Hi everyone,

Here is December's conference planning report. I hope it's okay – I admit that I have had a lot of my energy tied up in making all the preparations for the family Christmas (my youngest still believes in Santa) and would like to apologise if this isn't as thorough as usual.

I think we have all done a lot of important stuff since the last meeting:

We have the registration facility up and running (although I understand that many may not be able to part with money now until the new year). We have passed the deadline for proposals and have received a good number, and standard, of submissions (and, importantly, we have more submissions than we have slots to fill). We have been given a further discount at The Thistle and bookings are already being taken there.

These are significant milestones in the core aspects of the conference. I think we have done a LOT of the hard work and have achieved what we hoped for in each of the areas we have been working towards. I believe we can congratulate ourselves for that and be proud of what we have achieved together. Speaking personally, I feel it is very important to mark points in the journey such as this – to be allowed to feel an earned satisfaction and enjoy it uninterrupted! My hope is that we can enter the holiday period feeling pleased with ourselves.

Thank you to everyone who has helped. I would like to wish you all "Season's Greetings" and look forward to working with you in 2008.

Conference Planning Report – December 2007:

Program Planning:

“The PPC has once again been relatively quiet. We are waiting the process of peer review; however, we are aware that proposals have been slow or less in number than we would have wanted. We had planned for 42 peer-reviewed type presentations in the program, but we may not receive that many, and we may want to reject some of what we do receive if they are not deemed to be of appropriate quality or if we have so many in one subject area as to produce a lopsided conference from a content perspective. Therefore, we have begun to contemplate contingencies, and some of our members have suggested various possibilities in order to produce a well-rounded and balanced array of interesting presentations. We anticipate a full discussion of these things after the deadline for proposals has been reached on the 15th and after the holidays have been completed. Phil is in contact with Susan Gregory to coordinate on these matters.” (Phil)

Since Phil wrote this summary I know that more proposals have been submitted and understand that we now have more submissions than we, minimally, need. Also that they represent a good range and indicate a high standard. This is great news!

Thanks also to those members who so generously offered their support in structuring proposals: Dan, Peter P, Phil, Charlie and Susan.

Publicity:

Ronnie has re-pasted the details into the Yahoo database and has used it for two mail-outs this month. The first was a prompt re the proposals deadline and the second was an announcement that the registration facility was now taking bookings. Both these announcements were also made on the AAGT members' list, Gstalt-L, and the two UK (GPTI) discussion lists. AAGT Members were also given one week's prior notice for booking, in a separate announcement kindly sent out by Silvie - as was agreed at the last board meeting.

The committee placed an ad in the GANZ Journal.

The committee has also been liaising with Burt Lazarin about placing an advert in the next issue of Dialogical Bridges”.

Tali shares a concern that has developed this month:

“I have some concern about the relationship of the committee with the organisation. There is a sense of a 'service' required rather than an invitation to contribute and be a full partner.”

Peer Review:

The latest info I have is that we have well over 50 proposals (a big difference compared with last month's 8!). These include submissions from Japan, Russia, Turkey, India, Australia, England, Germany, and the USA – and probably more, since that information came in.

Susan has put out an announcement asking for more volunteers for peer review. I know that she has had some responses to this. I also know that I asked her to let me know when she felt she had enough people and she hasn't done that yet. So, if you're interested, please get in touch with her and ask.

CPC Stuff:

Financial matters:

Finances are in healthy state. Peter C should receive details from the accounts/bank statements in a separate mail.

The Paypal account has been set up in order to take payments from the website.

Peter C, Silvie and Sharon have spoken on the phone about the financial arrangements and the transactions between accounts. Along with Sharon, Peter C and Silvie also hold the passwords to the Paypal account.

A letter of thanks has been sent to Mike Turton of GPTI for the donation he made of £200 for the reception I mentioned in a previous report.

As most of you are aware, in the space since the last report, we have secured a further discount from The Thistle. They discounted us from £85 to £75 for a single room with bed, breakfast and evening meal (lunch is already included in the conference price). For people sharing, that translates to £45 for bed, breakfast and evening meal.

Registration:

The registration facility is now up and running – thanks to everyone who was involved with that. Special thanks to Steve Logan for doing such a lot of work on it in order to incorporate the different purchasing packages. Steve did most of this over the Thanksgiving period so I feel especially grateful for that. Silvie – please could you pass on our thanks, if you haven't already?

Big thanks also to Silvie, Peter P and Sharon for sticking with this when it became very complicated. I think the form looks great and very much appreciate all your efforts.

Logistics:

I am pleased to say that Linda Brownell has now joined the CPC as a full member, and with a particular enthusiasm to work on logistics.

Welcome, again, Linda!

Scholarship Committee:

I know there continues to be scholarship fund applications and developments because I have been copied in to some mails about these. Bud has also volunteered to give his services to yet another workshop to raise funds – depending on whether that can be set up for him.

Additional funds will be coming in with the registrations and the committee will go into action on March 1st and make their final decisions by April 1st.

Process Groups:

On the RCP call members discussed the possibility of creating an RCP workshop in Manchester and came to the conclusion that the best answer to their needs will be to have a special RCP Process Group. Tine wrote to Jack and Bud about the feasibility of this. Bud's response was that this was “Brilliant!” and an inspired, and very creative, use of the process groups.

Impressive, Tine!

Bud also asked Tine that he be reminded of this nearer the time of his organising the process groups – my writing it here is so we can all help with that.

Thanks:

On a personal note, I would like to thank all the board members who kindly offered to be there for me if I needed any support in my role. I really appreciate this and will, likely, take you up on your offers at various points next year. It's good to know you are there.

Speak to you tonight (for me, anyway).

Sarah

Appreciations were expressed to Sarah for the report above.

Peter P – this is shaping to be a great conference. There has been a huge learning curve taking the conference outside North America with logistics, currency issues, etc. You are carving a new path.

Sarah – thanks also to all who have offered to help.

Brian – you may not have heard from others but not hearing is also indicating you are doing a great job.

Peter P – is there an issue with Paypal?

Silvie – there are some difficulties with Paypal so no registrations have been sent from there. Sharon is to get back with Silvie about these issues.

Tine – has been receiving emails now that people are breaking into her paypal account, etc (spam mail). She is upset about this and does not plan to use it again.

Sarah – paid by pay pal but has not received the spam. Should look into why this happens to some.

Peter P – banks are nervous about taking pounds on the website. Steve Logan has been working on this to get it enabled on our website. We could have taken credit card bookings which transfer to American dollars 1) financial – we would lose huge amounts of money 2) if we are global organization then why would we have only American dollars? Through paypal we can have several currencies.

Brian – has had 4 people look at the website and say they think the costs are reasonable and are looking into going.

Silvie – there seems to be a limit on how much money can be released by paypal because they have to check for money laundering.

Peter P – Yes, pay pal has to do extra checks since we are doing this internationally to check for money laundering which is probably standard practice.

Peter P – responded to Phil's (and others) emails regarding how to prioritize and choose how decide who is included in the conference. The PPC handles this but the Board also should have some input on how these are decided. So if the new people see that the workshops are being done by oldies or vice versa by newcomers, this would not be good.

Phil – need to peer review first and then balance the program.

Dan – why would Manchester be different than any other conference in these decisions?

Peter P – Given that those questions (about selection of presenters) have been raised, we need to comment on them.

Dan – gets confused about issues of jurisdiction – any issue should be able to be discussed and any committee should be open to others questions.

Phil – issue is that if other folks get involved when there is an ongoing process in committee, this can be very interfering with the process.

Peter P – the conference is being done on behalf of the board which is elected. The committee's are not elected so the board may from time to time also give directives if that seems necessary.

Ansel – this discussion started when Susan gave input about how PPC should decide what is in the program.

Peter P – should this be fed back to her?

A discussion followed and the board decided that they all support the PPC reviewing the proposals per the blind peer review process as we have done in the past.

Sarah – ok to give Susan the board's comments not to give directive.

Ansel – Added that another thing that would help would be to have more peer reviewers.

E- Newsletter

RCP

Tine – would really like RCPs to be together in the process groups. Not many on the call but those who were there were enthusiastic. Would be an opportunity to know each other better and go deeper. There are 10 – 15 currently but not sure they will all be there.

Board supported this.

Tine - Also in Vancouver there were lots of people interested in becoming an RCP – so having an exclusive process group may not be good as it may exclude those who are interested in becoming an RCP while they are in Manchester. Feels it is very important to have a publicity table.

Peter P – would be great if someone who is interested in becoming an RCP could also attend.

Tine – then they would have to know before the start of the conference.

Peter P – suggested it would also be OK if they shifted out of there process group to join RCP.

Dan – would really gain a person with enthusiasm. Camaraderie – also would be supported.

Tine – will take this back to the RCP group.

Tine – Yalta – not really connected at this time to AAGT. Suggested we may need to take the Yalta conference off the website.

Peter P – has been telling folks about Yalta.

Tine – Hopefully folks from there will come to Manchester.

Peter P – asked Silvie to notify the webmaster to take the Yalta conference off the website.

Treasurer's Report

Peter C will send a report to the board regarding AAGT's current finances. This will be available to the members on request.

Communication Issues

Phil – AAGT as a whole is out of step in communications. We need to realign and reorganize our communication (lists, blogs, newsletters, websites) and then our language in the by laws (ex. By laws refer to newsletter which we don't have, etc). There would be a director of this who would be on the board and regional persons who would be trained and give reports.

Ann – sounds good. Need to bring it to annual meeting for consideration.

Peter P – agrees there is a need for this. Should also include even the making of DVD's. There are also committees like Dan's committee and RCP and would not want this department to take over those committees.

Phil – this would actually be a service department which serves others committees. It would not become the committees like RCP but would help and be of service to those committees.

Dan – agrees with Phil and Peter. Need to start paying more attention to supporting and developing communication that doesn't have anything to do with conferences. Also he has a fantasy that there will be another way of communicating like the newsletter rather than the blog. He would be willing to be involved with Phil on this committee.

Peter P – yes it would be good to have others join the committee and seek out those who may be interested in this like Dan.

Phil – Mae and Ronnie from Publicity would also be helpful on this committee.

Peter P – yes and include a wider range invitations.

Dan – yes like folks from Philadelphia.

Phil – Ok. But there has been some concern about me doing this.

Dan – stated that Phil has been involved in various polarizing and contentious disputes, which distracted us from the tasks at hand. EVERYONE should try to step back and consider before reacting -- not just Phil.

Bud – shares concerns and is also appreciative of Phil. Perhaps there could also be a mediator involved. Brian brought this up years back – not sure if anything was done with that.

Phil – do we need something like that now?

Peter P – it would be great to have that in place now. If people disagree, could be done with respect to others different points of view. Phil – you are much appreciated for all you do. This is my point of view about this particular issue – it is not personal.

Phil – not sure what your current position is?

Peter P – like Dan, I have seen you push and push which squashes other people's energy. You seem to be the owner of several of our means of communications – like Gestalt L (very important to AAGT).

Phil – are you supporting me to do this or not?

Peter P – I support that you don't be the coordinator but be in the department.

Phil – ok

Tine – how many people will there be?

Peter P – convener does not have to be the most computer savvy.

Ann – think we should discuss this but also take it to the annual meeting for the community to decide.

Phil – need to get it organized.

Sarah – don't we need to put this out to the membership then see who is interested?

Ann, Dan, others agreed. Peter P – yes and when/if this is agreed upon and a board membership is offered, need to be decided at the annual meeting.

Dan – doesn't need to be one person but a committee. We need to have other options to deal with each other – some are comfortable being aggressive, some are not. We may need a mediator.

Peter P – Phil, Dan and Marcy are interested in getting this going. Marcy has been left dangling but she would be appropriate on the committee.

Tine – would they be able to get the information out to the membership?

Peter P – yes. It is started off.

Sarah – can the department be run without a powerful leader and a powerful role? Like rotating the leadership to report to the board?

Peter P – don't think there will be a problem if the group elects a convener who is accountable to the board and the department. A chairperson who is accountable to the board.

Phil – don't the membership have to elect a board position.

Dan – Also need to consider if there is a need for communication? Need to decide first.

Peter P – some are elected and some are not, for example, the conference convener. What is the next step? Going to the members list to see who is interested.

Phil – Sought clarity about this issue and the discussion continued.

In an email sent by Dan, he offered the following addition to the minutes for clarification:

"Convenor" still seems to be a confusing term.

The context of the minutes did not adequately reflect that the committee would be informal, and that any formal positions would have to be decided upon by the membership. Phil's comment referred to that.

The first duty of the communications committee will be to assess the communications needs of the organization. This is a paradox. Since we begin with communications difficulties (imperfectly interpreted emails, quiescent members discussion list, conference-planning-fatigue, and so on), we have to solve some communications troubles in order to solve some communications troubles.

Marcy, Charlie, Phil, and I are the committee as of now.

Peter P – the board supports setting up a department for people who have energy and ideas. WE would put out feelers for who would want to be involved in this process and the discussion would continue resulting in the proposal for the annual meeting to discuss.

Bud – board has also made ad hoc additions to the board in between meetings.

Peter P – there are already three people on the board who are interested in being on the committee.

Phil - Do away with public director and communications persons and consolidate this to one position who coordinates all these issues.

Communications Department – now has three members and we will invite people who have energy and ideas to come forward and be included.

Phil – will we also invite members to have input and discussion.

Dan – we can make decisions like this.

Peter P – we can also listen to what members have to say and modify as needed and continue the discussion.

Phil – but we have made a proposal – we want to have this discussed at the annual meeting.

Dan – we will also discuss this in the meantime.

Peter P – really not likely that people will refute a discussion about this. So let's have a committee to talk about this and coordinate communications.

Ann – this worked very well with Committee on our Process. Helps keep momentum going and discussion in between meetings.

Bud – this could be deemed as a Pro tem which makes it clear that this is in process.

Peter P acknowledged Phil's proposal, ideas and energy. He will send out an email to the membership regarding the proposal for the communication committee and ask for interested volunteers from our membership to participate on the committee as well.

**On December 17, 2007, Peter P sent the following email to the AAGT Members List*

Dear AAGT member,

I am writing to let you know of something we have been working on in the Board which we would like to involve you in.

Led by a position paper from Phil Brownell, we have been looking at the communications both within AAGT and between AAGT and those outside. We have a number of websites, offering different possibilities and functions, a members' e-mail list and one for the Board, a blog run by Marcy Stern taking the place of the paper Newsletter. We have the Regional Contact Persons (RCPs) group, headed by Tine van Wijk, involving people from many countries, who engage people more locally to them. We have the Task Force on our decision-making, instituted at the Vancouver conference, headed by our

President-Elect and current Vice-President Dan Bloom. We have a paid webmaster, Steve Logan, who keeps our website up to date. We have started producing materials that communicate what we do: the Directory, the DVDs already available from Vancouver and to come in Manchester. There are ideas about having multimedia resources online as we become more widely spread geographically.

The proposal is to set up a communications group to coordinate all these functions, with a proposal put to the 2008 Annual Meeting in Manchester to have this group represented on the Board. The initiative is being coordinated by Phil and Dan.

So if you are interested in joining the thinking about this and want to join this embryonic group, or have any thoughts about the initiative, please respond on this list.

*Best wishes,
Peter*

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*Peter (Philippson)
peterphilippson@gmail.com
President, AAGT*

Phil Brownell made the following amendment to the above email: Phil is not the co-ordinator of the group.

THE NEXT BOARD MEETING – January13, 2008 at the same time as the December 2007 meeting.