

CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION/SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE POUR L'ÉTUDE DE LA  
RELIGION

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING / ASSEMBLÉE ANNUELLE**

**Via Zoom**

May 30, 2020, 14:00–16:00 EDT

**AGENDA/L'Order du Jour**

**Executive Present:** Alyshea Cummins, Heather Shipley, Qamer Hameed, Ruby Ramji, Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, Ted Malcolmson, Michelle Folk, Sana Patel, and Paul Gareau

**Executive Regrets:** Sana Patel, Samiksa Love, Sharday Mosurinjohn, and David Koussens

**Members Present:** Abraham Khan, Alexander Blair Stonechild, Alison Marshall, Chris Miller, David Perrin, Jeanine LeBlanc, Josie Hendrickson, Mark Chapman, Michael Gillingham, Noel Shuell, Patricia Dold, Diana Dimitrova, Paul Bramadat, Rachel Brown, and Walter Luzzi

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**1. Welcome/Bienvenue**

Start Time: 14:00 EDT

**2. Adoption of the Agenda/Adoption de l'ordre du jour**

**MOTION:** *Accept the agenda.*

Moved: Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme

Seconded: Noel Shuell

***Motion carried unanimously***

**3. Adoption of the minutes of the 2019 meeting of the Annual General Meeting /  
Adoption du procès verbal de l'assemblée annuelle 2019**

**MOTION:** *Accept the minutes.*

Moved: Ruby Ramji

Seconded: Michelle Folk

***Motion carried unanimously***

**4. Business arising from the Minutes/Suivis aux procès-verbal**

There is no business arising from the minutes.

## **5. Presentation: Mathieu Boisvert, Président, CCSR**

Mathieu could not make it and sends his regrets.

## **6. Reports/Rapports**

### **a) Membership Secretary/Sécretaire aux admissions**

Sarah Wilkins-LaFlamme

#### *Total Membership Numbers:*

Decline in membership numbers in 2019 and 2020; decline of 32% in 2020, compared with 5-year 2014-2018 average. This is a trend for each type of membership.

#### *Potential Shorter-Term Factors Driving CSSR Membership Down:*

- 1) Online membership payment system was unavailable during summer and early fall 2019. Once we got it back up and running in fall 2019, did not accept credit card payments (only Interac E-Transfer, cheque or money order). Due to new Canadian regulations surrounding e-payment for organizations. Working on solutions for 2021. Should we say that we're working towards 2022? It seems like only viable option.
- 2) Big issue was that 2020 CSSR conference at Congress was cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. Our conference was cancelled before all 2020 membership payments were received from conference participants. Estimate our membership total for 2020 would have been approx. 120 if the conference had gone ahead in person. Hopefully will not be an issue for future years
- 3) Some retiring regular members are not being replaced in their departments. More scholars are only being hired as sessional/limited-term contract workers, and have less/no available academic expense funds for things like association membership. Greater competition from larger number of associations/conferences for limited available dollars.

#### *Potential Factors Driving CSSR Membership Up:*

Online and social media membership drive in fall 2020 and winter 2021. Thanks to all those of you who helped us get the word out. And we have such a great community of scholars.

## Five Great Reasons to Join or Renew Your 2020 CSSR Membership Today!



Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR)  
SOCIÉTÉ CANADIENNE D'ÉTUDES EN RELIGION (SCER)

- 1** • Participate in and support our annual conference!
- 2** • Help provide Canadian students, emerging scholars and high-quality research with funding and prizes!
- 3** • Get access to great resources, including: *Studies in Religion*, the CSSR newsletter, research prizes, student travel funding, a larger network of research peers, and more!
- 4** • Help give our diverse community of Canadian researchers of religion a voice!  
The CSSR advocates on your behalf with organizations such as the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- 5** • Great 2020 membership student (\$30-\$50), associate member (\$55-\$60) and regular member (\$100) rates!

Visit us online for more information: [cssrscer.ca](http://cssrscer.ca)

*What You Can Do to Keep CSSR Membership Going Strong:*

Help us get the word out about CSSR whenever and wherever you can. There'll be another membership drive in fall 2020 and winter 2021: when you see the messages and posters, please share them widely with your networks. Keep coming to the annual CSSR conference at Congress. And keep organizing great sessions with panelists new to the CSSR.

*Other CSSR Membership Business:*

Have not decided yet if CSSR membership fees will stay the same, increase or decrease for some or all member categories in 2021. Decision will be made over the course of the summer; once the CSSR Executive has had the chance to review all 2019-2021 expenses. Ultimate goal is to keep these membership fees as low as possible, while still managing to cover all CSSR annual expenses.

There have been some discrepancies with the distribution of *Studies in Religion* to members who have paid for it. Some members have reported receiving two hard copies of the same issue; or delayed delivery. Working with Sage to sort these issues out, but please let me know via e-mail of any issues you experience with this. And a reminder that members who have paid to receive SR can select to receive an e-copy instead: Sage should've sent you an e-mail to this effect at the start of the calendar year.

**Discussion:**

- Paul Bramadat asked if we could have a “temperature checking survey” for all of the departments and programs across the country to see how people are doing. This may be good for before or after the pandemic. We could do a cross-country check-up to see how people are doing at university, with the state of Religious Studies, and COVID-19 pandemic.
- Sara spoke to how there are different ways to look at this more than anecdotally. This could be something that Sara does near the end of her tenure as membership secretary. This is definitely something to keep in mind.
- Paul Bramadat also volunteered to be part of a subcommittee that would look into this question of how Religious Studies is doing.
- Patricia Dold supports this idea of doing a cross-country check-up looking into the size of departments and graduate enrollments. Pat also volunteered to a subcommittee.
- Rachel Brown (from the chat): *I have started a list of all the programs and departments across Canada. Sarah, let me know if you want that.*
- Dianna Dimitrova spoke about joint membership with other French-language associations like the SQER. Also mentioned that the SR journal will only be presented online and this may affect membership.
- Sara responded positively to the approach. She also mentioned developing webinars through the Fall and Winter where paid members can engage in scholarly discussion.
- Mark Chapman (from the chat): *Given all the interest in Religious Studies departments maybe we need a large conversation at the annual meeting. Either as part of the research or in response to the research.*
- Walter Luzzi mentioned making a promotional kit for classes to show what CSSR is all about. He has worked for non-profit for years and would see the benefit of making more presentations. Best target audience is the students and they would

- benefit from a quick presentation of the benefits from a CSSR membership.
- Sarah responded that sending out a poster would be a great idea. Not sure if we could do individual in-class presentations.
  - Abraham Khan commented about looking specifically about grad students. Heather Shipley mentioned looking at graduate student ambassadors in trying to reach our students. Please send suggestions on how to reach our students as best as we can.

## **b) Treasurer/Trésorier**

Ted Malcolmson

### *Membership Dues:*

Membership dues are significantly down: 2018–2019 \$ 9,717.00 to 2019–2020 \$ 6,560.00.

### *AGM Deficit:*

AGM Income: \$3,705.00; AGM Expenses \$4,097.87 = Deficit (\$392.87), which is substantial.

### *Essay Contests:*

Same as last year with \$1,200.00. PhD Prize of 650.00 to Lucie Robathan. MA Prize of 250.00 to Connor Thompson. Undergraduate first prize of 250.00 to Justin Bulicz, second prize of 50.00 to Suzanne Bonfils.

### *Paypal Fees:*

This was eliminated by the switch to eTransfer this year. Paypal was used up until April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019. The cost last year was \$197.74.

### *Website:*

We are still mostly working off credit due to the buildup over the change of hosts, so the only expense we had was \$32.00 for sitelock security. Last year the expenses were \$641.93. We also pay \$700.00 for our website admin, which is the same as it was last year.

### *Book Prize:*

The book prize of \$100.00 went to Dr. Lori Beaman. This amount is unchanged from previous years.

### *Office Expenses:*

Office Expenses this year were \$40.87 compared to last year's 33.18. This number will increase next year as we've gone through most of the built-up stash of stamps and envelopes.

### *Executive Travel:*

This was \$3,400 across eight members, up from \$2,400 last year.

### *AGM Travel:*

This past year we spent \$5,495.35 on AGM travel to Vancouver, which supported travel for 22 individuals.

### *Investment Gain/Loss:*

This year's investments have, at present, a gain of \$1,239.51 compared to last year's \$1,548.97. Please note that due to a very volatile market this may not be the most accurate representation of the vitality of the investment—the account has gone down \$1,001.26 since March 8<sup>th</sup>.

*Operating Income/Expenses:*

Operating Income \$11,504.51; Funds from investment account \$5,000.00; Operating Expenses \$19,826.60, Net Deficit (-\$3,322.09). Here's a comparison between recent years: On the books 27 May 2020 = 92,280.82; On the books 27 May 2019 = \$98,743.41 → Down \$6,462.59.

This is due to our loss of income from the AGM as well as our investment downturn, and executive travel accounting for most of this differential.

Budget is tentative while there is a lot of things that are up in the air. This will allow for a lot of discussion. There is less income and expense.

*Challenge to Vancouver AGM Expenses:*

Initial congress statement of account sent August 20<sup>th</sup> did not have all of the catering expenses included, and indicated a \$2,037.25 surplus. A revised statement of account sent October 8<sup>th</sup> was revised to indicate a \$392.87 deficit. After consulting the exec, Ted challenged this amount, and the supporting documentation that they provided was just the number written in pencil on the event sheet. They indicated that they were having some issues getting documentation from UBC.

This was clearly an issue with the PIT bar at UBC randomly writing that they settled with 86 tickets when we gave out 40. The Federation came back and offered to pay 50% and we would pay 50% on the deficit. We want to raise this with you on paying the amount owed or do we pursue it. The amount owed would be \$150; \$212 over what was budgeted. This is money owed to the Federation and not the caterer. (See discussion below)

*Change of Mutual Fund*

The current choice of mutual funds is, in my estimation, underperforming. I identified two potential alternatives earlier—that would be BMO Aggregate Bond ETF (ZAG) and BMO Discount Bond Index (ZDB). If the May 2019 mutual fund balance of \$65,024.16 had been put in a 50/50 split of those two bonds, the value today would be \$68,098.11 instead of \$66,263.67; a difference of \$1,834.44. Passively managed funds represent the health of the stock market as a whole rather than being actively managed to reflect anticipated trends like a standard mutual fund. While this makes these funds less able to react to changes in the economy—for example pandemics—they have much lower operating expenses.

Ted thinks passively managed funds are the superior investment vehicle, the strongest criticism is their inability to respond quickly to economic shifts like the kind we are living through, which in this context is generally presented as being less 'agile'. The idea of changing these funds should be something to think about in the future; maybe not right now. We can come back to this in the future; in the fall, winter, or next year. *We propose to see what happens next.*

*Incorporation:*

The actual paperwork is minimally invasive – a few forms, and a simple disclosure once a year – and the costs are minimal—300\$ or so, plus 12\$ a year to file the annual return. The primary advantages as I see it are a) individual board member protection in the event of potential legal action and b) eligibility for not-for-profit grants. It would also allow for much easier access to credit card payments, if we wanted to offer that as an option for members again. Not-for-profits can be incorporated provincially or federally—federally seems like the best option here. The chief obstacles I see are practical—corporations require a registered headquarters as a permanent or semi-permanent address. Updating the board of directors would require more filing and busywork. It would undeniably be more effort in terms of paperwork, but the advantages gained might be worth it.

*Rising Ongoing Costs: Last Words*

Since 2016 or so we have started to be less sustainable long-term. A few key factors here – 1) lackluster mutual fund performance 2) rising AGM expenses 3) lowering membership numbers 4)

increase in executive travel funding. This isn't a crisis—but especially in the context of an upcoming year with reduced membership numbers, reduced AGM income, and reduced investment income, we could run into real funding issues inside fifteen years or so.

**Discussion:**

- No discussion from the treasurer's report.

Motion to Accept: Abraham Khan

Second: Diana Dimitrova

*Motion carried*

**c) Programme Chairs/ Responsables du programme**

Qamer Hameed and Michelle Folk

*Congress Details:*

Congress 2020 was scheduled for Western University in London with the theme of *Bridging Divides: Confronting Colonialism and Anti-Black Racism*. Western University helped us find a local area coordinator. Unfortunately, communications have proven difficult and we have been working without a LAC. Chris Miller volunteered but it was unable to work due to the pandemic. Want to thank Chris.

*Presentations:*

The CFP closed December 15, 2019 without a deadline extension. Draft program was submitted to Congress via portal on March 20<sup>th</sup>. We received a total of 34 individual papers from 37 presenters (3 papers have 2 presenters); 1 special paper; 6 panels with 21 participants including chairs; 6 roundtables with 29 participants including presiders and presenters, and 1 author meets the critics roundtable with 4 participants co-sponsored with the Canadian Sociological Association (CSA). There are people participating in multiple panels so in total we have 80 people attending this year (29 students). We offer all accepted presentations to present at Congress next year.

*Craigie or Interdisciplinary Lecture Hosting:*

We are hosting this year's Craigie/International Speaker. Amir Hussein, Professor of Theological Studies at Loyola Marymount University, has agreed deliver the International Joint Speaker 2 lectures. The title of his presentation is *Muslims Challenging and Changing Images of Muslims on Film and Television*. We received \$1100 from the Federation's International Speaker Grant to host the event. We are not scheduled to host in 2021 but recommend consulting with the other associations about how to move forward with the 2021 event.

*Congress 2020 during COVID-19 Pandemic:*

The Federation announced its plan to move forward with Congress 2020 as a virtual conference in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. All professional associations and societies were asked to let CFHSS know by March 27, 2020 whether or not they would participate in the online conference. Only 4 associations moved forward with virtual conferences with support from the Federation. This move to a virtual Congress would have had several important consequences and implications for our members. CSSR held an emergency meeting March 24, 2020 to discuss the plans for an online conference and decided unanimously to withdraw our participation this year.

*Congress Graduate Merit Awards (CGMA):*

The Federation allotted us 6 Congress Graduate Merit Awards (CGMA) for this year. As we are not participating in the event this year these awards are no longer available to the CSSR.

*Congress 2020 Refund:*

The Federation extended the refund deadline, waived the \$25 administration fee for registrants, and gave associations the option of refunding members' registration fee or allowing registrants to donate



it to the association (the onus would be on associations to provide charitable tax receipts). We opted for a full refund for members.

*Congress 2021 at the University of Alberta:*

Congress 2021 is in Edmonton May 29-June 4, 2021. The theme is northern relations and asks us to explore connections between peoples, communities' cultures, and ways of knowing, while listening to voices that speak directly to some of the most pressing issues in the north: reconciliation, governance, social justice, climate change, reciprocity, education, and more. Our annual meeting is scheduled for Saturday, May 29-Tuesday, June 1, 2021.

*Questions in Moving Forward:*

Our ways of working and living have changed because of the pandemic. How have our members' lives changed? What are their concerns? Many universities and colleges have decided on hybrids of in person/distance learning or distance learning for course delivery in the fall and in some cases the winter semester too. Transitioning to distance learning has led to increasing workloads and changes to how we teach. Initial research is showing that women's submissions for publication are down and that they are starting fewer research projects during the pandemic for example. What might next year's annual meeting might look like (how should it look) from a programming and planning standpoint to best support our members?

**Discussion:**

- Heather thanks Qamer and Michelle as well as Chris Miller to make the changes and all of the work done even when Congress was cancelled.
- Mark Chapman (from the chat): Perhaps a couple of the planned papers could become webinars? Heather mentioned that this we will think about for the near future.
- Patricia Dold (from the chat): *Yes, great work on the program! I think we need to open conversations with members about what next year's congress should look like and also about how any, online presentations/panels might.*
- Heather mentioned that we are going to look at some initiatives moving forward.

**d) Graduate Student Member-at-Large/ Conseiller étudiant**

Sana Patel

*Student Ambassadors*

This is the fourth year of the Student Ambassador program, initiated by the CSSR/SCÉR's former graduate student member-at-large Saliha Chattoo. Student Ambassadors act as local liaisons between their home institutions and the CSSR/SCÉR, ensuring that their student body is kept up-to-date on all academic, funding, and professionalization opportunities we offer throughout the year. We have 14 Student Ambassadors so far this year that are now listed on our website, which is one more from our last meeting.

*Graduate Student Luncheon*

Because CSSR is cancelled this year, there is no luncheon. Perhaps we can use the contribution of \$350 from CCSR for both the lunch and the headshot event next year.

*Other Business*

The call for student essays for the student competition was forwarded to all Student Ambassadors in April 2020.

**Discussion:**

- No discussion from graduate student member-at-large report.

**e) Communications Liaison/Liaison de la Communiton**

## Samīkṣā Love

*Website and Server:*

Everything is running just fine now that we switched to Bluehost web hosting provider. Ongoing issue: we need to continue renewing our domain name with Hostpapa since Bluehost does not support .ca domain names. Our Bluehost site nameservers are simply pointing at the Hostpapa domain name now. We still have some credit on our account through Hostpapa so we will use the remaining amount to continue renewing our domain there every year.

One thing for me to continue to watch out for is that Bluehost seems to like updating specific features on its own (e.g., index.php file) which makes our website not show up properly. It is a matter of reuploading the correct file into the website and is not difficult. If the website goes down in the future this is the first place to check. A security update for drupal (the php software our website runs on) was successfully conducted in mid-May 2020.

*Sunflower:*

SUNFLOWER (our automated paper submission system) ran smoothly during autumn 2019. It is ready for use in Autumn 2020.

*New Membership Payment System:*

We have switched from a PayPal payment system to Interac E-Transfer, which we began implementing in November, 2019. It seems to be running smoothly at least on the website side of things.

*Membership Database:*

There are roughly 715 members within our website's database as of May 24, 2020. The numbers have gone up during the membership renewal period, as usual. Thank you to our Membership Sarah Wilkins-LaFlamme for diligently updating members' membership status on the database as she receives notice of their payments from our Treasurer, and creating new profiles for them if they are new members. The website database is usually consistent with the list we send to SAGE. We also started to more vigorously promote membership renewal this autumn 2019 with a poster and included it all over the website and in our weekly newsletter consistently into the new year.

*CSSR Weekly Newsletter:*

Our Mailchimp newsletter service is still working great for us. As of May 24, 2020, we have 532 subscribers to our Mailchimp mailing list (it fluctuates as people subscribe and unsubscribe). "SUBSCRIBE TO OUR NEWSLETTER" option is still on our website's home page as well as under the "Connect" menu. Thank you to other CSSR Executive members who also send news to post onto the website and include in our newsletter each week. Alyshea Cummins (former Recording Secretary) also continues to send out the Twitter items. The Facebook page is maintained by another CSSR Executive member – occasionally I post there too.

**Discussion:**

- No discussion from communications liaison report.

## **f) President/Présidente**

Heather Shipley

### *Thank you from the President:*

A great thank you to everyone in the CSSR for your dedication and great work, especially under the stress and changes brought on by COVID-19. Also, a heartfelt word of thank you as outgoing president and having been recording secretary for three years before that.

### *First Virtual AGM:*

There are about 28 people are participating in the AGM in the afternoon; which is fantastique. . Thank you Samikṣā, Paul, Qamer, Michelle, Ted, Ruby, Alyshea, Sharday, Sana and Sarah for making sure members are up to date about the plans as they unfold. Provided we have member registration, we will meet for the AGM from 14:00–16:00 EDT on Saturday May 30, 2020. Our executive took place from 10:00–12:00 EDT on Saturday May 30, 2020 (also by Zoom).

### *Virtual Voting:*

Should any of the nominated positions be contested positions (multiple candidates), voting will be conducted for two weeks post-AGM via Google Form (counted by Samikṣā) to ensure that members have the access they might need to submit their votes. If there are no contested positions, we will not need to conduct the vote by Google Form as the roles will be acclaimed.

### *CCSR President Presentation:*

CCSR President, Mathieu Boisvert, was going to present during our AGM to our members in their own efforts to ensure members of the constituent societies are aware of CCSR's role related to the societies. Unfortunately, he sends his regrets.

### *Honorary Executive Advisory Position:*

This honorary roll is for Ruby Ramji. The position itself will be drafted and presented for a vote in our next AGM (2021). However, we will announce this to members this year, given them time to reflect on it prior to voting on this amendment next year.

## **Discussion:**

- No discussion from president's report.

## **g) Nominations Committee/Comité pour les nominations**

Rubina Ramji

### *CCSR Book Prize:*

Eighteen books were submitted for the 2019 CSSR Book Prize Competition. The committee, comprised of Ruby Ramji, Arlene MacDonald and Qamer Hameed, evaluated and ranked the books submitted. The winner for the 2019 CSSR Book Prize is: ***What Has No Place, Remains. The challenges for Indigenous Religious Freedom in Canada Today*** by Nicholas Shrubsole. (University of Toronto Press: 2019).

### *Open Executive Positions and Current Nominations:*

The following positions are open for election at the 2020 Annual General Meeting. Nominations received to date (May 29, 2020) are listed below, and further nominations will be accepted up to the time of elections, as well as any from the floor:

*Recording Secretary:*

Nominations: Diana Dimitrova, Université de Montreal

*Member-at-Large:*

Nominations: Qamer Hameed, University of Ottawa and Jeanine Leblanc, University of Alberta

*Program Co-Chair:*

Nominations: Nicholas Shrubsole, University of Central Florida

*President:*

Nominations: Paul Gareau, University of Alberta

***Nominations:***

1. President (Paul Gareau) = *acclaimed*
2. Programme Co-Chair (Nick Shrubsole and Qamer Hameed, *nominated from the floor*) = *this item was put to a Google Form vote*
3. Recording Secretary (Dianne Dimitrova) = *acclaimed*
4. Member at Large (Qamer Hameed and Jeanine LeBlanc) = *this item was put to a Google Form vote*
  - Paul Bramadat nominates Rachel Brown for Member-at-Large from the floor = unfortunately she cannot take the position because she is on the editorial board of the CCSR (*conflict of interest policy was initiated by the CCSR and not the CSSR*)

***Discussion:***

- No discussion from nominations committee report.

**h) Student Essay Awards/Prix pour les essais étudiant(e)s**

Sharday Mosurinjohn and Alyshea Cummins

*Student Essay Winners:*

We have had to nullify the PhD competitions. We have first prize and second prize for Undergrad and one prize for MA.

The First Prize winner of the Undergraduate competition is:

“The Perfect Man in the Philosophy of Zhuangzi and Ibn ‘Arabī,” by Ian Greer, McGill University

The Second Prize winner of the Undergraduate competition is:

“Jewish Identity as Reflected in Musical Compositions” Sophie Sklar, McGill University

The winner of the MA competition is:

“The Politics of the Hidden Soul: Judicial Ethics in Augustine’s *City of God*,” by Jonas Brandt, McMaster University

***Discussion:***

- No discussion on student essay award's report.  
**j) Allied Associations/Associations alliées**

***Discussion:***

- Institute of Historical Research (IHR) meeting in New Zealand in August was cancelled. They weren't pleased. Heather mentioned that we update our CSSR members of association business on our letter.
- CCSR AGM is on June 2<sup>nd</sup> via Zoom. We need to respond to the meeting to connect to the meeting.
- SQER is holding a conference at l'Université Laval in November 2020; the due date is really close.
- AAR is planning on holding the conference in person, if people are interested.
- The European Academy of Religion was cancelled.

**7. Adjournment/ Levée de l'assemblée**

**MOTION:** *Move for adjournment.*

Moved: Paul Bramadat

Seconded: Abraham Khan

***Motion carried unanimously***

Meeting adjourned at 16:00 EDT