

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / RÉUNION DU CONSEIL
VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA
AUGUST 27TH, 2024, 11AM TO 1PM ET**

- Present:** Rubina Ramji, Chris Miller, Diana Dimitrova, Zabeen Khamisa, Rachel Brown, Alyshea Cummins, Alison Marshall, Paige Thombs, Faezeh Izadi, Kalpesh Bhatt, Paul Gareau, Aaron Sandborn-Overby (DeGruyter), and Albrecht Döhnert
- Regrets:** Christopher Austin and Jacqueline Giesbrecht

1. Welcome/Bienvenue

Start time: 11:34 Eastern

2. Land Acknowledgement (Paul Gareau)

3. Accept Agenda/ Accepter l'ordre du jour

MOTION : *Accept the agenda*

Moved: Alison

Seconded: Ruby

Motion carried unanimously

4. CSSR Books Series “Critical Perspectives on Religion”, published by DeGruyter-Brill

- Alison summarizes that we met last month to discuss this issue. CSSR Executive held a vote and decided to pursue a new Series Editor and re-enter contract negotiations with DeGruyter
- Aaron shares that he is grateful for the opportunity for all 3 parties to get together and resolve any issues
 - Note that the 3 parties in question are the original signing parties of the CSSR Book Series with DeGruyter. They are (in no particular order): 1) the Society; 2) the Series Editor; and 3) the Publisher
- Aaron adds that DeGruyter has recently expanded its profile in the last several years to Canadian academic societies. The idea for this series began in 2022, with discussions with Diana, as well as Ruby, Paul, and Chris Austin
- Publisher sent a letter with terms for contract to Diana in December, with the understanding that this would be shared with the editorial board
 - At the time, this consisted of Ruby, Paul, and Chris Austin
- This contract was signed in February by President of the Society and the Series Editor
 - Notes that it is not a problem in terms of the legality of the contract that one individual signs under two separate roles
- DeGruyter’s understanding has been that this was a visible, public, and transparent process
- Ultimately this comes down to whether or not the society still wants to develop a book series with the publisher
 - They view Canadian scholars as a distinctive community studying distinctive issues that need to be treated as such. See value in a series that explores this perspective
 - Now having combined with Brill, they represent the world’s leading Humanities publisher
- Re-affirm that they are willing to invest a lot in this series
 - All of the investment (monetary) to this point has come from the publisher
 - Goal is to provide more publishing options for Canadians and let the society take leadership

- Their view is that the contract signed in February is valid
- They acknowledge that the vote raises serious questions that the publisher needs to discuss. They are open to revising and re-imagining this contract
 - But this needs to be done in agreement with all 3 parties
- Diana sees great value in the series as expanding the options for Canadian scholars to publish
 - Also a great value to the society in that all of the investment comes from the publisher
- Acknowledges that the contract was not discussed with the full executive board, but provided regular updates to the executive at meetings
- Series already has 2 books that are in development
- Alison raises point of clarification. She was a member of the executive (Program Chair) in January 2024 when the contract was signed
- Suggests that it is in the Constitution that the President cannot sign contracts on behalf of the board
- Diana clarifies that after Editorial Board meetings with Ruby and Paul, she asked if she could sign the contract. Suggests that they both said yes
- Zabeen asks for clarification of options. Is the idea that there's two options: terminate the contract; or re-negotiate the current contract
- Alison says that we are still in negotiations, but termination is one possibility
- Aaron clarifies that we can terminate contract with 6 months' notice
 - That would assume that the contract is valid
- Aaron also clarifies that while the terms of Series Editor is 'indefinite' that is not necessarily a lifetime appointment
- Alison asks for clarification on terminating the contract
 - Aaron says that we could send an email to Publisher, and termination would be in effect 6 months after that date
 - Albrecht advises that there is no guarantee that we could re-negotiate the same contract with them from scratch since their merger with Brill. The current contract is still in place, and could be revised. But a new contract negotiation would be different due to their new organizational structure. Suggests that it is therefore much easier to revise the current contract
- Ruby says that we as an executive wanted to remove the Series Editor not because there is distrust towards Diana, but because the contract was signed without the executive's notice
- Ruby denies that she gave Diana assent to sign the contract
 - Add that one person cannot do the work on behalf of the entire society without the executive knowing about it
 - Wanted the executive to have input on choosing the series editor. There should have been a discussion about this at some point
- Ruby also raises as an issue that the contract was signed in Germany
- Additionally, raises issues with some of the elements within the contract. Did not see the contract or the elements within it
- Overall, has no issue with maintaining a contract with DeGruyter, but wants the executive to have input on the revisions we make
- Diana suggests that she has an email that confirms that Ruby and Paul gave their assent to sign the contract
 - Will look for this documentary material and share it with the executive
- Also asks why Ruby and Paul would have shared their banking information if they were not aware of things in the contract like an honorarium for executive board
 - Ruby says that she gave the banking information because she thought this was needed to *draw up* the contract

- Albrecht suggest that some of this discussion seems like internal matters of the society, so he and Aaron should not be a part of it
 - The Publisher has acted in good faith, so would like to move forward with the stipulations outlined in the contract that CSSR would like to change
- As major terms, Ruby suggests that the executive wants to change the Series Editor (SE), install a 2-year preliminary term, followed by an indefinite term with 5-year check-ins
- Aaron agrees that the current contract is not in good standing among the executive
 - However, DeGruyter is constrained by acting in good faith with the original 3 parties
- As clarification, Aaron notes that the 2% royalty goes to the authors, not the board
 - Also confirms that the contract is signed in Germany because it is a Germany company. The next contract would be like this too
- Alison summarizes where we stand
 - There are 2 options (terminate contract or revise) though ultimately we want to stay with DeGruyter
- Asks Aaron and Albrecht if they are open to us electing a new SE
 - Aaron notes again that they need to move forward in good faith with all 3 parties
 - This includes Diana, the current SE
- Albrecht notes that the Publisher needs a level of independence from societies
 - Publisher and the editorial board need to be empowered to make decisions
 - They can provide updates to the society, but to be efficient and productive, they need to be trusted in their scholarly authority
- Alison asks for clarification on how we can install a new SE
 - Aaron says that we can't use the termination clause as a mechanism
 - In other words, we can't terminate the contract just to re-open negotiations with only 2 of the original 3 parties
- DeGruyter notes that they are constrained by who currently holds the position of one of the three parties
- Zabeen asks as clarification if the current SE can step down
 - Diana can also sign off on a new SE, if she so chooses
- Diana clarifies that the contract was not rushed. Adds that she acted in the best interest of the CSSR. Also says that she is not willing to step down
- Albrecht notes that while 5 years seems like a long time for a SE term, publishing requires long timelines to be fruitful and productive
 - Publisher is open to the probationary period, but it is not ideal
- Zabeen asks for clarification on how long of a time DeGruyter has in mind for their SE
 - Also notes that the society might want a SE to reflect the diversity of the society, and to allow for the constant inflow of new ideas

At this point, DeGruyter representatives leave to allow the CSSR to discuss internal matters

- Ruby says that based on our last vote, that we seem to be in a position that we cannot move forward as 3 parties
- Rachel puts forward the possibility of moving forward and not looking back
 - Acknowledging that past issues exist, but not allow these to prevent the society from moving forward with the best possible contract
- Alison suggests that there might be better contracts to be found with other presses

- Rachel notes that if people had these thoughts about the Book Series and what a contract should include, then these should have been raised at past AGMs
 - All members were aware that a series was being developed with DeGruyter
- Alyshea asks Diana if he would be willing to step down, then put her name forward so that she could be voted in as SE
 - Diana shares that she believes she did move forward transparently
 - Alyshea asks again if she would be willing to step down
 - Diana says that she will not
- Chris echoes Rachel's message that despite issues, we all knew that a series was being developed. We have an opportunity to move forward with a contract, which would be positive for the society
 - Zabeen echoes this, and suggests that Diana can work in establishing expectations of what is required by SE
- Ruby suggests that the CSSR needs greater control over all aspects of the book series. This includes the SE as well as the editorial board
- Kalpesh suggests that we should explore options with other publishers
 - Ruby also believes that we should look at other presses. Some may even give a better royalty for new authors
- Zabeen suggests that we have a vote on pursuing a new publisher
 - This would also allow people to rank their preferences of possible options moving forward
 - Will not be taken as a vote that compels the society to act in one way or another, but can inform decision-making on next steps
 - Diana will send documentary evidence referenced earlier by Sunday
 - Chris will send out a survey of ranked options to move forward

5. Adjournment/ Adjournement

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 PM Eastern