

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / RÉUNION DU CONSEIL
VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA
JULY 29TH, 2024, 1 TO 2PM ET**

Present: Rubina Ramji, Chris Miller, Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Zabeen Khamisa, Rachel Brown, Alyshea Cummins, Alison Marshall, Paige Thombs, Faezeh Izadi, and Aaron Sandborn-Overby (DeGruyter)

Regrets: Diana Dimitrova, Christopher Austin, and Kalpesh Bhatt

1. Welcome/Bienvenue

Start time: 1:06 Eastern

2. Accept Agenda/ Accepter l'ordre du jour

MOTION : *Accept the agenda*

Moved: Alyshea

Seconded: Paige

Motion carried unanimously

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

- Alison explains that this meeting is to sort out and potentially revise the contract formed between the CSSR and DeGruyter. Alison came across this contract after taking over as President, and taking a closer look at contracts that CSSR had signed in the past
 - Suggests that we need greater care in the contracts that CSSR signs, and greater input from wider executive
- Ruby shares that in summer 2023, Paul Gareau, Chris Austin, herself, and Diana Dimitrova met with Aaron Sanborn-Overby of DeGruyter Press to arrange a book contract
 - Ruby was aware of honoraria that peer reviewers would receive, as well as an honoraria that editorial board would receive for every book published (in the range of roughly 100 euros)
 - Ruby says that she was unaware of the contract that Diana ultimately signed with DeGruyter
 - Has concerns that this contract was arranged by the Series Editor (SE), not the larger executive
 - Also has concerns that Diana signed this contract twice in different roles (as CSSR President and as SE)
- Alison summarizes the problems that she sees in the current (signed) contract
 - Diana selected herself as SE
 - No due process of selection
 - Also is concerned about being the SE of 2 other series
 - SE receives 1000 Euro signing bonus
 - As well as 350 Euro for every book published in the series
 - The maximum size of the editorial board is 10 members
 - Want this to be reduced to 6
 - Currently contract stipulates 50 euros for every book published and 100 for every book acquired
 - Want some of this money to be distributed to the CSSR itself, rather than board members
 - Want SE role to be determined by vote
 - Want to split honoraria so that half goes to SE and half goes to CSSR
- Alison also highlights EDID targets to set for board members (see below)

BOARD DIVERSITY TARGETS

As a Canadian academic society the CSSR follows SSHRC guidelines and protocols, including “achieving equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in the Canadian research enterprise [which] is essential for continuing to generate the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and respond to national and global challenges.”

The CSSR “is committed to advancing research excellence through our ongoing efforts to reduce the systemic barriers and biases experienced by women, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, members of racialized minority groups, and other underrepresented and disadvantaged groups” throughout its activities including in the publication of a new series, the CPOR (https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/edi/index-eng.aspx). The Publisher and CSSR are committed to increasing equity, diversity and inclusion on the CPOR SEial Board by actively seeking out qualified candidates who meet diversity criteria for Board composition, including the SE. We will actively promote and seek out SEs from equity deserving groups who will provide multiple perspectives, expertise, high quality scholarship, a safe space where people feel welcomed and heard, and possess experience on matters related to gender, ethnicity, age, religion, sexual orientation and French. At least four (4) of the members appointed to the editorial board shall be a member of (6) groups as equity-deserving:

- Women
- Indigenous persons
- People whose first language is French
- Disabled persons
- Racialized persons
- Sex, Sexual, and/or Gender minoritized persons.

The CSSR Executive and Publisher, by committing to maintain the categories listed above as diversity representation on the Editorial Board, will therefore ensure that 4/6 of the CPOR Editorial Board membership be from these six (6) equity seeking groups. If Editorial Board representation falls below its target of 4/6 equity deserving members, the CSSR Executive will commit to meet its target by the next quarter.

It is important that the contents of our publications are inclusive, do no harm and convey no disrespect. Therefore, the Editorial Board and SE will follow SSHRC protocols that aim to achieve equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In particular SEs and Editorial Board members will be encouraged to take part in EDI and unconscious bias training (covering such topics as Truth and Reconciliation, systemic racism, hate crimes, anti-racism education, accessibility, accommodations and cultural sensitivity) to mitigate the likelihood of harm and/or disrespect that may arise out of actions and/or activities of the SE and Editorial Board members. Complaints about SE and Editorial Board Member EDI related conduct will be directed to the CSSR Executive for discussion and follow up.

Discussion:

- Major change is updating from gender and BIPOC diversity to all of the categories listed above
- Ruby raises that honoraria will be tied to actually reviewing the book
 - So it may go to an independent peer reviewers, rather than an editorial board member
- Desire to change the editorial board from 3 to 6 members
 - These will be appointed by CSSR
- Want CSSR executive to be involved in all conversations between SE and Publisher
- Alyshea asks whether all SEs need to be Executive Members
 - Ruby notes that at 2024 AGM, we determined that the President will fill 1 editorial board slot. But the rest of editors (including the SE) do not need to be on the Executive Board
- Jacqueline asks about section of Board Diversity Targets regarding board members representing different countries. Does the person have to live there now, or just be from that country?
 - Alison says this is not specified. We need to try to get clarity on this
- Rachel asks, if we decide to change SE, what will happen to the 1000 Euro honoraria
 - Alison notes that this has already been dispensed

Aaron Sanborn-Overby from DeGruyter joins the meeting at roughly 1:49 and fields questions

- Alyshea asks: when you work with other societies, what is an ideal term for SE?
 - Aaron shares that it is generally a non-ending, semi-permanent position. There are clauses/provisions to remove this person if they are not working
 - Aaron adds that 2 years (which was tentatively proposed by CSSR exec) does seem fairly short and does not line up well with a typical publishing schedule
 - Adds that if you find a good, productive editor, you generally want to hold on to them
- Alison asks: if we re-negotiate our contract, does Diana need to remain as SE?
 - Aaron says that she does not need to. But she has to sign off on this, as signatory of the first contract. Basically, the new contract would be an addendum on the first contract, so she would have to approve of that change
- Alison asks: what if she is not willing to step down, or sign the new contract?
 - Aaron says that the contract would be in place, but we would still have a way to exit the contract
- Aaron challenges that the original contract was signed without the Board's knowledge
 - Ruby says that she didn't see the contract, or all the stipulations within
- Aaron also shares that the series is still proceeding and underway, with a book already in development
- Aaron's shares his advice that the editorial board needs to work sort of independently from the structure of the executive. The executive can still oversee the work of the series, but publishing is a lot of work, and it often needs to go on separately in order to be productive
- Rachel notes that a 2-year SE term limit is indeed short. Asks if there is a way to have the executive 'check in' or review every 2 years
 - Aaron says this is definitely possible. SE could give a report at the CSSR business meeting every 2, 3, 4 years (or as we see fit)
 - Adds that in contracts, a term like 'the Executive will appoint' is good, because it gives lots of freedom to appoint in a way that we choose
 - Also adds that there are removal mechanisms in place, with cause
 - Urges being thoughtful about how the rhythm of publishing works and aligning term limits with the publishing process which is always ongoing
- Ruby asks: if we want to add a term limit, can we just add this into the existing contract?
 - Aaron says this would be fine
 - Adds that in general, you want a contract that allows you to do what you want, but isn't specific enough to *make* you do something
- Jacqueline asks about section 4.1 (publisher's right to final say). What examples would this come up in?
 - Aaron says that the publisher has to maintain the right to NOT publish a book. This protects them. Adds that sometimes it is not about contentious topics, but something that the publisher doesn't think is viable or worth investing in
- Paige asks if we can cap how long the SE can be indefinitely renewed. It would automatically roll over for the most part, but there is an out at some point in the future
 - Aaron suggests that it is good to have a moment in time for both parties to reflect, but this should be informal and avoid paperwork, deadlines, other processes
- Alyshea asks about the non-compete clause, and if there are any concerns about Diana being SE of 2 other series
 - Aaron says they are not concerned, and were aware of these other roles. They have looked at these other series and they are sufficiently different in scope. There wouldn't be many books from 1 series that could potentially slot into another
 - Adds that you want to be careful with non-compete clauses so that you are not cutting off the most experienced and well-connected scholars
- Ruby asks about wording in contract regarding sole proprietor of series, which would give control to SE, not CSSR
 - Aaron says that he is fine to switch this to CSSR. The language of SE may remain in future contract. They basically sign over the rights to the series when they are done in their role.
 - He advises that the SE does maintain some capacity over choosing their editorial board, so that you have a well-functioning board

- Alison asks about ownership of the book series, particularly in the scenario in which the CSSR votes to not continue with the current contract with DeGruyter, but Diana does not concede to signing a new contract and removing herself. What would happen to the contract? What would happen to the series?
 - Aaron says that even if the CSSR tries to claim that the contract isn't valid, parts of it still are valid. For example, Diana is currently SE for a series with DeGruyter titled Critical Perspectives on Religion
- Alison asks question of clarification. Contract says SE gets honorarium and 2% royalty from any books published
 - Aaron notes that this is incorrect. The royalty goes to the author
 - Ruby adds that most book publishers actually do give a royalty, and this is not something that is unique to DeGruyter
- Alyshea asks clarifying question about membership for editorial board
 - They need to be members of the CSSR, but not executive members
 - Aaron has also proposed waiving membership fee for editorial board members, but Alison is not certain we want to do this
- Chris suggests that the term should be longer than 2 years based on points Aaron raised
 - Ruby suggests a 2 year probationary period, then a 5 year term
 - Chris adds that the following steps should be informal to avoid paperwork and slowing down the work of the book series
- Chris asks: how easily can the contract be modified? Can we add in all of the stipulations that we have been asking for, but then keep Diana and the current contract in place?
 - Alison believes that this is the case, though it is something that we need to sort out

4. Additional Items

- The executive will hold a virtual vote based on the following proposition: At present, De Gruyter is negotiating a contract in which Diana Dimitrova is Series Editor until January 2026. I will be asked to vote yes or no on ratifying this contract. By voting no, I understand that a new contract will need to be negotiated with a new series editor. Chris will send around a link to vote

5. Adjournment/ Adjournement

The meeting adjourned at 2:56 PM Eastern