

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

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING / RÉUNION DU CONSEIL
VIRTUAL MEETING AGENDA
NOVEMBER 29TH, 2024, 1 PM TO 3PM EST**

Present: Rubina Ramji, Chris Miller, Zabeen Khamisa, Alyshea Cummins, Alison Marshall, Paige Thombs, Faezeh Izadi, Christopher Austin, and Jacqueline Giesbrecht

Regrets: Diana Dimitrova and Rachel Brown

1. Welcome/Bienvenue

Start time: 1:03 Eastern

2. Land Acknowledgement (Alison Marshall)

3. Accept Agenda/ Accepter l'ordre du jour

MOTION : *Accept the agenda*

Moved: Ruby

Seconded: Paige

Motion carried unanimously

4. Draft Code of Conduct

- Thank you to Paige and Zabeen for putting together a draft of a CSSR Code of Conduct (see below). Discussion of the document and its protocols follows below

CSSR/SCÉR- Code of Ethical Conduct (Draft)

Opening statement

The Board Members' Code of Professional Ethical Conduct (the Code) sets out the standards of conduct for members of the Board of the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR)/Société Canadienne Pour L'Étude de la Religion (SCÉR), in alignment with the CSSR/SCÉR Constitution.

Scope

All Board members are accountable for their conduct. The scope of the Code includes all forms of conduct and communication including both verbal (both in-person and via Zoom, or equivalent technology), and written (including but not limited to email, text messages, and social media). The scope of the Code also extends to academic integrity (see below for more information on academic integrity).

Administration and Accountability

The current Chair is responsible to promote Board members' awareness and compliance with the Code. However, each individual member has a responsibility to read, understand, and comply with the Code and any future revisions to this code of conduct.

All Board members are expected to participate in full and responsive communication to ensure timely and fair operations of the CSSR/SCÉR. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Operations and responsibilities outlined in the CSSR/SCÉR Constitution
- Organizational roles and responsibilities contributing to the activities and Important Dates of the CSSR/SCÉR
- Confirming receipt of emails in a timely manner (by communicated deadlines and/or within 72 hours, and excluding weekends).

General Conduct

Board members must conduct themselves in a manner that promotes respect for one another and reflects the high standards of behaviour and professionalism required of CSSR/SCÉR. As members of the board, we represent the organization and should reflect the professionalism that we expect of all of our members. This requires Board members to not engage in acts that constitute bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Definitions

Bullying & Harassment

Bullying and harassment includes any inappropriate conduct or comment that a person knew or reasonably ought to have known would be humiliating or intimidating. Bullying and harassment excludes reasonable actions taken by a supervisor or board relating to managing the workforce. The conduct may be written, verbal, physical, online, or electronic, a gesture or display, or any combination of these.

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- Criticism, humiliation, invasion of privacy, slanderous comments, undermining, destructive rumours, gossip or making unreasonable demands
- Rude, belittling or sarcastic comments
- Abusive, belittling or intimidating phone calls, emails, notes, etc.
- Baiting or unreasonable teasing
- Deliberate and unreasonable isolation or exclusion from work discussions, communication or other work-related activities
- Ignoring the person
- Withholding necessary information or deliberately withholding workflow so that a person cannot carry out their duties

Discrimination

Discrimination refers to negative treatment that is based on a personal characteristic that is protected by both Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, as well as the various provincial Human Rights Codes. These include, but not limited to:

- Age
- Ancestry
- Class
- Criminal Conviction or Summary Conviction Unrelated to Employment
- Disability
- Family Status
- Gender Identity and Expression
- Indigenous Identity
- Language or Accent
- Marital Status

- Place of Origin
- Political Belief
- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation
- Source of Income

We are also suggesting that for the purposes of CSSR/SCÉR, we include “academic status” to the above list.

All CSSR/SCÉR Board members must never use their official roles within CSSR/SCÉR and/or academic status to inappropriately obtain an advantage for themselves or to advantage or disadvantage other Board members.

Academic Integrity

As members of an intellectual community, it is important that we uphold the standards of academic integrity. CSSR/SCÉR fully endorses the policies outlined in the “Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research” (2021) issued by Canada’s three research granting agencies — the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

Dispute Resolution

[Modeled after Section 12 in the By-Law of the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences of which the CSSR/SCÉR is in accordance as a Member]

Disputes or controversies among members of the CSSR/SCÉR Board arising out of or related to this Code, the CSSR/SCÉR Constitution, or any aspect of the operations of the CSSR/SCÉR are as much as possible to be resolved in accordance to with mediation and/or arbitration as outlined below:

1. Disputes or controversies among members of the CSSR/SCÉR Board arising out of or related to this Code, the CSSR/SCÉR Constitution, or any aspect of the operations of the CSSR/SCÉR should as much as possible be resolved in private meetings between involved parties.

2. In the event that a dispute or controversy among Board members of the CSSR/SCÉR arising out of or related to this Code, the CSSR/SCÉR Constitution, or any aspect of the operations of the CSSR/SCÉR, is not resolved in private meetings between the parties, then without prejudice to or in any other way derogating from the rights of members of the Board, and as an alternative to such person instituting a lawsuit or legal action, such a dispute or controversy shall be settled by a process of dispute resolution as follows:

- A complaint of the dispute or controversy shall first be submitted to the Ethics Committee (a subcommittee of the CSSR/SCÉR Board) in writing.
- After confirming receipt of the complaint, the Ethics Committee will review the complaint in a timely manner (as determined reasonable by the Ethics Committee).
- The Ethics Committee will call a meeting of involved parties in an attempt to resolve the dispute internally of the CSSR/SCÉR.
- If the Ethics Committee and involved parties are not able to resolve the dispute

internal to the CSSR/SCÉR, the Ethics Committee will call a meeting of mediation, whereby each party appoints one mediator, and the Ethics Committee appoints another mediator.

e. The number of mediators may be reduced to one or two upon agreement of the parties.

f. If the parties are not successful in resolving the dispute through mediation, then the parties agree that the dispute shall be settled by arbitration before a single arbitrator, who shall not be any one of the mediators referred above or the Ethics Committee, in accordance with the province or territory where the CSSR/SCÉR is situated or as otherwise agreed upon by the parties of the dispute.

g. All parties agree that all proceedings relating to mediation and arbitration shall be kept confidential and there shall be no disclosure of any kind. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding and shall not be subject to appeal on a question of fact, law, or mixed fact and law.

h. Consequences for violating this Code may range from verbal or written warning or being asked to resign from CSSR/SCÉR Board. Retaliation for complaints of inappropriate conduct will not be tolerated.

i. All costs of the mediators appointed in accordance with this section shall be borne equally by the parties of the dispute or the controversy. All costs of the arbitrators appointed in accordance with this Code shall be borne by such parties as may be determined by the arbitrator.

Commitment to Duty of Care, Loyalty, and Obedience

As a member of the CSSR/SCÉR Board, I agree to act in good faith and uphold the Code to the best of my ability.

If a Board member is knowingly unable to fulfill their responsibilities as a Board Member and/or abide by this Code for whatever reason, the Board member will communicate this directly to the President of the CSSR/SCÉR and/or disclose this to the Board.

Name(print): _____

Signature: _____

Date : _____

Date Drafted: November 2, 2024

Draft Updated: November 11, 2024

Discussion:

- Paige notes that as an organization, it is important for us to have a Code of Conduct in place. This puts something in writing to reflect the kind of environment that we wish to create
- Zabeen adds that this document will be complementary to our Constitution. Can also be incorporated into our by-laws in the future, if we have these
- This document seeks to protect the unique spirit and community of our organization
- Adds that this code is about *all* forms of conduct (e.g., in-person and written interaction)
- Includes general behaviour, but also upholding academic integrity
- Acknowledging that we are all supporting the CSSR on a volunteer basis, the Code of Conduct also puts in place expectations of completing our duties and responding to communications in a timely manner
- Document includes language and definitions around what constitutes bullying, harassment, and other issues
- Unique to our society, this document also wants to discourage harassment based on academic status

- Members also cannot use their role on the executive to gain undue advantage in their professional/academic life
- Code of Conduct encourages members to voice their needs (for instance, if/when they become unable to fulfill their roles)
- Zabeen would potentially like to add the Code of Conduct to our Constitution, by including that all executive members “agree to abide by our Code of Conduct”
- Paige shares that they considered including examples in the document, but chose not to, in order to allow for the gray areas that shape our work and acknowledges unique circumstances that may arise
- Alison notes, considering that some executive members may have precarious positions, that the victim should not bear the costs of mediation
 - Zabeen notes that this is only a recommendation, but it is common in codes across organizations
 - The costs of mediation are usually split evenly among all parties
 - Mediation could also potentially go through the Federation, as we are a member society
- Paige would be open to talking about having the CSSR set money aside for mediation, but feels that if all parties sign off on the Code of Conduct, then conflict will hopefully never reach this stage
- Ruby thanks Zabeen and Paige for putting this together. Shares concerns about mediation becoming a paid issue. Does not want our limited funding to potentially be used up by a case of mediation.
 - Suggests that conflict resolution should stay inside the organization as much as possible
 - Perhaps even a member of the society who is not on the executive can be called on for assistance should need arise
- Alyshea suggests that bringing in our own members – as opposed to mediators – could bring about a breach of confidentiality
- Chris Austin suggests that we do not have money to spend on mediation, considering that we only have 100 members, most of whom pay a reduced student rate
- Zabeen wants to clarify that a series of steps are outlined before a dispute would get to mediation. Most of these aim to solve any disputes internally
- Paige reiterates that it is about giving the parties *the option* to pursue mediation
- Zabeen acknowledges that confidentiality should be integrated into the Code of Conduct as well as the conflict resolution process
- Jacqueline says that energy and interpersonal costs should also be considered, and that outside, external mediation can offer valuable support in this way
- Executive agrees to table this issue, re-draft the Code of Conduct, and bring it to the board again
- When doing so, Paige and Zabeen will identify a date and deadline for feedback, before carrying out a final poll
- *Note: On December 2, Zabeen circulates a revised draft over email, giving the executive until December 9 to submit feedback*

5. DeGruyter Book Series Virtual Survey

- Alison shares the results of a virtual poll carried out in August.
- The most popular option was to maintain the contract and appoint a new Series Editor
- Ruby states that this poll tells us what the majority decision of the executive is
- Alyshea says that even though we all voted, this is not a viable option. We need to terminate the contract if we do not want to operate with the current Series Editor
- Chris Austin agrees that the poll is clear in the conclusion. The next step will then be what does DeGruyter say when we say that we want a new Series Editor, and that there is a clear mandate of what the majority wants
- Alison and Ruby clarify that any book currently in the pipeline of the series will still be carried forward. Those authors have a contract with DeGruyter, regardless of the CSSR series status
- Alyshea suggests that we at least ask DeGruyter if they would be open to a new contract (with a new Series Editor)
- Chris Miller notes that based on meeting with Aaron over the summer, it is clear that we can’t use terminating the contract as a mechanism to remove the Series Editor

- Also suggests that we ask about a possible no compete clause during the 6-month period from which we notify DeGruyter that we are terminating the contract, and the official end of our agreement
- Alison says that she has talked to Aaron, and there will not be an issue with talking to other presses during this time
- Ruby suggests that this process has given us clarity on what the CSSR would like in contract negotiations moving forward
- Zabeen suggests that we place these desires/plans into writing
- Jacqueline asks whether someone could reach out to Diana again and encourage her to step down
 - Chris Austin says that he may be in touch with her for other business, but wants clarity on what he would be communicating
 - Essentially, asking her to reconsider her position and step down from her role

MOTION : *Alison will talk to Aaron at DeGruyter, about the survey results, and our desire to install a new Series Editor. If this is not possible, then we will terminate our contract*

Moved: Paige

Seconded: Faezeh

Motion carried unanimously

6. Reports

Treasurer/ Trésorier (Christopher Austin)

- Our accounts are currently reasonably health
 - BMO bank account has a balance of around \$5,200
 - Our investment account has roughly \$77,000
- In terms of details on our current membership, details are as follows
 - 30\$ students opting out of SR: 19
 - 50\$ students receiving SR: 17
 - \$55/\$60 associate opting out of SR: 20
 - \$100 regular member: 43

Discussion:

- Alyshea asks whether that number in our account is low
 - Ruby notes that people have not yet paid next year's dues, so our account will likely go up slightly come January
- Chris Austin adds that though our cash account is low, our investments are healthy and we have not touched them
- Faezeh asks how many members are students
 - Chris Austin (who shared the above breakdown in numbers over email), suggests that roughly 40-50% of our members are students

Programme Chair/ Présidence pour le programme (Paige Thombs/Alyshea Cummins)

Congress 2025: Overview

Congress 2025 will be hosted by George Brown College (GBC) from **May 30 to June 6, 2025**. The CSSR annual meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, May 31 to Monday, June 2, 2025**.

Theme: Reframing Togetherness

George Brown College, the first college to host Congress, invites attendees to reframe coexistence with other humans, the environment, and technology. The event aims to foster collaboration that bridges diverse ways of learning and producing knowledge. Topics include:

- Addressing climate and humanitarian crises.
- Questioning traditional knowledge hierarchies.
- Exploring models of togetherness that promote diversity while considering its potential drawbacks.

Full details of the Congress 2025 theme can be found [here](#).

Federation’s Annual Planning Meeting

Paige attended the Federation’s planning meeting on October 1, 2024, via Zoom and has participated in all subsequent meetings.

Congress Planning Meetings

Paige has attended all Congress planning meetings. Alyshea and Paige meet weekly, typically on Fridays at 12 PM EDT. Members are encouraged to share agenda items via email.

Highlights from meetings

- October 1: Social Zone, Expo Hall, President’s Reception
- October 24: AV Base package includes lectern, computer, projector, podium, screen, microphone
- November 21: Open event funding increased by 25%, associations can receive up to \$5,000

Local Area Coordinators (LACs)

This year, we are supported by two Local Area Coordinators:

1. **Ken Derry** (CSSR Member): Will assist in identifying venues for offsite programming and provide critical local insights.
2. **Anna Heychuck** (GBC Staff): Will help coordinate onsite needs such as room bookings, dorm accommodations, catering, and AV services.

Role of the LACs:

- Booking meeting/event spaces.
- Organizing audio-visual services, catering, and furnishings.
- Assessing and accommodating accessibility needs.
- Managing the association’s greeting table and event assistants.

We thank both Ken and Anna for their assistance in helping to plan our meeting at GBC.

Historical Data

Historical attendance and financial data reveal trends that can inform planning:

Year (Congress Location)	Registration	Revenues	Expenses
2018 (University of Regina)	83 (74 pre-registered, 0 regular, 9 on-site)	\$2,335.00	\$2,114.63
2019 (UBC)	112 (91 pre-registered, 17 regular, 6 on-site)	\$3,705.00	\$4,147.22

2023 (York)	50 (30 pre-registered, 16 regular, 4 on-site)	\$2,060.00	\$2,265.30
2024 (McGill)*	71 (47 pre-registered, 24 regular, 0 on-site)	\$3,010	\$2,112.09.

* The 2024 conference moved to UQAM due to labor disputes and police violence towards student peace protestors at McGill, which impacted attendance.

Registration

Opening Date: January 2025

Deadline: Ongoing until June 6, 2025

Categories:

1. **Black and Indigenous**
2. **Regular attendees**
3. **Reduced fees** for underemployed attendees, postdoctoral researchers
4. **Special reduced fees** for Students, retired, public school educators, unemployed

Deadlines:

- Early-Bird: March 20
- On-Site: May 29 – June 6

We have note changed the costs for our members to attend our meeting. However, we do propose cost changes for future meetings:

Type	Membership	2025 Cost (early-bird)	2025 Cost (regular)	Proposed New Costs (early-bird)	Proposed New Costs (regular)
#50-Comps-Black & Indigenous students	Member	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
#50-Comps-Black & Indigenous students	Non-Member	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Congress Regular attendee	Member	\$55	\$65	\$55	\$65
Congress Regular attendee	Non-Member	\$65	\$70	\$65	\$70
Reduced Congress Fee	Member	\$55	\$60	\$45	\$55
Reduced Congress Fee	Non-Member	\$65	\$70	\$55	\$65
Special Reduced Congress Fee	Member	\$20	\$25	\$20	\$25
Special Reduced Congress Fee	Non-Member	\$65	\$70	\$30	\$35

Programming Schedule

Congress asks that associations follow its daily programming schedule to accommodate for other programming and suggests the following daily schedule:

- 8:30–10:00 Session 1
- 10:00–10:30 Break 1
- 10:30–12:00 Session 2
- 12:00–13:30 Lunch
- 13:30–15:00 Session 3
- 15:00–15:30 Break 2
- 15:30–17:00 Session 4

- 18:00 + Special events, AGMs, joint sessions, receptions, open events etc.

Room bookings:

We have requested rooms for plenary sessions, drop-in spaces, and key events such as the AGM, President's Reception, and Graduate Student Lunch. Classrooms at GBC are equipped with hybrid-ready AV packages (\$100-\$225 depending on room size), and additional equipment can be ordered as needed.

DATE	SESSION/EVENT	CAPACITY (max)	DURATION	NOTES
Day 1 (May 31)	Plenary Session Room #1	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Plenary Session Room #2	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Drop-in Room	50 people	9am-5pm	Set up/clean up
	AGM	100 people	4pm-7pm	Clean up
	PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION	100 people	6pm-9pm	Set up/clean up
Day 2 (June 1)	Plenary Session Room #1	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Plenary Session Room #2	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Drop-in Room	50 people	9am-5pm	Set up/clean up
	Graduate Student Lunch	50 people	11am-2pm	Set up/clean up
Day 3 (June 2)	Plenary Session Room #1	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Plenary Session Room #2	50 people	8am-5pm	
	Drop-in Room	50 people	9am-5pm	Set up/clean up

Paper Submissions: Website Portal

The CSSR submission portal faces critical issues that require urgent updates:

1. **Cumbersome Layouts:** The current spreadsheet format is difficult to navigate. A streamlined portrait layout is needed.
2. **Disorganized Data Structure:** Submissions are not categorized by type (e.g., Individual, Panel), adding administrative burden.
3. **No Membership Integration:** The system does not verify paid membership automatically.
4. **Missing Fields:** Accessibility needs, panelist links, and BIPOC identifiers are absent.

Alison and Kyle are working to address these issues before the Call for Papers is released. CSSR is also searching for a new website manager to provide ongoing support.

Funding opportunities

Open Programming Fund

- Eligibility: Must be public and fully integrated into the conference.
- Deadline: February 28, 2025
- Amount: \$2,500 (up to \$5000 for two events)

Congress Graduate Merit Award (CGMA)

- Eligibility: Graduate students (MA/PhD) in good standing.
- Nomination Deadline: February 3 – April 17, 2025
- Funding Disbursed: July 2025
- Amount \$500

Childcare Subsidy

- Eligibility: Presenters, moderators, chairs, or respondents registered for Congress.
- Application Deadline: April 17, 2025
- Amount: \$2,500

Catering

Must be done through GBC and can submit requests for catering as early as March 3 and no later than March 31st, 2025. Review and approval of orders will be provided by April 15, 2025.

Deadlines

Fall deadlines:

- **Conference Fees Form:** November 14, 2025 (done)
- Conference Web Listing Form: November 14, 2025 (done)
- **Room Requests:** November 25, 2025 (done)
- **Membership List:** December 2, 2025 (done)

Winter deadlines:

- **Open Program Fund:** February 28, 2025
- **Catering:** March 31, 2025

Discussion:

- Paige and Alyshea extend thanks to Alison and Chris Austin for helping them get up to speed with planning for Congress
- Alyshea and Paige have been meeting weekly to iron out details, and encourage all executive members to forward any concerns to them by email
- Paige notes that George Brown College has offered lots of support to associations, even a dedicated Local Area Coordinator
 - Useful in understanding things which are specific to this year's location
- Zabeen asks Chairs to send CFP to the communications team when this is ready
 - Also volunteers to help formatting the program when the time comes
- Alyshea proposes that in the future, we reduce the Reduced Congress Free and Special Reduced Congress Fee
 - As outlined in the report above, these fees would change by \$10 and \$35 respectively for reach category
 - This may be useful in order to encourage more people who are non-members or under-funded to attend our sessions
 - We will need to pass this at 2 AGMs by vote, if we want to implement this
- Alison asks whether the Black and Indigenous waived fee is for anyone who meets that designation, or just students
 - Paige clarifies that it is for all Black and Indigenous scholars

- Chris Austin asks whether efforts to reduce certain categories will actually increase our revenue. Wonders if non-members will pay even a reduced fee in order to attend just one or two sessions
 - Alyshea suggests that it is just good to provide as an option
 - Ruby adds that non-members are generally local scholars who live/work in the host city. Year-to-year, reducing these categories can help us bring more people to our sessions

MOTION : *Reduce the Congress Registration fees for the following categories and amounts: Reduced Congress Fee Member (\$55/\$60 down to \$45/\$55); Reduced Congress Fee Non-Member (\$65/\$70 down to \$55/\$65); Special Reduced Congress Fee Non-Member (\$65/\$70 down to \$30/\$35)*

Moved: Zabeen

Seconded: Ruby

Motion carried unanimously

- Chris Miller asks if Congress will charge AV fees for our drop-in room
 - Alyshea clarifies that no, they will not
- We briefly discuss the submissions system, which as outlined is not ideal
 - Alison notes that Kyle Parsons is stepping down as our website administrator. We are currently looking for someone to take this on
- Zabeen asks for clarification on what is happening with our website
 - Alison and Alyshea note that the situation with Kyle stepping down has only happened in the last week
 - Zabeen notes that she wanted to be part of our website development in the past, and that she has expertise in this area
 - Wants to be a part of this project moving forward
- Alyshea asks for clarification on Congress' Open Programming Fund
 - Ruby says that we put on a 'Craigie Lecture' every 5-6 years. This is shared by the various CSSR societies. This funding is what we typically apply for to fund that lecture

President/ Présidente (Alison Marshall)

We have been a busy and productive group since June and I especially want to thank Chris Miller for his work setting up meetings and polls. Thank you to everyone for all your work and patience with me. We are all volunteers and I really want to emphasize how much I appreciate your time spent working on CSSR-related matters. I have checked in with most of you already this fall to express my thanks and to see if there is anything I can do to help you in my role as President.

I also wanted to extend a special thanks to Rubina Ramji whose formal role is overseeing the annual book prize competition but whose informal role is related to all of what we do throughout the year. Ruby is our knowledge keeper and I am very grateful to Ruby for all of her help navigating this new role and completing tasks.

We've met a few times already, we've answered surveys, we have a new code of conduct, some of us have taken on new roles, some of us have moved on to new ones, and the program chairs are working hard to prepare the 2025 program for Congress meetings at George Brown College in Toronto.

Here are my updates:

CSSR DeGruyter Brill Survey Results

The results of the survey indicate that our first choice was to find a new series editor.

Response ID	[First Choice] = 4 points	[Second Choice] = 3 points	[Third Choice] = 2 points	[Fourth Choice] = 1 point
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1	Maintain contract	New SE	Terminate	Two series
2	New SE	Two series	Terminate	Maintain contract
3	New SE	Terminate	Maintain contract	Two series
4	Two Series	Maintain contract	New SE	Terminate
5	Maintain contract			
6	New SE	Terminate	Two series	
7	New SE	Terminate	Two series	Maintain contract
8	Maintain contract	Two series		
9	New SE	Terminate		
Total ranking points	Find New SE: 5 votes x 4 points = 20 Maintain: 3x4 = 12 Two Series = 1x4=4	Terminate = 4 votes x 3 points = 12 Two Series = 6 New SE = 3 Maintain = 3	Terminate = 2 votes x 2 points = 4 Two Series = 4 New SE = 2 Maintain = 2	Two Series = 2 votes x 1 point = 2 Maintain = 2 Terminate = 1

Outcome: Overall First Choice = Find New SE; Overall Ranking Points: Find New SE

1. Find New Series Editor **25** points (20, 3, 2)
2. Maintain contract **19** points (12, 3, 2, 2)
3. Terminate **17** points (12, 4, 1)
4. Two Series **16** points (4, 6, 4, 2)

If any Questions/Option removed then choices move up so second choice becomes first, etc.

Questions: Rank these 4 questions (questions and abbreviations in brackets)

Maintain contract with DeGruyter, with Diana Dimitrova as Series Editor (Maintain contract)

Maintain contract with DeGruyter and find new Series Editor (3 months notice required) (Find new SE)

Terminate contract with DeGruyter, and seek a new publisher for a CSSR Series (Terminate)

Maintain contract with DeGruyter, AND ALSO develop a Book Series with another Publisher (Two series)

9 respondents cast their votes for the four questions provided (Response ID). The respondents cast their votes based on the importance of each option. Therefore, the option that received the most votes is listed as "First Choice".

Ranking the choices: First Choice (4 points), Second Choice (3 points), Third Choice (2 points), Fourth Choice (1 point). *With thanks to Peter Beyer, former CSSR president and lifetime member, who provided advice on how to read this data.*

2024 Congress follow up

Following our 2024 Congress meeting, the Federation sent us a bill that included cancellation fees (which we did not expect) along with charges for catering and av (which we did expect) along with outstanding fees for Congress 2023 that the CSSR had not paid. After multiple meetings and emails, the amount payable by the CSSR \$376.88. Chris Austin has now paid these fees.

	Revenue	Expenses
CSSR registration revenue Congress 2024	\$3,010	
CSSR AV/Furnishing expenses Congress 2024*		\$862.31
CSSR Catering expenses Congress 2024*		\$1,249.78
Previous outstanding balance from the CSSR's Congress 2023 statement of account		\$474.79
Federation Congress 2024 cancelation fee		\$800

Total:	\$3,010	\$3,386.88
Total CSSR owes the Federation:		\$376.88

Congress 2024

Despite the last minute change of venue, feedback on the 2024 Montreal Congress meetings has been very positive. While we had more than a dozen people not attend Congress in support of the protests and people on strike, there was a healthy attendance. I am very grateful to everyone on the board who quickly helped to secure a new venue and especially to Roxanne Marquette and Mathieu Boisvert who offered space at UQUAM for us and who put up signs around the campus and were so welcoming to our group. I sent a gift card by mail in the amount of \$200.00 for their department use in July.

Congress 2025 May 31-June 2, George Brown College, Toronto

We have signed the 2025 Congress Contract and will pay a fine, and potentially additional thousands of dollars in penalties, should we decide not to hold our meetings at Congress.

Alyshea Cummins and Paige Thombs have been working hard on the 2025 program, meeting weekly, attending Countdown to Congress meetings, and coming up with some great ideas for a really fun meeting in Toronto this year. Thank you to Alyshea and Paige for all your long hours and work. It is much appreciated.

Code of Conduct:

Zabeen Khamisa and Paige Thombs worked hard over the last few months to craft a new Code of Conduct which Zabeen will review at the upcoming meeting with a vote to follow. This is an important document and I am very appreciative of the time and care both Zabeen and Paige have taken to come up with the Code of Conduct.

Website:

Rachel Brown changed roles in the last few months, as membership responsibilities shifted to Chris Austin. Rachel is now Communications Liaison and Website Coordinator. We really appreciate it. Kyle Parsons will be finishing up his work with us maintaining the website. We are in the process of finding someone who can take over this task.

Membership

Our membership numbers continue to be in the range of 100, and otherwise seems healthy.

CSSR webinars 2025

We have chosen two dates in February 2025 for the CSSR Webinar(s) and presentations to be given by the winners. Details to follow.

Newsletter:

Jacqueline Giesbrecht took over Rachel Brown's task of sending out regular newsletters to our members this fall. I want to express my sincere appreciation for all of Rachel's work to get this information into our inboxes each week.

The Newsletter is a big job and in addition to crafting and sending a report of all things CSSR related, including events and announcements, Jacqueline has also integrated accessibility best practices into the format. Thank you Jacqueline and Rachel.

New Linkedin Social Media presence

Thank you to Faezeh Izadi for the hard work and also suggestion to create and now update the new Linkedin CSSR page. I am really enjoying hearing about all things CSSR related online.

Undergraduate Essays

This month I accepted Kalpesh Bhatt's resignation from the board due to a heavy workload. We thank Kalpesh for his service to the board and we wish him all the best. Chris Austin agreed to assess the remaining MA essay prize submissions. At this point, we have only one confirmed winner, given the outstanding information. I will send out the letters of acceptance to all the winners, pending receipt of any outstanding correspondence and information related to the essay prize competition. Winners are announced in the newsletter, on the website, and on social media (LinkedIn and X).

1st Place (\$250) – James Nowak, St. Michael's College, University of Toronto

Title: "Regarding Creation: Praise, Visual Perception, and Double Movement in John Scottus Eriugena's Periphyseon"

2nd Place (\$100) – Antonio Rodriguez, Wilfrid Laurier University

Title: "Religion of the Colonized: Towards a Fanonian Theory of Religion"

Graduate Essays

M.A. Prize (\$300) – TBA

PhD Prize (\$650) – Joshua Zentner-Barrett, Saint Paul University

Title: "With Orca, Goose, and Bear: Expanding Canada's Ritual Body"

Treasurer

Thank you to Chris Austin for his work this year as treasurer. Chris now has access to the CSSR bank account and the CSSR treasurer email related issues have been resolved. With Chris's help this summer, I became a signatory for the CSSR account at the Bank of Montreal.

CSSR Book Prize 2025 and President's Reception

Thank you to Ruby Ramji and all related committee members for all their book prize related work to date.

CSSR executive meetings

Thank you again to everyone for taking part in the many meetings and polls that we have had since the Montreal Congress meetings and in relation to the DeGruyter Brill Contract and Series Editor discussions.

Graduate Student Member-at-Large (Faezeh Izadi)

In my role as the Graduate Student Member at Large, I have been serving as the primary coordinator for the Student Ambassador Program. Furthermore, I have collaborated closely with Jacqueline on managing the LinkedIn page since August and contributing to the newsletter starting in November. More information on these efforts can be found in the combined communications report.

This is my first year in this role, and I still consider myself in the process of learning and adapting to my responsibilities. Without a clear role definition and detailed guidance, it has taken longer than I expected to get up to speed, and I am still progressing slowly. Nevertheless, I am immensely grateful for the unwavering support of everyone I have consulted during this period, especially Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Zabeen Khamisa, and Alison

Marshall.

Ambassador Recruitment and Onboarding

In mid-September, I received initial information related to this role from the previous graduate student member at large, and the associated Gmail account was granted access on September 23. According to the files provided by my predecessor, the CSSR has had an average of 13 ambassadors per year over the past eight academic years. In 2023-2024, this number was 12. In reaching out to last year's ambassadors, I found that three of these ambassadors had since graduated, and two others wished to pass on their roles to other students. As a result, I officially began my work this academic year with seven ambassadors.

In addition to distributing a poster for ambassador recruitment in all September newsletters (thanks to Rachel Brown), I directly emailed 19 faculties and programs across Canada in October, requesting that they share the Call for Ambassadors and related information with their students. Although I have not received replies from many of them (even after follow-up emails, which I suspect may be due to email filtering issues that I will address later), eight new ambassadors joined the program, and we now have 15 ambassadors working with us.

Ambassador Outreach and Engagement

In addition to the newsletter, I directly shared the *Publicly Engaged Research in Religion Student Prize* invitation with the ambassadors and highlighted it in my follow-up emails for newsletter delivery.

I also created the poster of current Ambassador names, which was shared in the newsletter and LinkedIn and updated on the website. Recently, Jacqueline and I updated the list of 15 universities and large programs where we still seek ambassadors in the newsletter, and this will soon be highlighted on social media.

Furthermore, Jacqueline and I noticed that certain individuals engage more frequently with our LinkedIn page. This led us to consider and suggest the possibility of having honorary international CSSR ambassadors. More details on this are included in the communications report.

Challenges with Communication

One of the biggest challenges I have encountered has been communication with the Student Ambassadors. From the beginning, I have experienced that many of the emails I sent with the official student ambassador Gmail account remained unanswered. As detailed in the communications report under the newsletter section, this issue is largely related to email filtering. In almost all the October newsletters, I checked in with many of the Ambassadors (via the CSSR's Gmail, and if I didn't get a response, I used my personal university email or LinkedIn profile) to confirm whether they received the newsletter. This process led to another important discovery: some ambassadors had been automatically unsubscribed from the newsletter, as explained in the communications report.

To address these issues, the following solutions are being considered and implemented:

- Asking ambassadors to resubscribe if they have not received the newsletter in recent weeks and to add the newsletter email and the ambassador Gmail account to their safe senders or whitelist.
- Requesting the web maintenance person to set up a new student ambassador email on the cssrscer.ca domain.
- Developing better communication tracking methods, such as asking certain ambassadors to always BCC me on any emails they forward to their departments. In the future, we could consider asking someone from the department (perhaps a program coordinator) to confirm if an email from an ambassador to the department has been received.

I am planning to hold the first online meeting with the ambassadors either in December or early January, depending on what is most convenient for everyone. During this session, I will reiterate all of these points and gather feedback from the students on potential program activities and topics for the graduate lunch at the upcoming annual meeting.

Moving Forward

Students are the future of our society, and I strongly believe that investing in them—whether through financial support or time—will promote sustainable growth and a thriving future for the CSSR. Many of these investments can be easily implemented. One example that we've already put into practice is highlighting the names of our ambassadors at the top of our newsletter and announcing their involvement on LinkedIn, tagging them whenever possible. By doing so, we aim to acknowledge their contributions, recognize their involvement, and inspire others to join the program.

Additionally, as someone who was a student ambassador for two years before taking on this role, I recall feeling very unfamiliar with the processes and structure at the beginning. Next year, I would like to organize an introductory meeting to familiarize ambassadors (and any interested students) with the CSSR's structure, activities, and functioning, and to meet the society's leadership. This would provide an opportunity for direct interaction between the leadership and students.

In addition to this, and with Jacqueline's invaluable input, I am proposing the following ideas to further engage ambassadors and students with the CSSR. Some of these ideas are easy to implement, but they require collective decisions, while others will need more careful evaluation due to financial implications.

- **Graduate Student Success Series (GSSS)**

Looking ahead, I would like to initiate a "Graduate Student Success Series," offering more lectures and workshops tailored to students. Many students are looking for a more structured and supportive approach to understanding key aspects of their academic and professional journeys—such as deciding whether to pursue a PhD, navigating postdoctoral opportunities, securing funding, and developing essential academic skills. Students are seeking not just theoretical knowledge, but also practical, experience-based advice to help them make informed decisions and succeed in their paths within the field of religious studies. Many universities offer graduate skills workshops, but they tend to be very general. It would be incredibly valuable for students to hear directly from professionals in the field of Religious Studies. The GSSS could serve this purpose well, and I would love to see this become a tradition in the coming years. Ideally, with the help of a webinar coordinator, I hope to plan and set up two webinars for this series each semester, ensuring a consistent and accessible format for students. Some initial topics I've considered are:

- Exploring the PhD Path: Is a Doctorate in Religious Studies Right for You?
- Fund Your Future: Mastering Grants and Fellowships in Religious Studies
- Navigating the Postdoc World: What Comes After Your PhD?
- Toolkit 101: Essential Skills for Success in Religious Studies
- Teaching Tips and Tricks: Excelling in the Religious Studies Classroom
- Career Strategies: Navigating Academia and Beyond with a Degree in Religion
- Balancing Act: Managing Work, Life, and Research

- GSSS for the upcoming winter semester

While I understand that the CSSR is focused on other important priorities this year, I would like to explore the possibility of organizing at least one GSSS event in the upcoming winter semester. For example, by leveraging the network of our executive members, I hope to connect with experienced individuals who could lead a session on postdoctoral opportunities. Alternatively, we could invite someone from SSHRC to speak about how SSHRC applications are processed and evaluated from an insider adjudicator's perspective. If you know of anyone who would be able to speak on these topics or any other relevant topics that would align with the GSSS, I would greatly appreciate it if you could share your recommendations either via direct message (cssrstudents@gmail.com) or during the meeting.

- **Fee Waivers and CSSR Graduate Student Leadership Award**

I believe it would be valuable to enhance student engagement and make the CSSR more accessible to a diverse range of students. While we do offer reduced fees in our Congress fee, the combination with the hefty Congress base fee can still prevent graduate students from participating. Travel awards vary across institutions and

programs, and are often quite limited. Additionally, many of our ambassadors are not CSSR members due to the membership fee. Therefore, I propose that we consider offering the following financial support to encourage student/ambassador participation in the annual meeting and other CSSR activities.

1. *CSSR Membership Fee:*

○ **Waiver of CSSR Membership Fees for Student Ambassadors**

This initiative would encourage active student participation and leadership while alleviating the financial burden for those assuming these roles. It would also foster a sense of belonging and involvement in the society, particularly as these ambassadors could help recruit more students into the organization. I understand that this may have an impact on membership revenues. However, given that the waiver is for ambassadors only, and this role could be part of a broader effort to build a student engagement program, the long-term value of student involvement might outweigh the immediate loss in revenue.

○ **Sliding Scale Membership Fee for All Students**

Implementing a sliding scale based on student's ability to pay could increase membership accessibility. This would demonstrate the CSSR's commitment to inclusivity, making it easier for students from diverse financial backgrounds to participate. For example, self-funded students who are not eligible for certain scholarships or financial support would benefit from a reduced membership cost.

To keep this financially sustainable, the CSSR could consider introducing a "pay what you can" model, where students suggest a fee they can afford, with a minimum fee set to ensure at least a modest contribution. This would maintain revenue while being sensitive to students' financial needs.

I would like to emphasize that this initiative is an investment that goes beyond the present moment—it is an investment in the vitality, diversity, and future of the CSSR. By offering a sliding scale membership fee, CSSR is ensuring that the next generation of scholars and leaders in religious studies can access the resources, networking, and opportunities that the society provides. This is how an organization grows, thrives, and evolves—by supporting its future members today.

2. *CSSR Conference Fees:*

○ **Conference Fees as Eligible Costs for Travel Subsidies (If the student is not being reimbursed elsewhere)**

This could encourage greater participation in the conference by students who might otherwise be deterred by the combination of travel and registration costs. I understand this could add complexity to the subsidy process, requiring additional administration to verify conference fees and ensure fairness. However, this is manageable if the guidelines for subsidies are clearly defined (e.g., students should apply before the conference with all required documentation). Additionally, the CSSR could set a cap for the total amount available per student or prioritize students who are presenting or playing key roles in the conference to maximize impact.

○ **CSSR Graduate Student Leadership Award**

I would also like to propose the creation of the *Graduate Student Leadership Award* within the CSSR. The idea behind this initiative is to offer graduate students a waiver for their conference fees in exchange for taking on active leadership roles during the annual conference, such as chairing panel sessions or organizing events. By doing so, we provide students with valuable leadership experience while reducing their financial burden. This initiative could build the next generation of leaders for the society, encouraging students to become more involved in planning and executing events. Additionally, it would help distribute the workload for the executive committee and could improve the overall quality of the conference. I believe giving this initiative a strong name, such as the Graduate Student Leadership Award, would further emphasize its value and create a sense of recognition for students who take on these important roles. From a budgeting perspective, this could be a low-cost initiative if the award is limited to a few students each year. If the CSSR can limit this to a manageable number of students, it could serve as an excellent long-term investment in leadership without significantly increasing the financial burden.

I fully understand that the CSSR's current budget is very tight, and membership revenue is crucial for our society. However, the increased student engagement and potential growth in memberships from satisfied and involved students could lead to greater long-term sustainability. Furthermore, we can explore partnerships with academic institutions, grants, or corporate sponsors to provide additional funding for initiatives like the travel subsidy and leadership award. Finally, we could implement these initiatives on a limited, experimental basis (e.g., 3 years) and track their success through data collection. This will help refine these programs in the future and demonstrate their value to the membership when making future funding decisions.

Thank you!

Discussion:

- Due to time constraints, all members are encouraged to send Faezeh questions, comments, or concerns over email
- Ruby also suggests that since we will need to skip the reports of several executive members, if people have a motion that we need to vote on, that they share this over email to get the conversation started
- Jacqueline briefly shares her concern over the timing of the Student Essay/Research Prizes. Wants to revise these competitions and deadlines so that they better align with student schedules
 - Details of this proposal will be sent over email

7. Adjournment/ Adjournement

The meeting adjourned at 3:01 PM Eastern

Note: though the meeting adjourned here, the reports from members who did not share these during the meeting have been copied below

Membership Secretary and Communication Officer / Secrétaire des membres et agente des communication (Rachel Brown)

Communications

Continued to send out bi-weekly Newsletters since the AGM until Nov. 1st when Jaqueline and Faezeh took over this responsibility.

I have been very impressed with Jacqueline and Faezeh's work on the Newsletter and am grateful to have that task off my list of responsibilities.

I continue to communicate with our members via email as many reach out to me as first point of contact.

I will be joining Faezeh, Jacqueline and Zabeen in the new year at the Communications team meetings and look forward to supporting the excellent work they have all been doing with my work on the website.

Website work

The website continues to take up most of my service time. I have had multiple meetings with Kyle over the past five months working on streamlining and updating the website. I have asked executive members to let me know of any changes they would like to see to the website and have implemented the ones I can, and have communicated with Kyle to make the ones that I cannot. My goal moving forward is to make changes and additions once a week on Fridays. If any executive members would like to see things posted to the website, please feel free to send them my way and I will collect them and post them once a week.

Kyle will be transitioning out of the website hosting role, and Alison and Ruby are looking for a replacement for him. I think we need to be clear about what we want from the website, and think through what is possible for a volunteer versus a paid website support person.

CSSR Communications Report (Jacqueline Giesbrecht, Faezeh Izadi, and Zabeen Khamisa)

General Communications Team Update

We have been meeting biweekly since September 2024. The intention of our meetings is to ensure consistency and efficiency with our communications strategy. This became particularly important and useful when Faezeh was able to start our CSSR LinkedIn page. It is our intention that we will continue meeting biweekly. We also hope to include in our meetings the CSSR Communications Liaison and Website Administrator, Rachel Brown, who assists in managing the website.

As we continue working together, we have decided to communicate our updates in a single report, and will each speak to our work during our CSSR meetings as needed.

One of our goals is to ensure accessibility of all CSSR communications. One way we wish to address this is to include [alt text](#) for images in our CSSR Newsletter, and social media.

Twitter & Facebook

CSSR Twitter and Facebook account has been inactive as Zabeen Khamisa has been working on the Code of Ethics document. CSSR Twitter and Facebook account activity will resume starting next week (December 1, 2024), especially to support the CSSR conference communications.

LinkedIn

The decision to officially launch the CSSR LinkedIn page was made in mid-August between Alison, Jacqueline, Rachel, and Faezeh. The account was created to help facilitate the move to a biweekly newsletter, and to provide additional methods of communication with CSSR members—grad students and early career scholars in particular.

Faezeh and Jacqueline have been working closely together managing the LinkedIn page. Our first LinkedIn post, which was an introduction to the LinkedIn community, was published on September 18, 2024. Thus far, in less than three months, we have gained over 450 followers, with around 10 new followers joining daily in recent days. This indicates that our page has entered LinkedIn's algorithm for suggested content, and we anticipate continued growth in a positive direction.

Since the page's launch, over the past two months and ten days, we have made more than 90 posts, either original content or reposts with added commentary. This averages about 9 posts/reposts per week. These posts have received a total of around 250 reactions (comments, reposts, and likes). During this period, we have received multiple direct requests for reposting (two of which from people new to the CSSR) and have gained numerous followers from our tagged event posts. In line with our overall goal, we have made efforts to include alt text for the images used in our posts whenever possible.

Networking and Community Building

There has been a clear gap for a LinkedIn page that serves as a reliable source for religious studies academic activities focused on Canada. We hope to fill this gap and provide a space for interactive engagement between our members online, and to foster opportunities for professional networking and collaboration.

We primarily share events and opportunities by and for religious studies scholars in Canada. However, many associations are continuing to offer virtual or hybrid events and conferences that would thus be easily accessible to our members as well. Sharing these events has provided a valuable opportunity for networking with other associations internationally and across disciplines. As a result, we have also gained a number of followers internationally and from a variety of professional backgrounds.

Approximately 45% of our followers are from within Canada, while 55% are from outside Canada. Interestingly, certain individuals are very engaged with our page and help spread our posts. This has even led us to consider and

suggest the possibility of having honorary CSSR ambassadors outside of Canada to help promote CSSR online activities or serve as liaisons for their host departments to include religious studies-related online conferences and events, if we find them appropriate for CSSR members in general.

Around 60% of our followers are in the fields of education and research, with the remaining followers coming from marketing, media and communications, human rights, and related areas. Knowing this information about our audience can help us better understand the potential LinkedIn offers and consider how we can leverage this valuable network of professionals in our activities moving forward.

Exec Contribution

We do our best to find and share relevant posts. However, sometimes we miss things due to the LinkedIn algorithm. If there is something you would like shared, please don't hesitate to tag us (the CSSR page) or share it with us in a direct message.

Request: We kindly ask CSSR's esteemed executive members to link the CSSR LinkedIn page to their personal profiles under any relevant section that fits best for them, such as "Experience" or "Volunteering." This would add significant credibility to our page. If anyone requires assistance with this, we are eager and happy to help.

Newsletter

To help reduce Rachel's workload, Jacqueline and Faezeh agreed to take over the newsletter. This transition occurred on November 1st. Thus far, we have sent out three newsletters, and have made the following changes:

- New email (set up by Kyle): newsletter—newsletter@cssrscer.ca
- Weekly to Biweekly (as discussed at previous exec meetings). Deadlines for newsletter submission will continue to be included at the top of the newsletter.
- Minor changes to formatting for increased accessibility.

Accessibility

We will continue to work towards increased email accessibility. Thus far, we have begun including deadline dates, and using a formatted [heading hierarchy](#). The newsletter and subscription forms have also been adjusted to meet WCAG AAA standards for [colour contrast](#) (ratio of 7:1). We are currently working to implement [descriptive links](#) and [alt text](#) (these two are still very much works in progress).

We will be working to include alt text for all newsletter images and social media posts. Flattened event posters (images) are unreadable by those who use assistive devices or without reliable internet. Many event posters are text-heavy images and are tedious to transcribe, making it more difficult for exec and Student Ambassadors to share CSSR opportunities across platforms and mediums. As such, we will be reducing our use of text-heavy images, and requiring alt text for all images included in the newsletter.

Email Filters

Our newsletters have been having difficulties making it through spam filters. We've been having issues with newsletters bouncing (mostly often U of T) or ending up in junk mail. Also, several individuals have informed us that they have been automatically unsubscribed repeatedly. Jacqueline and Faezeh have been able to identify some of the causes:

- Changes in email sender requirements potentially impacting our email credibility and delivery rate.
- Some spam filters can automatically unsubscribe when vetting links.
- The U of T recently changed how they do alumni emails, without much warning. All utoronto.ca and mail.utoronto.ca alumni accounts were deactivated in early October in favour of alumni.utoronto.ca accounts, and there seems to be no forwarding service to help with this transition.

We have included a note in the November 25 newsletter as well as on LinkedIn, noting that if someone has not directly received a newsletter from us in the past month, they may need to resubscribe.

Email Sender Requirements

We're taking steps to hopefully improve our delivery rate. Several email services have updated requirements for email marketers, which has impacted email deliverability for many newsletters. Kyle helped us get our [email domain authenticated](#), which is now required by Gmail and Yahoo for large email campaigns. We are considered a small campaign, so this may not be what was impacting us. However, this authentication certainly won't hurt and should have a positive effect on all of our cssrscer.ca email accounts.

MailChimp has a partnership with a DMARC monitoring service called Valimail, which helps email marketers keep up-to-date on sending requirements. Since this service would be free, Kyle has suggested it would be worth trying. Jacqueline will work with the new web maintenance person to set this up.

Changes to MailChimp Pricing Plans

We're currently on a free MailChimp plan that allows 2,000 contacts and 12,000 sends per month. MailChimp has changed its [pricing plans](#) and we were at first concerned this was part of our email delivery problem, as the new free plan is much more restricted.

Fortunately, we have learned that we have a [Legacy Free](#) plan and do not need to worry about these pricing changes being applied to our account.

CSSR Member-At-Large Report: Publicly Engaged Research in Religion Student Prize (Jacqueline Giesbrecht)

As was decided last year, my role shifted to focus on the new student prize category, the Publicly Engaged Research in Religion (PERR) student prize. I have also collaborated with Faezeh on the LinkedIn page (August) and newsletter (November). More details on this are provided in the combined communications report.

The new Publicly Engaged Research in Religion category was launched in May, with a deadline of August 1st. I did not receive any submissions by this deadline. In conversation with the Student Ambassadors, Faezeh was able to identify that this was due to a gap in communication. For various reasons, news about this new competition did not reach many grad students. As such, we decided to extend the deadline to October 31st and readvertised the prize in the newsletter and on LinkedIn. Faezeh communicated directly with the new student ambassadors. There was more interest this time around, but unfortunately, we still received no submissions.

While we were able to improve some of the communication issues, they are still not fully resolved. For this reason, we believe that the lack of success with this prize launch does not represent a lack of interest or relevance. As grad students ourselves, we know that grad students are working on such projects and feel that investing in these research outputs is worthwhile. I suggest holding this competition again this year and continuing to work on improving the various gaps in communication.

Communication Issues

There were a variety of contributing factors that made communication with grad students difficult.

1. **Late contest launch:** The Student Prizes were launched later this year (May) due to needing to finalize details of the new category. This, combined with the August 1st deadline, meant that the prize launch went unnoticed by many students. Very few students subscribe to the newsletter, and no physical posters would have been put up in departments during the spring/summer semester. There is also often a transition between Student Ambassadors during the summer, and students are less likely to check their emails. As an established competition, the Essay Prize was less affected.

2. **Combined launch:** The two student prize competitions were launched at the same time, with the same deadlines and using the same poster. In hindsight, it would have been a good idea to separate these out more to help the new category gain attention.
3. **Filter issues:** Several student ambassadors weren't receiving Faezeh's email from the Student Ambassador Gmail account or our newsletter. More on this in the Communications report.
4. **The nature of the Student Ambassador program:** Faculty and admin are less likely to inform students of CSSR opportunities because they assume the student ambassador is. If the ambassador is not receiving the information, students can go without CSSR updates for a while before it is noticed.
5. **Programs without Student Ambassadors:** By October 31st, 15/30 student ambassador positions were filled. This is above our average, but it still means we are not in direct contact with students from half of the religious studies programs in Canada.
6. **Social media:** The social media landscape is quite fragmented right now, which makes sharing news difficult. A lot of academics have moved away from X/Twitter to LinkedIn, which has helped make our LinkedIn account a success. However, most of our followers thus far are faculty rather than students. We also continue to not have access to the CSSR Student Facebook page (my initial post about the essay contest is still pending...)

2025 PERR Launch Strategy

To resolve the above issues, I will continue to work with Faezeh and the Comms team to improve communications with graduate students. I also suggest making the following adjustments to the 2025 PERR Student Prize launch strategy:

1. **Launching the Student Prizes separately**, with separate (and visually distinct) posters and deadlines. While they may be launched together in the future, I suggest launching them separately this year to help the PERR prize become established.
2. **Send posters directly to Program Admin for printing** (copying Student Ambassadors so they can help put them up). This will ensure all programs are receiving this information, even if they do not have Student Ambassadors.
3. **Reduce the time between the PERR launch date and deadline.** There is a large gap between the student prize launch and the deadline (4-5 months), which makes it difficult to advertise in a way that maintains interest, especially over the summer. I propose reducing the time between the launch date of both prizes to 3 months.

Proposed timeline adjustments:

- a. **2025 PERR student Prize:** September launch, December deadline
- b. **2025 Essay Prize (and 2026 for both):** February launch, May deadline

Since this is my last term as MAL, the 2025 PERR Student Prize launch will fall to the next MALs. To help the launch go smoothly, I will prepare launch materials for the new MALs to use (and adjust as they wish). I will work with the new web maintenance person to set up a new student prize cssrscer.ca email and put these documents on a shared drive.

2025 Essay Prize Launch

As described above, I suggest that we make a similar adjustment to the Essay Prize launch date and deadline. Here are additional arguments for a May deadline (instead of August):

1. **Winners could be announced at Congress.** The current Fall announcement feels anticlimactic and falls very close to SSHRC deadlines. Congress also provides a clear deadline for adjudication.
2. **Most students already have their essays ready by April** (coursework) and just wait to August to avoid looking too keen.
3. **It may be easier to get verification** letters before faculty go on summer holidays. (Yes, students can preplan, but most of the letters are written within a few days of the deadline).
4. Similar to August, **adjudicators are less likely to be teaching a course in May.** However, May has the added benefit of not being during last minute prep time for September.
5. **It would fit better within exec terms.** This would allow the launch and adjudication of a competition to be within the same term, and for the results to be included in the most relevant AGM report.

Recording Secretary/S cretaire archiviste (Chris Miller)
Report November 27, 2024

Meeting Poll

Thank you to everyone for submitting your responses to of our meeting poll and for helping us to find times that work for this meeting.

Virtual Votes

Over the summer/fall, we held several virtual votes regarding matters related to the DeGruyter book series. Thank you to everyone for submitting your responses to these in a timely manner. Below I have just included a short summary of each vote.

Ratify Contract

The first vote was held in July/August asked for a response to the following proposition: The vote will be to ratify or not ratify a new contract with Diana Dimitrova as Series Editor with proposed draft changes

80% of respondents voted 'No, I do not wish to ratify this contract'

20% of respondents voted 'Yes, I do wish to ratify this contract'

Future direction(s) for book series

In September, we circulated a survey to gain feedback on next steps to take. Executive members gave responses based on the following prompt: This survey is designed to collect feedback from all CSSR executive members and guide decision-making on if/how we proceed forward with a CSSR book series. Below, you will have the option to rank your preferences of the options which we can pursue. You are able to rank every option, but you do not need to assign a ranking to each option. In the last question, you will also have the option to share other thoughts you may wish to share.

Respondents were given the choice to rank their 4 preferred options in order. The 4 options were: Maintain contract with DeGruyter, with Diana Dimitrova as Series Editor; Maintain contract with DeGruyter, AND ALSO develop a Book Series with another Publisher; Maintain contract with DeGruyter and find new Series Editor (3 months notice required); Terminate contract with DeGruyter, and seek a new publisher for a CSSR Series. With ranked options, there are many ways to interpret the results, but I have outlined some below.

Looking at what people selected as the first (most preferred) option, then maintaining the contract seems like a popular choice. 5 people said keep the contract and find a new series editor, while 3 said keep the series editor, and 1 also said keep the series editor and develop a new series. It's not really clear to tell what the second most preferred option is. You could look to what most people listed as their second preferred choice, but the number of

people who said 'terminate the contract' (4) is the same as the number that said 'maintain it' (with or without a new series editor). Alternatively, you could add up all of the ranked options (e.g., if someone ranked something as their #1 choice, you give that 4 points; if they ranked it #2, you give it 3; #3 is 2 points; and #4 is 1). When you tally things up that way, then the most popular choice is 'Maintain contract with DeG and find new series Ed,' followed by 'Maintain contract with DeG and with Series ed for 2 years', then Terminate contract, then Maintain contract and develop another book series.

How CSSR chooses to follow up based on these reflections that people shared will likely require greater discussion.

Thank you again to everyone for your timely responses to all requests!

Chris Miller