 **Committee Meeting Minutes**

 **Friday 27 January 2012, 1:00pm – 4:30pm**

 **British Postal Museum and Archive**

**Chair: Michael Terwey**

**Minutes: Georgina Young**

**Present: Joe Carr, Michelle Day, Adam Bell, Freya Folasen, Jenny Broadbent, Victoria Rogers, Cat Newley, Laura Briggs**

1. **Apologies**

Karen Oliver-Spry and Jenny Brown

1. **Minutes of last meeting & matters arising**

Michelle Day noted that the British Library has not taken SHCG Journal since 2003.

Discussion around enacting the planned bursary scheme was deferred until point 4 of the agenda.

 The minutes were accepted as a true record.

**ACTION: Georgina Young to draw up a plan based on guidance so far for CIO status**

1. **Officers reports – Decisions required and questions arising**

**Journal Editor**

Michelle Day. Next edition of the journal is ready to go to print. She just needs addresses from the Membership Secretary to proceed and find best quote for work.

Adam Bell queried places of deposit for News and Journal. He had been told something different to Michelle Day’s understanding.

**ACTION: Adam Bell to forward on details of his conversations and contacts to Michelle Day**

**Treasurer**

The majority of issues regarding finance were deferred for discussion until point four. Joe Carr presented the accounts. They now show the grant income from the Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund. This is deceptive and makes our accounts look healthier than they are.

Georgina Young suggested splitting the accounts into restricted and unrestricted funds so that SHCGs operating budget can be seen more clearly.

Adam Bell asked about whether we might close the second account. Joe Carr is considering keeping our reserve separately here once all direct debits to this account have been terminated, but this may cause problems with cashflow.

Victoria Rogers reminded Joe Carr that SHCG had committed £3000 to the FirstBASE project and that this needs to be taken into account when considering our financial position.

**Esmee Fairbairn Collections Fund FirstBASE Project**

Victoria Rogers noted that there is an error in the report as submitted; 3 February 2012 is the new appointment deadline for the contractor. The delay has been caused because an additional task was added into the selection process to help make the decision.

**Seminars**

Jenny Broadbent reported that there have been issues around couriering Object Lessons and this limits how easily the boxes can be circulated.

The geology seminar is planned, but bookings are currently low. Committee decided to go ahead in any case and re-promote to encourage take up.

**Web Editor**

Cat Newley noted that there were issues with the picture library attached to out current website.

The ACE grant allocated to website improvements needs to be substantially spent by end of March, and completely spent by end of April 2012. Cat Newley asked if anyone had any specific requirements of the website and listed several areas as prompts.

**ACTION: All to submit ideas and comments re: website development**

**News Editor**

Adam Bell reported that the News has been published to schedule, the next deadline for copy is 18 April 2012. The paper News Archive has still not been transferred, but Adam Bell has secured PDF versions of editions under his editorship. He would like to place the News Archive online by the end of 2012 and committee discussed the best way forward. Victoria Rogers would not recommend the scanning bureau that she used for the Journal.

**ACTION: Victoria Rogers to explore the hourly rate for a temp working on a workplace scanner.**

**ACTION: Adam to establish the scale of the job and get quotes from other companies**

**ACTION: Adam to send spare copies of the News to Laura Briggs so that she can send them out to new members.**

**Membership Secretary**

Laura Briggs is expecting to reduce membership numbers due to non-payment. She has looked into what is required from the Membership Secretary in order to comply with regulations for CIO status, but we need to reconsider our categories of membership before she can take it any further. Discussion deferred to points four and five.

**Sponsorship and Development**

Freya Folasen proposed putting together a sponsorship and committee agreed this action. We need to gather together the contact details of past and potential future sponsors, committee agreed to add this into the membership database brief.

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**ACTION: Michael Terwey, Adam Bell and Victoria Rogers to pass on details of potential sponsors who we’ve approached in the past.**

**Secretary**

Georgina Young presented the brief and contract information for the new membership database. Suggestions to include development contacts and automate deletion of members who have not paid their subscriptions were noted.

**ACTION: Georgina Young to update and issue brief and contract information.**

**Conference**

Georgina Young read through the Conference report in Karen Oliver-Spry’s absence. The plan for conference went down well.  The line up for the debate was praised and Michael Terwey volunteered to chair.

The biggest change requested was that there be an all delegate launch slot for FirstBASE rather than an opt-in session.  There was also some discomfort about the conference title.  Do we always get it right?  was seen as a bit presumptuous (as if we mostly do) so it might be worth rephrasing.

There were a few typos: 'who's interpretation' should read 'whose interpretation'; also 'comparison' and 'visitor expectations' were mis-spelt. It was also noted that there was an hour missing from the programme on the Friday afternoon and the tour of M Shed will need clarifying in the next version.

Victoria Rogers will convene the first day and Georgina Young will convene the second. Laura Briggs, Freya Folasen and Cat Newley will be the front desk team on day 1.  Michael Terwey will take photographs (apart from during the debate when Freya Folasen will take over)

Joe Carr has had a look at the costs and they are currently running a little lower than last year overall.  As our finances are more vulnerable, he proposed keeping the cost for delegates the same as last year and Committee agreed.

1. **Financial review and cost analysis**

Joe Carr clarified why the balance in our accounts had fallen so dramatically between 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. Conference made a loss, the cost of paper publications was substantially higher due to rapid inflation in paper, ink and postage costs. Committee had also committed to additional activities beyond core operating functions. At the same time income fell, particularly membership payments.

Discussions took place on how to stabilize the financial situation of SHCG. There appeared to be too many barriers to holding committee meetings digitally (Council firewalls not allowing Skype etc) and having fewer than four meetings a year was seen as damaging. The following immediate actions were agreed by committee:

* Plan fees for future seminars / conferences to ensure they break even as a minimum and incur less risk
* Put an indefinite hold on non-contracted additional activities (e.g. bursaries)
* Move the primary means of communication with members around membership from paper to digital
* All committee members to book travel to meetings as early as possible in order to take advantage of offers

Further areas to investigate in order to restore financial health:

**ACTION: Victoria Rogers and Cat Newley to see if we can reduce core digital costs by negotiating new web hosting agreements as part of web redesign and FirstBASE work**

**ACTION: Joe Carr to propose an uplift in membership fees to the next meeting that will match core costs against membership income.**

**----BREAK----**

1. **Member survey feedback**

**ACTION: Karen Oliver-Spry to compile all separate analyses into a full report**

Michael Terwey asked if there were any shocks in the responses. Michelle Day noted that more people read the journal than anticipated and there was better than expected feedback in this area.

Georgina Young reported on the first five questions, notes on discussion follow.

Individual members are more significant in terms of numbers and contributions than institutional members and should be our focus.

The immediacy, exclusivity and community of the SHCG list was almost universally valued. However, some technical issues with the list were reported.

**ACTION: Cat Newley to look into frequently reported issues with the list and investigate fixes**

Victoria Rogers noted that the least valued SHCG services: Object Lessons (2.05), FirstBASE (2.07) and Website (2.67) suffer from a lack of publicity and are due to be overhauled this year in response to known issues. We need to make sure we get out the message about new and improved versions. Once the new FirstBASE is launched, the duty officer will push out a message every Friday highlighting new content.

Jenny Broadbent noted a lukewarm response to recent seminars and suggested that - as funding for travel and training is tight at the moment -that we might actually want to make more available online and enhance the digital offer.

**ACTION: Georgina Young to revise mission statement in response to comments**

Discussion moved on to Conference and Seminars. There was a sense that we should begin to broadcast some elements digitally, but a fear that this might constrain what people say in the room.

**ACTION: Karen Oliver-Spry to look into recording and broadcasting a sample from the 2012 Conference as a pilot.**

The point about AGM being combined with Conference skewing attendance and decision making was taken, but when AGM was held separately from Conference in the past in never achieved quorum because the geograhical spread of our members makes it hard to come along without a broader justification.  All we can really do to mitigate is make it as clear as possible that all members are invited to attend the AGM for free and that they need not book for Conference if they wish to take part or stand for committee.

There is a sense that seminars have lost direction and identity a little and that there are real and present issues for the membership about the time and financial resources required to attend in person. Conference, seminars and Object Lessons are part of the same offer and suffer some of the same problems. The idea of providing digital training content alongside also links to the commissioning plan for FirstBASE; we can test this under the current project.

We need to probe issues around seminars further. Georgina Young suggested putting together a new Whatchamacallits session as these had always been popular and there is still a clear demand for object-based help. We could use this to test whether recent lack of enthusiasm and take up was associated with content or with resource constraints on members

**ACTION: Jenny Brown and Jenny Broadbent to revive Whatchamacalits for next year’s seminar programme**

Moving onto FirstBASE, the evidence from the survey supports the development activities underway. The lack of content, complexity of use and lack of publicity are barriers all of which are being addressed.

Quite a few barriers to the use of Object Lessons boxes were identified, but the downloadable resources are well used and people still want them. Ideas came up about mini boxes and moving into textiles , but committee decided to put a hold on further development of Object Lessons until the FirstBASE project completes.

News remains very popular and pretty much everyone reads it! 89% want a digital archive and it was decided that this project should go ahead subject to the resources being available.

Adam Bell will respond to feedback that the News should be shorter and snappier with more on current issues in museums and more criticism and challenge.

Most people want a digital copy in addition to rather than instead of a print copy. Committee agreed that we should put forward two membership subscription rates: print and digital or digital only.

**ACTION: Joe Carr to incorporate a digital only option in the new membership fee structure proposal**

Most people do read at least some of it the journal and would like a digital version.

Its value is seen primarily as a record of conference and a way to share research. There were comments that indicated the scholarly standard could be higher and that the Journal needs to be more academic if it is to continue in its current form.

The committee decided on continuation of the Journal for the time being, there is a need to test the approach of podcasting conference sessions before considering this as a substitute record of events.

Feedback on the e-mail list was very positive for a mixture of reasons, however, Cat Newley noted a lack of enthusiasm for SHCG on Twitter and Facebook at present. There doesn’t seem to be a strategy to our involvement in social media and the low level of activity is an issue. This needs to be considered once the new FirstBASE is up and running.

**ACTION: Cat Newley to set up a Linked In group for SHCG**

Suggested changes to the website were listed out and will be used to shape redevelopment. Quite a proportion of our members do not currently use it and there is a demand for better design and navigation. Online payment and booking had strong support. The West Midlands Fed page was noted as a good example to follow.

Michael Terwey reported that advocacy and campaigning received middling responses. We should be doing it but it’s not our most important function. Primary concerns of members (and hence SHCG) were:

1. Specialist posts
2. Museum closures

People weren’t prepared to get actively involved, there was anxiety about this. Adam Bell suggested that we look more at positive advocacy as opposed to reactive responses. There were lots of ideas on how we could get better in this area, but it is not seen by a priority by members or committee.

1. **SHCG strategic priorities discussion**

Carried over to next meeting

1. **Future membership categories, levels, charges and rights**

Suggestions included a reduced price to incentivise taking publications digitally and a realignment of core costs with membership income. We need to take a proposal to AGM to make these changes, but in the meantime we can collect current e-mail addresses as part of the membership renewal process.

**ACTION: Laura Briggs to request e-mail addresses as part of membership mailout**

**ACTION: Joe Carr to propose a new membership fee structure**

1. **AOB**

None noted

**The next meeting will take place at the National Media Museum Bradford on Friday 4 May 2012, 1pm-4pm**