H-Net Council Quarterly Meeting  
October 9, 2015; 9 a.m. – noon Eastern Time  
Minutes

H-Net Officers and Council Members

Present:
Robert Cassanello, Patrick Cox, Jesse Draper, Ryan Dunch, Daniel Fandino, Randolph Hollingsworth, Andrew Iliadis, Yelena Kalinsky, Peter Knupfer, Jeff Strickland, Jean Stunz

Absent:
Kevin DeJesus, Avrum Goodblatt, Scott Hendrix, Jerome Krase, Monika Lehner, Charles Reed, Donna Sinclair

NOTE: These minutes are generated primarily by Yelena Kalinsky with some minor edits from Randolph Hollingsworth. No changes to the previous meeting’s minutes (posted at https://networks.h-net.org/h-net-council-2015-2nd-quarterly-meeting-minutes) were requested.

Agenda

* Annual Elections (Stuntz)
* Strategic Plan and Search for New Executive Director (Stuntz)
* SCRAP findings/recommendations (Hollingsworth & Dunch)
* Reports from the H-Net Home Office (Knupfer, Draper, Kalinsky)
* Reports from the VPs (Lehner, Cassanello, Cox)

The meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

Annual Elections (Jean Stunz)

Councillors Whose Terms are Ending 12/31/15: Fandino, Goodblatt, DeJesus
Officers Whose Terms are Ending 12/31/15: Hollingsworth, Cox, Dunch
Councillor Resigned whose Term Ends 12/31/17: Sinclair

(see more at https://networks.h-net.org/node/59057/pages/59079/officers-and-council)

Election committee is accepting nominations but only one candidate announced (Fandino) yet for council, none yet for h-staff editor (Dunch is not running for re-election), or president-elect; Cox is standing for re-election; some forwarded nominations in meeting but the conversation turned to strategies to bring “new blood” into the leadership; Dunch was asked to write about his experience on council; suggestions were to blast it on E-Review & Editor Resources, seek out similar things in the H-Staff logs or H-Grad and have the Election Committee make direct appeals to the most active editors.

Search for New Executive Director (Jean Stunz)

Knupfer reported that his meeting with the Interim Dean of the College of Social Science, Neal Schmitt (http://socialscience.msu.edu/about-us/administration/interim-dean/) was reassuring in that, verbally, as to MSU support for H-Net remaining as-is. H-Net will get no additional money from the College, however the History Department Chair (Walter Hawthorne, http://history.msu.edu/people/faculty/walter-hawthorne/) included language committing the department to pay for 1 trip/year for H-Net President to come to MSU to meet with dept. chair & dean; Knupfer felt that the current Department Chair is supportive. The Chair agreed to pay for a reception at
AHA (or other major conference in the US – just should have applicability to History); the Chair is open to H-Net’s suggestions. The Chair agreed verbally not to sever the contract with Peter’s retirement from the History Department and will collaborate with H-Net to assure that succession procedures are in place.

Discussion ensued as to who would actually hire the next executive director of H-Net – and to whom does this individual report for evaluation purposes? Knupfer responded that this depends on the position that H-Net agrees it wants for the department to hire: if it’s fixed-term, non-tenure line position – department hires; if tenure line - college hires and candidate goes through regular tenure process. H-Net will be invited to participate in the search and can veto if it contributes to the salary. Knupfer assured the Council that the department won’t hire someone H-Net doesn’t want. Would they hire someone H-Net does want? Knupfer surmised that the Department Chair would not commit to hiring someone whose fitness and skills he doesn’t know; but also he won’t hire someone that H-Net doesn’t want to hire; it would have to be a collaborative process.

To whom does the Executive Director report – who is the supervisor? Currently, the Executive Director reports 1x/year to the department on what H-Net is doing. The current Chair would be open to a more formal review process with Council. Outside funder can yank funding if the person is not doing their job. Possibly writing up consultative process between H-Net & the dept. to review Exec Director. It was agreed that the MOA would need to specify conditions and procedures regarding the Executive Director’s Annual Performance Review. Hollingsworth will work with Knupfer to draft this additional language.

Can the Executive Director do their job from a distance? Knupfer estimated that it would be difficult to manage staff remotely. Fiscal duties, hiring & firing could not work at distance. Note that the draft agreement calls for signature of interim dean. Agreement will be with the department, not the dean. From the conversation with Knupfer, the Dean is fine with it and understands that the agreement with the department chair would be binding.

Does the University have a published Centers & Institutes policy? Not published, but usually a center gets startup money, and after 5 years - has to run independently. MSU considers having given H-Net the startup with course release, office space, payroll infrastructure, etc. Centers draw the pay of the leader from centers’ accounts.

What would be entailed by a move out of MSU? There are currently four employee lines, equipment and room, servers and equipment. Movable assets: servers are ours; staff depends on arrangements with host institutions; home office can’t run with one associate director - need to keep that middle management. Knupfer anticipated that a move would entail a significant disruption of services for H-Net; and the physical move itself would take some time. A move would also depend on labor pool at host institution, and this would be a serious obstacle at a small institution. Knupfer advised that word about a move would not elicit confidence in H-Net, and this would impact revenues. H-Net is dangerously dependent on one stream of money: the Job Guide.

Next steps for the agreement? Council needs to vote to approve draft agreement. The Council chose not to take any official moves toward moving. The Council is requested to review and comment on the draft Memorandum of Agreement between the MSU Department of History & H-Net: https://networks.h-net.org/system/files/contributed-files/mouh-nethst10-1-15.pbk.pdf
**Strategic Plan (Jean Stuntz)**

Strategic Plan committee has finished and the EAC has reviewed it; Council should now make a final review and make it ready for submission to H-Staff. This document is tied together with the search for the new Executive Director which should begin to take place within the next two years in order to have a new Director in place in three years. Knupfer stated that he can stay on for the life of the agreement (through Dec. 29, 2019) to give a chance to see if we can promote from within, do a search, etc. Peter, Jesse & Yelena will go through strategic plan, tighten it up, check for consistency in wording, etc. The current Strategic Plan on Google can be found at: [docs](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tQX23hfkIrlqSHaxZFlqxVWnDTtwi90vEGcqcJe5k1v0/edit)

Council should read and comment by next Friday, Oct. 16.

**SCRAP findings/recommendations for revised policy on “misconduct” (Randolph Hollingsworth and Ryan Dunch)**

The committee reviewed the existing policies, AHA’s policy and drafted a new policy for the Council to review: how to handle cases where a reviewer believes there’s academic misconduct in a book that’s being reviewed. The question was how to handle this internally and what to say about H-Net’s public/external role.

It was originally proposed as an H-Net Reviews policy, and Knupfer recommended that it be written up as a Council-wide policy. The policy draft is 6 points: knowing professional standards; CC license; strong recommendation against publishing reviews of books with academic misconduct; H-Net will not communicate with author, publisher, or employer about the allegations; reviewers or network members; see the full text at [https://networks.h-net.org/node/882/discussions/88661/rules-and-procedures-committee-h-net-council-2015-meeting-re](https://networks.h-net.org/node/882/discussions/88661/rules-and-procedures-committee-h-net-council-2015-meeting-re).

Hollingsworth recommended that this new language be inserted into H-Review policies and also into H-Net policy 5.01(b). There was not a quorum at the meeting, so Jean Stuntz put up on the Council network her motion that Council accept the proposed changes as given in the previous email and discussed at the web meeting. Andrew Iliadis seconded. The recommended change needs to go out to H-Staff for review, please vote before next Friday, Oct. 16.

**Reports from the H-Net Home Office**

**Executive Director, Peter Knupfer:** budget is currently $83,747; job guide 2-3% behind last year. We have sufficient funds to continue, but it’s a matter to pay attention to. Staff will prepare for donation drive. There will be information on Council network. Waited until now because there are new services to advertise.

**Associate Director Networks – Jesse Draper**


- Professionalizing home office staff (undergraduates and graduate students at MSU); social media coordinator; staff monitor 10 networks, see how we can assist editors - network analyst role, working on monitoring networks, identify how to improve or create content; professionalization day; useful for staff.
- Dedicated staff members into Google Analytics to look at site traffic. Report for H-Diplo - gives total unique users, breakdown, page views, avg page views during the week. Will tie into the
Book Channel. Use of search terms? Did it feed back into lexicon/tagging? Possible future direction.

- A number of staff will be graduating, will need to hire 1-2 more staff in the spring.
- New Editor training system up and running. Still experiencing some lag between editor certification & training. Will start implementing a personal call to new editors.
- Media tab - chronological dump of files. Replacing Media tab > Resources. Will be replaced by network projects landing page. Will pull up dynamic views from networks & globally on specific types of content. Will also encourage editors to work on projects - will see what’s happening at other levels; and providing better user experience for subscribers.
- Book Marking feature - on the test server; will allow you to bookmark anything on H-Net; will roll out within the next 2 weeks
- H-Germanistik migration - translating into German - involves browser translation, drupal translations, & manual
- Additional hubs - originally thinking about developing a Teaching hub - may not be necessary with Resources tab; would like to get back to working with the Teaching Committee; other hubs - taking ideas for other Commons-wide ideas for hubs; conversation with Andrew Iliadis - may need to have editors, to deal with subscribers
- Still plan to improve front page experience - still interested in doing that, just got behind on other priorities.
- Ongoing content development to support networks
- Updating outdated banners and upgrading graphics display

How many staff do we employ? 2 1/2-time graduate assistants – one is paid by the History Department, 10 undergraduates that equates to $7-9K for salaries. Need to get more of the information about Home office staff described to the H-Net community, e.g., cameos in newsletter. Newsletter should go out to H-Net Staff.

**Associate Director Reviews – Yelena Kalinsky**

- Book Channel launch imminent; this is a service to readers & subscribers; sponsors get a 3 month trial to decide if they still want to be a sponsor and pay; front page is still in progress – using example of Oxford UP as sponsor; is the editorial content part of H-Net and so need to abide by H-Net editorial policies? No, this is commissioned content by field editors (an example by Caleb Owen is currently on the Book Channel - [https://networks.h-net.org/node/1883/pages/87164/perspectives-understanding-homosexuality-and-homophobia-africa](https://networks.h-net.org/node/1883/pages/87164/perspectives-understanding-homosexuality-and-homophobia-africa)) is moderated and reviewed by the H-Net Home Office staff. Authors could be paid an honorarium. Council recommended the description of this work be “invited author” and this will show greater prestige/value.
- Reviews - continued recruitment; 17 new editors; 9 revived reviews programs since July; there are some difficulties in the current process with publishers switching to e-books instead of printed review copies – this is being worked on. Review editors who have come on since 2013 need to be added to HNet-Staff. This membership should now be a regular part of review editor certification and training.
Reports from the VPs

VP for Teaching/Learning
No report and Monika is absent.

VP for Research & Publications
Robert Cassenello spoke of how he wants to make greater use of H-Net’s brainpower, ambitions and energy to create content. Because Robert is interested in podcasting as a medium, he believes this could be an additional strategy for curating academic content. The network came up as a way to distribute. But people also examine podcasting in an academic capacity, and there are professional organizations for podcasting. He knows there is a cohort of people who think about podcasting on a producing, academic, or teaching level. Scholarly literature now coming out on educators using podcasts for teaching/learning. H-Podcast might be a way to bring people together around discussions, collaboration, professional development material related to podcasting.

- The Art of the Review - releasing it on H-Podcast now, will take 3 weeks to get into iTunes directory. Using H-Reviews program & editors to create something that is original content in itself - year-long discussion about what it means to review; hoping the idea sells to people who subscribe to the podcast. H-Net has been doing reviews since 1993, not only a repository of reviews, but a body of knowledge about reviewing & how can we share that? Robert & Yelena identify issues, ideas, talk to Basia & Charlotte - create year-long series of podcasts that exist and are available for people to use & tap into the knowledge. Then want to inspire networks to do the same thing: not necessarily podcasts, but digital history, digital humanities project about their networks that can be shared globally through H-Net. Want a fairly standard system for it. Many tools at the disposal of scholars & network editors - should promote & create an environment where networks feel they can create original content.

- HASTAC - Nov 2017 - will be in Orlando, hosted at UCF. Interested in collaborating with H-Net. Robert would like to start now promoting the idea that any network that wants to meet & collaborate, create projects, let’s all meet in Orlando at HASTAC. Submit panels, encourage formal or informal receptions or gatherings to meet face to face to create an incubator for collaboration in ways that we aren’t doing. H-Net could sponsor sessions, reception, etc. to get some synergy for future collaboration. Create a page on the Council network - information for when panels due, etc. and Council can decide what kind of budget it would want, travel support for panelists?, build some traction

VP for Networks
Patrick Cox described the work that EAC is doing in thinking about the networks’ advisory board situation (lack of). Discussions & recommendation are posted at https://networks.h-net.org/node/882/discussions/89936/advisory-boards. Alongside advisory boards, networks need editors, especially single-editor networks. It will be a long, slow process of telling editors that they need to get themselves advisory boards. The Council will need to consider the question of what to do at the end of the timeline if networks don’t do it, especially for networks that are small but healthy and productive, especially when they have made efforts and can’t get anyone.

- EAC looked into Strategic Plan - Jean has posted it to the Council network; Patrick will post a synthesis of the productive conversation from the EAC.

- Recruiting efforts has been astounding. Peter Knupfer encourages Council to support VPs in any way possible.
- Need to update voter list: automatically generated by editor roles in the Commons. Regular login for voting on the Commons through drupal - no additional problems. Staff list is not ideal since many in the network are not currently serving as editors; same with Editor Resources network. Hollingsworth requested that all current editors be sent a reminder email indicating which login is the official one for voting. Review editors should be added to H-Staff network.

The meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.