2022 BPG Business Meeting Minutes

AIC 50th Annual Meeting, Los Angeles (Zoom)
Thursday, May 26, 2022, 1:00 PM ET
Meeting duration: 1:32:32
Minutes by Marieka Kaye, BPG Secretary/Treasurer (2021-2023)

Opening

Outgoing BPG Chair, Melissa Tedone, called the BPG business meeting to order. She presented the meeting with the other members of the Executive Council, Secretary/Treasurer, Marieka Kaye, outgoing Program Chair, Katie Mullen, and Morgan Browning, who will move from Assistant Program Chair to Program Chair. Several guests also joined to present during the meeting.

The Executive Officers attended the Annual Meeting in Los Angeles in May, which was the first in-person meeting in three years and a celebration of AIC’s 50th Anniversary. The business meeting continues to be held on Zoom to remain accessible to a broader constituency than those attending in-person and live streaming is extremely expensive. Holding the business meeting on the AIC Zoom platform after the in-person meeting made the most sense from both time management and cost perspectives.

Land acknowledgment statements were shared by each BPG Executive Officer, honoring the land they work on and standing in solidarity with Indigenous communities. They shared the following resources with calls to action:

Native Governance Center
Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums
International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs

Members voted on and approved the 2021 Business Meeting minutes, originally shared by Marieka Kaye on December 1, 2021 in the online BPG Community on Higher Logic. No corrections were submitted. Fletcher Durant made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Melina Avery.

Due to the numerous violent conflicts and humanitarian crises around the world, such as Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, Melissa invited Dr. Catherine Foster, Executive Director, Cultural Heritage Coordinating Committee (CHCC), Cultural Heritage Center (CHC), US Department of State, to join the meeting to provide some perspective on how we as conservation professionals might fit into response strategies. Additionally, Tiffani Emig, AIC’s Programs and Operations Director, and Eric Pourchet, FAIC Institutional Advancement Director, joined to answer questions about FAIC’s emergency response programs.
Summary of Dr. Catherine Foster’s presentation:

The CHC is a small 20 person department that advances US global leadership in cultural heritage protection and preservation by fostering connections between cultural heritage professionals, institutions, and international counterparts. They also support efforts to protect heritage from the impacts of deterioration and natural disasters, among other causes, through the US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. The CHC does a lot to protect heritage from theft, looting, trafficking, and destruction through interagency coordination and collaboration with various partner governments, as well as US Customs and law enforcement agencies. This work is done through the Cultural Antiquities Task Force and international cultural property agreements, which are treaties between the US and countries that have issues with looting and trafficking of their heritage.

The CHCC is an umbrella for all of these efforts, which came out in 2016 during the horrific acts of looting, trafficking, and destruction in Syria, which supported terrorist finance. Congress responded with the Protect and Preserve International Cultural Property Act of 2016. The CHCC was formed to coordinate the efforts of the federal government to protect and preserve international cultural property at risk due to political instability, armed conflict, or natural or other disasters.

Three working groups get tasks done - technology, preservation, and the cultural antiquities task force (the law enforcement of the group). They include stakeholder communities to discuss ways the federal government can work with the private sector to protect at-risk heritage. One such initiative is the public-private partnership with UPenn called the Cultural Property Experts on Call Program. Federal law enforcement (such as customs agents) are not experts so they need to be linked up with experts on call. This includes any cultural property category. Priorities now include Ukraine. The CHCC provides a single US government voice when coordinating and communicating efforts around the protection and preservation of cultural heritage.

Emergency response - one initiative through CHCC membership agencies, including the Smithsonian and the Cultural Rescue Initiative - they have been working with the State Department to secure funding and support a partnership that the Smithsonian has with the Virginia Museum of Natural History to set up a cultural history monitoring lab. This lab provides global monitoring for cultural heritage sites threatened by armed conflict and natural disaster. They are monitoring 26,000 cultural heritage sites in the Ukraine, which began in April 2021. They are using open source research and satellite imagery to gather evidence of damage to the sites, which can be used as evidence in war crime cases and other legal avenues that may be pursued in the future.

There are reps from 16 federal agencies sitting on the CHCC, including the Library of Congress. There is a deep level of expertise and network to draw from. Challenges - pooling of resources, add-on to duties people have already. Would like to do larger initiatives that have a higher price tag. Need to react quickly to emergencies, which can be difficult when resources aren’t all in place. Situations shift quickly with emergencies and war and it can be hard to respond to the
constant unpredictable situations in emergency response. CHCC relies on partnerships and collaborations, so Dr. Foster asks people to contact her to become involved in these initiatives.

No questions followed Dr. Foster’s presentation.

Announcements from the Chair

Melissa thanked all the volunteers who dedicate their time to the BPG and welcomed Kim Norman, Jodie Utter, and Annie Wilker to their new volunteer roles. There’s a Volunteer Opportunities page on the AIC website for those interested in being involved.

Melissa reminded everyone that this is the last year the BPG Annual would be in print, which was shared on the online BPG Community and in the AIC Newsletter earlier in the year. This decision is recorded in the ad hoc BPG Financial Committee’s report (June 2020), which emphasized that the savings are $10,000+ with printing and shipping costs continuing to increase. The digital 2021 Annual is available online and the print copy should be available in August 2022.

Because of those savings, Melissa discussed adding more funding in the BPG budget for those who are required or highly encouraged to travel to the annual meeting. The four elected officers currently share a fund of $2K, which is divided by need. BPG has at least six more roles that require attendance including: managing and assistant editors for the BPG Annual, the Education and Programs Chair, and the four discussion group co-chairs. The travel money for the elected roles is roughly divided at $500/each, so we would need an additional $3K to offer travel support for the other volunteer positions.

AIC/FAIC Announcements

Elmer Eusman, AIC/FAIC Treasurer, and Sarah Melching, AIC/FAIC Director, Specialty Groups, presented news from the AIC Board. This included information about the Membership Designation Working Group (MDWG) and the Membership Engagement Subcommittee. The MDWG was dissolved following the approval of the final proposal by 76% of voters, with 33% membership voting, in December 2021. Changes are being implemented, starting with revision of the Bylaws. The Bylaws Committee was reformed with five Fellows and PAs and will work 6-12 months to propose changes, due to AIC PA and Fellows to vote on. Once the Bylaws are approved, they will start implementing the new system. Renewals/memberships between 2023-2027 will have changes in designations. Continuing professional development credits will be required for professional members starting in 2028. More information will be provided in the Fall 2022.

Membership Engagement Subcommittee - hosts one-hour monthly meet-ups on Zoom. The subcommittee uses these meetings to engage with members and AIC Committees, and to help
recruit and educate members about volunteer opportunities and AIC. Committee members and specialty groups are encouraged to give presentations during these meetings.

Sarah Melching discussed the work being done to review and revise the AIC Ethics core documents, with work taking place over the next two years. Each specialty group should contribute, as each group functions differently. There may be town hall style listening sessions, surveys, small topical meetings - it’s important for all specialty groups to be able to participate. Hope to have recruitment for this work done by August. Member vote will happen in Fall 2023. A DEIA lens will be applied to this work.

No questions followed the FAIC updates.

Treasurer’s Report

Marieka presented the Treasurer’s Report. This included the 2021 income and expenses and the 2022 proposed budget. All financial matters discussed happened between Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2021. The full report and all financial details can be found in the presentation slides: 2022 BPG Treasurer’s Report. Members voted to approve the continuance of current donation allocations, which was $1,000 to Gaehde and $1,000 to the Horton Funds. In 2019 members voted to dedicate all BPG donations to the Gaehde and Horton Funds, which directly benefit BPG members, and BPG stopped contributing to the Stout Fund. In the chat, some people asked if BPG could return to donating to the Stout. Fletcher Durant made a motion to accept the 2022 Treasurer’s Report, which was seconded by Ursula Mitra. Members voted to approve the 2022 Treasurer’s Report and the motion passed.

Program Chair Report

Katie Mullen discussed the meeting, starting with the abstract review committee, which was a balance of book and paper conservators both in institutions and private practice. There were over 70 abstracts submitted and only a handful of timeslots. Sixteen panels of talks were organized over 5 sessions. There were sessions for the LACDG, APDG, BPG/PMG joint Wiki lunch session, and a lunch panel on varnished maps, which was a separate ticketed event. The lunch panel and all Tuesday sessions were made available through livestreaming and recordings.

Assistant Program Chair Report

Morgan Browning discussed the reception, held at the Japanese American National Museum. 162 members of BPG and PMG were present. Sponsors included Foster + Freeman, Hollinger Metal Edge, and University Products, who were thanked for their support.
Nominating Committee Chair Report

Sarah Reidell, Nominating Committee Chair, reported election results. The members of the Nominating Committee were Ken Grant, Sarah Norris, and Sarah Reidell (Chair emerita). They sought a slate of candidates that represented a diverse range of geographic locations, specializations, and education backgrounds to support the BPG equity and inclusion mandate and to mirror the breadth of BPG membership. The ballot was open from March 21-April 8, 2022.

Results: Liz Dube, Chair (2022-2024) and Amy Hughes, Assistant Program Chair (2022 and then 2023-2024 as Program Chair). Susie Cobbledick and Stephanie Lussier were thanked for running on the ballot as well.

The next nominating committee will work with Melissa Tedone as she transitions to the Chair emerita position. Sarah made a call for two volunteers to join Melissa in seeking candidates for the next Assistant Program Chair and Secretary/Treasurer.

Members voted for three candidates and chose Shelly Smith and Deb Cuoco.

General Announcements

- Silvia Albro retired from the Library of Congress after 37 years of service
- Peggy Ellis retired from NYU and is appointed a fellow in residence at the Menil Collection Drawing Institute
- NARA recently made many great hires in the St. Louis and DC area locations, and Marta O’Neill (St. Louis) and Nancy Davis (DC) retired
- BPG members planned and/or presented at the 25th Congress of the International Association of Paper Historians, an online colloquium hosted by Library of Congress, NARA, and the National Gallery of Art
- Peggy Ellis announced that the LEOcode Project is now live at LEOcode.org
- 2022 BPG scholarships, grants, and award recipients were acknowledged
- JAIC and BPG Annual contributors were acknowledged

New Business From the Floor

Discussion of Stout Fund

Fletcher Durant made a motion to discuss BPG’s donation to the Stout Fund, seconded by Sarah Norris

Fletcher discussed the importance of the Stout Fund for incoming conservators, so contributions of a small amount would be good to do so again, anywhere in the $500-$1,000 range

Sarah Norris seconded Fletcher’s comments; BPG activities are good but are all inward looking to BPG only; Stout is outward looking towards AIC at large

Looking back at the 2019 budget, before changes were made, BPG contributed $1,200
Peggy Ellis provided context and history about the Stout Fund and how it was bolstered significantly, due to the efforts of herself and Debbie Hess Norris, but they didn’t intend for specialty groups to decrease their support; she also supports adding a donation back. Fletcher Durant made a motion that BPG make a $1,000 contribution to the Stout Fund this year; seconded by Michelle Smith and Noah Smutz. Tiffani Emig shared that they gave 13 awards at $1,000/person this year. Eric Pourchot corrected that there were 18 requests this year, and only partial support could be given to 14. Members voted with overwhelming support and the motion was approved. Stephanie Watkins asked - will Stout funding be brought up annually along with Horton and Gaehde funds? BPG membership is required to vote annually on donation allocations, so this will be the case for the Stout donation going forward. Important fund because Stout funds can go to pre-program, conservation students, and emerging professionals.

Discussion of BPG volunteer travel stipends

Michelle Smith commented that Wiki coordinators are also required to attend meetings - they should also be allowed to apply for the pool of travel funds. xx made a motion to discuss the support of travel funds for BPG volunteers; Beth Doyle seconded the motion. Sarah Reidell stated that there’s inflexibility in voting for the use of funds - should be left to the discretion of the BPG Chair. Melissa stated that there is narrow representation of the membership attending the Business Meeting (50 in attendance) so the greater membership (900 members) might need to be included for further discussion on this issue, but Melissa proceeded to make a motion to create a pool of funds, and on an annual basis any volunteer who wants to use the funds can make an application to the Executive Council who would review the requests and respond in a balanced and equitable manner as to how the funds should be dispersed. The pool should be $3,000 because that’s a third of the savings BPG will realize from the transition to the digital-only BPG Annual. This was seconded by Sarah Norris and Deb Cuoco. A poll was created and membership voted in favor of allocating a flexible stipend of $3,000 for volunteer travel to the annual meeting and the motion was passed.

Closing

Question in the chat - will there be a print-on-demand option for the BPG Annual? Roger Williams said the Publications Committee is continuing to work on this option. Melissa encouraged everyone to continue the discussion on the online BPG Community and adjourned the meeting.