

Present: Andrew Bartlett (Board), Ian Dennis (Secretary-Treasurer), Eric Gans (Board), Eric Jacobus (Member), Marina Ludwigs (Board), Zenon Mackinnon (Member), Andrew McKenna (Member), Stacey Meeker (Board), Matthew Schneider (Board), Richard van Oort (President), Magdalena Złocka-Dąbrowska (Board)

Meeting **called to order** at 16:10 EST, DMS 11143, University of Ottawa and via Zoom. Richard van Oort chaired.

1. President’s Welcome – Richard van Oort

Richard called the meeting to order, welcomed participants, and offered the Society’s thanks to Ian Dennis and the other members of the 2022 Conference organizing committee for their work.

2. Treasurer’s Report & Update on GASC Website – Ian Dennis

Ian told the meeting that an up-to-date financial statement was not yet available, as conference expenses would need to be compiled, but that he would send one in a few weeks’ time. Overall, the Society’s finances are sound. He discussed the website and asked the meeting if it would think it worth while to upgrade to a more expensive version of the platform in order to avoid having advertisements on the site. Stacey Meeker noted that an upgrade might provide some enhanced features, but there was no general desire to spend more in order to avoid ads. Ian indicated that he was now comfortable with site maintenance but not too eager to invest more time in learning new functions. Stacey offered assistance should he at some point want to upgrade.

3. GASC 2022- Assessment, Ian Dennis and Board

There was an extended discussion of the current conference, which often focused on the mixed or “bimodal” format of simultaneous in-person and online participation and its advantages and disadvantages. Consideration of such issues led quite directly to questions of the format of future conferences. A number of points were made both about 2022 and potential conferences in subsequent years.

The Meeting remembered that the intention established at the 2021 AGM was to have a primarily in-person conference, with the unadvertised possibility (particularly for long-standing members of the GA community) of online participation. It became difficult,

however, to turn away participants whose proposals had been accepted but wished only to join online.

It was noted that the low in-person attendance (6 in person, 22 registered online, with an average of 12 to 14 online attendees per regular session) was probably still partly a result of the pandemic health risks and restrictions. This balance might change if these conditions improve in future years. Several online participants this year indicated they would certainly have attended in person, were it not for this factor.

It was also suggested, however, that low in-person attendance was at least partly a result of a reduction of available travel funding for scholars, and that this situation was likely to continue.

While it was generally agreed that in-person meetings were better, it was also noted that the online format did have some advantages, and that the discussions through Zoom at the conference, both during question period and between sessions had been good. The format seemed to encourage such interactions and the screen set-up created an equality between participants.

It was noted that a partially online conference was cheaper to fund both for participants and organisers, although Ian did note that the amount of labour and expense for the organiser probably did not much increase if there were 20 rather than merely 5 in-person attendees. More in-person attendees of course mean more revenue—the current conference will need to use reserves to pay for the in-person expenses. The option of applying for larger block funding, as had been done at the 2009 and 2014 conferences was recalled, but it was noted that the energy and time required to do this regularly was a challenge for an organization as small as GASC.

It was suggested that the bi-modal format could also be improved, partly by learning from the current experience. For example, a better result might be obtained, with less effort, by requiring all in-person participants to have a lap-top computer, and to sign on to the Zoom session that way. This would ensure that everyone's face was visible and would obviate the need for the in-person Zoom host to manipulate cameras to show those in person to those online, as was somewhat awkwardly done at the current event.

Ian noted that at least some online participants tended not to be as committed as those who planned to come in person. Several participants whose proposals had been accepted but who opted to attend online pulled out of the conference in the days before the event, citing such reasons as workload or lack of planning. The program had repeatedly to be revised in the last few days. Those who did withdraw were invited to attend the conference anyway to hear the papers and discussions (and pay the conference fee), but in no case did they do so. This might have been less likely for in-

person participants who would have had to make travel arrangements. Ian wondered if the next organiser might consider a policy whereby acceptance for online participation was conditional upon the payment of the fee, which would be non-refundable.

A policy was proposed whereby online participation would be limited to scholars living outside the general geographical area of the host city of the conference. This was considered, although it was noted that it might work against our long-held policy of trying to attract new participants.

4. Future Conferences? – Board—See Addendum from Matthew Taylor page 5 below

The proposal for Japan made by Matthew Taylor and Kiyoshi Kawahara was discussed and appreciated. It was noted, however, that their preference was for 2024, and the Meeting felt it would be ungenerous to ask them to shift ahead to their less-preferred year of 2023. There was enthusiasm expressed, however, for going to Japan again, and at least a few speakers indicated they would want to attend in person, even if online participation was possible or preponderant. To some it would be a means to combine scholarship with travel.

A possible conference in North America in 2023 was then discussed. Zenon Mackinnon suggested that he and Zack Baker might consider organising the event in Paolo Alto, California. This offer was greeted with appreciation and the possibility was discussed. It was felt that if some of the lessons learned in 2022 were applied, the conference could be mounted with less overhead, less expense, and less time and effort for the organisers. A university affiliation might not be required, and if in-person participants brought laptops, less technological support might be needed. Andrew Bartlett offered to be involved in such a project, as advisor on such matters as developing the CFP or even as potential host in Vancouver. Several members said they would be willing to travel to California (or Vancouver) in person. It was agreed that this idea should be explored and discussed again at the next Board meeting within the next couple of months. Zenon asked that he and Zack be invited to this meeting and Ian assured him this would be done.

It was also suggested that, should an in-person option not develop in 2023, the fall-back position ought to be a fully online conference, as the annual continuity of meetings seemed important to some members.

5. Any Other Business

Rotation of the presidency of GASC was discussed. Richard noted that previous presidencies had lasted four years, and that this is what he had now served. Marina indicated she would be willing to stand for election, but in a year's time, and Richard

agreed to serve until 2023.

Andrew B spoke to the ongoing friendship that has kept GASC alive and made our long string of conferences meaningful. He invited us to see this connection as one of the most significant rewards of our ongoing endeavour.

Magdalena thanked the meeting and Society for all that it has meant to her, and other members expressed their concurrence.

Richard **adjourned the meeting** at 17:20 EST.

Addendum – Email from Matthew Taylor, June 22, 2022

Dear board members,

The business meeting for GASC 2022 is scheduled deep in the a.m. for me and I won't be able to attend online. However, I wanted to offer this beforehand as an item for discussion in planning future conferences.

I have been in consultation with Kiyoshi Kawahara, my co-organizer for the 2016 Nagoya conference, who is now teaching in Tokyo. We finally have a solid plan for a conference proposal in Japan, if it is amenable to board members. We feel confident and enthusiastic about it.

The explanations below are a bit wordy, so the executive summary is:
GASC 2024, Central Tokyo, Japan

Time:

2024 is best. 2023 is possible but perhaps difficult to organize in time (and I've heard that there is probably a venue in the works for GASC in 2023 already).

Venue:

Central Tokyo

--First choice: Takushoku University, Kiyoshi's institution

OR

--Second possibility: Sophia University, a well-known Catholic university (like the Notre Dame of Japan), this is if Kiyoshi's graduate school mentor at Sophia agrees to have the university used as a venue

OR

--Should Tokyo fall through for some reason, there is our familiar Kinjo University in Nagoya. The campus has been newly landscaped very nicely, and the "Central Park" area downtown has also been redesigned. However, we no longer have the downtown campus facility by the TV tower, which closed after COVID-19.

Conference theme: Interfaith dialogue or something related

Participants from Japan other than GA regulars:

- 1) Girardians in Japan, including inviting Jeremiah Alberg.
- 2) Kiyoshi's colleagues at Sophia who are in religious studies.
- 3) Susumu Shimazono, a professor emeritus of Tokyo University who knows Girard's theory very well (candidate for plenary speaker: this is by no means settled but I'm just bringing it up as a possibility)

Language support:

Kiyoshi also teaches interpretation students at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and may be able to get some of these students involved in translation assistance as interns. This is by no means certain, but mentioned as a possibility.

Supporting grants:

Not completely clear yet, but a definite possibility from my side (Kinjo University). I don't know about Kiyoshi's side

On my own impressionistic note, Tokyo is my favorite city in the world, and central Tokyo puts us in its beating heart, unlike our 2012 conference in collaboration with COV&R, which was at International Christian University, far out in the suburbs. (Center vs. periphery!) I think central Tokyo could be a great experience for us.

Anyway, please feel free to introduce this at the business meeting if there is a place or time for it.

Best,

Matthew T. (in collaboration with Kiyoshi Kawahara)