

RBMS Membership and Professional Development Committee
Draft Minutes
Saturday, January 25, 2003, 8:30-11:00
Philadelphia Marriott, Franklin Hall A - Tables 25 and 26

Members Present: Henry Raine (NYU/N-YHS) (Chair), Kathryn Beam (Michigan), Ellen Ellickson (Yale), David Faulds (Emory), Ann Ferguson (U. of Washington), Lois Fischer Black (NCSU), Susan Szasz Palmer (U. of Louisville), Fernando Peña (Grolier Club), Gerri Schaad (UTSA), Jennifer Schaffner (UCLA) (Intern)

Members excused: Mike Kelly (NYU)

Visitors: Mary Lacy (Library of Congress), Hjordis Halvorson (Newberry), Linda Reynolds (Stephen F. Austin St. Univ.)

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Selection of recorder and finalization of agenda
3. Approval of minutes from the June 15, 2002 meeting
4. Housekeeping:

A. Committee membership

Raine announced that the committee has openings for new members. If your first term is ending and you want to serve for a second term, you need to fill out an ACRL committee volunteer form and give it to Margaret Nichols, the RBMS Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect.

B. Committee roster

Raine asked committee members to look at their entries on the committee roster and send corrections to him. He will forward them to Christian Dupont, RBMS Webmaster.

5. Educational Opportunities Directory (Ellickson)

Ellickson says she usually saves her big report for the Midwinter meeting. The directory lists 52 library schools with courses in rare books and special collections. She surveys the schools on a yearly basis, and only 1/3 of schools respond. Raine mentioned the new program on the book arts at Long Island University. Peña suggested having a "hits" counter on the website. Ellickson will contact Christian Dupont to ask about this.

6. Task Force Committee on Diversity

At the Executive Committee meeting in Atlanta, the Membership and Professional Development Committee presented an action item, proposing that RBMS establish a task force on diversity. The proposal was approved, and the new task force, with Julie Grob

as Chair, is having its first meeting from 8:00 to 10:00 PM on Saturday, January 25, 2003 in Philadelphia to begin forming an action plan. Schaad talked about the diversity issue within ALA, and said she would look for their action plan. In Atlanta, the Executive Committee also approved the RBMS Statement on Diversity drafted by the Membership and Professional Development Committee, and it is now posted on the RBMS website. Raine sees this as a first step – the hard work is yet to come.

7. RBMS Non-Members Survey results (Peña)

Peña presented a summary of the results from the second phase of the RBMS Non-Members Survey, which was distributed at the SAA conference in Birmingham in August, 2002. 39 survey responses were received and collated by Peña, who opened his detailed review of preliminary results by asking why the committee was conducting a Non-Members Survey. Was the goal to recruit more members? SAA has few minority members, like RBMS. The survey asked respondents to state their reasons for not attending RBMS. Most respondents said it is because they are not members of ALA. The survey asked for information about the size of the repository according to the number of volumes in the collection, which shows a bias in RBMS towards printed collections, since this is not an applicable measurement of collection size for archives. The committee talked about archivists vs. literary manuscript librarians, implying that there are two types of archivists. Halvorson observed that library schools separate the archives tracks, and maybe we should ask them to bring the two tracks back together.

We discussed educators involved in RBMS, for example David Gracy, and his work with the de la Peña diary on forgeries. How many professors are in RBMS? Schaad said she would be leaving RBMS, finding it, like many other people, to be very exclusive, and even personally exclusive. Some members of the committee said that RBMS programs tend to exclude the archivists, so they find SAA more relevant. SAA is bigger than RBMS, so the people don't all know each other. Raine talked about the context of RBMS within ALA – ALA is a big conference, the meetings are scattered all over town, and the RBMS preconference is easier to negotiate. The committee discussed the topic of the 2003 preconference – Facsimiles, Fakes and Forgeries – with respect to non-members.

Raine suggested a preconference on the theme of archives. Some collections are just books, and then the archivist is thrown into among the books. How about blurring the lines? Ellickson noted that in large institutions there are often separations between rare books and manuscripts. Where does one go to learn about rare books? Rare Book School offers training, but it costs money – where would we get funding? SAA knows its focus, and is not dragged down by a larger organization like ALA and ACRL. Some say the ALA committees exist only so that members can go to the conferences.

The committee discussed how SAA addresses the issue of diversity. The SAA Key Contact program ensures that an SAA member contacts the people who drop their membership. They are also trying out a program for year-round mentors in SAA. Then the question was raised about generational issues.

The committee returned to the question of whether RBMS needs to increase its membership. Do we need the money? Does RBMS want to narrow its focus, or broaden its focus? Is RBMS an organization for members without connections, and without stature? Raine commented that he wants to increase RBMS membership. He'd like to make the experience of being a new member rewarding and welcoming. Raine asked to add to the agenda a discussion of the mailing labels sent out by ACRL for new members. The committee discussed whether the RBMS preconference and the ALA conference should be located in the same place. This is an issue for the Conference Development Committee, and it is an economic problem. RBMS wants to make sure its conferences are economically viable, and that they take place in cities with a strong local special collections community.

Ferguson asked about people with multiple assignments. Can we do more than one format? Can RBMS address more than one format? Be broader? Palmer mentioned photo archives as an example of format – not important? By subject? Scarcity? Fragility? Do we have enough people?

The committee discussed doing a new survey of RBMS Members, since the last one was conducted in 1997. Raine asked if he should ask the Executive Committee about conducting a new Membership Survey. Lacy said the committee could make its own decisions and set its own priorities, and that the Executive Committee looks to this committee to take the lead. The Membership and Professional Development Committee can make recommendations to the Executive Committee on how to proceed. Raine said he would summarize results of the latest phase of the Non-Members Survey for the Executive Committee meeting and ask the Executive Committee to endorse a new membership survey, perhaps shorter than the last one, with only 6 or 7 questions. He said that mailing out a survey would cost money, and that we should consider other options for dissemination such as listservs, or posting the survey on the web. Is it time for new members? Faulds, Peña and Halvorson decided to take on these questions, acknowledged as a lot of work. They will try to address smaller questions, such as “coldness” in the section, and conduct a self-assessment on unfriendliness in RBMS.

8. Update on the Scholarship Program (Lacy)

Lacy reported that there was little or no surplus from last year's preconference, but that ACRL allocated \$3,000 to RBMS this year for continuing the scholarship program. Raine commented that RBMS would need to apply every year – it needs to be initiated by the section chair. The Budget and Development Committee decides on how to divide the money between full and partial scholarships. Rachel Howarth and Mike Kelly, who have been running the scholarship program for 3 years, recently announced that they no longer wanted to be involved. Lacy has agreed to work on the scholarship program again this year to provide continuity, until a new committee can be put in place. Raine will need to present an action item to the Executive Committee to recommend the formation of a continuing ad hoc committee on scholarships. Traditionally, the scholarship program committee has consisted of one member from the Executive Committee, one from Budget

and Development, and one from Membership and Professional Development. Lacy suggested that this ad hoc committee be a “virtual” committee, and that it conduct its business over email, so as not to cause scheduling conflicts with other committees.

9. Update on the Buddy Program (Raine)

Raine reported that there were 4 requests for buddies and 5 volunteers for this conference. He reported that he had received an email complaining that the name of the Buddy Program did not sound professional. He asked the committee for discussion and suggestions of alternative names. Among the names suggested were “Navigator,” “Mentoring,” “Networking Partner,” “Advisor,” and “Guide.” Raine cautioned the committee that a mentoring program implies a very different level of commitment on the part of volunteers than the Buddy Program as it is currently understood, and that it may be difficult to get volunteers willing to be mentors on an ongoing basis. Raine noted that this was the first complaint he had ever received about the name of the program. Black said she would create a list of possible program names.

Raine asked if the committee should consider establishing a true mentoring program, offering long term support for new members. Schaad said that SAA has both a Buddy Program and a Mentoring Program. She noted that participating in a mentoring program is difficult, and implies a year-long commitment of 5-10 hours per month, and checking in with the new member at least once a month. It’s a big commitment, but we need the mentors. Raine asked for a description of other mentoring programs, and what information or guidelines would be given to the mentors. Raine worried about getting people to commit their time. Palmer suggested we ask the Buddy Program volunteers. What would we be trying to accomplish? At SAA, the goal is to retain their membership. Schaad said she would distribute SAA guidelines for mentors and other information.

10. Presence at the 2003 ALA New Members Round Table Orientation (Schaad)

Schaad will go again at the Annual Conference in Toronto, and would like to see RBMS as a presence in all of ALA.

11. 2003 RBMS Preconference Orientation (Raine et al.)

Raine conducts this session to introduce RBMS to new members and first time attendees at the preconference, and to tell them how they can get involved. There has been a good turnout in the past several years, good handouts and good publicity. The committee discussed catering, but agreed that food is too expensive, and unnecessary since the orientation takes place right before the opening reception. Faulds will send out announcements and bring flyers for the registration desk. Raine brought up the need to have ribbons available for preconference registrants who want to identify themselves as new members. This was done in Montreal, and again in San Francisco, but not in Atlanta. Ferguson and Raine agreed to work again on trying to get ribbons for new members.

12. 2003 RBMS Preconference Seminar: Members For The Future: The View From Newcomers to RBMS (Raine)

James Fox reported that the committee's proposal for a seminar in Toronto on the topic of new members has been accepted. It will be a panel of five or six people, including some new RBMS members, scholarship recipients, individuals new to the rare books and special collections profession, those not currently or not yet in the profession, and those having become rare books and special collections librarians as a second career. Raine mentioned the names of people who had already agreed to be panelists, and asked the committee to suggest additional names to fill out some of the categories, especially that of new members. It was stressed that not all of the panelists should be from the Membership and Professional Development Committee (!). Raine asked the committee to email suggestions to him.

Beam asked if Schaad would be one of the panelists. Schaad identified herself as a new member and new to committees. "New" was defined by the committee as 5 years or less of involvement in RBMS. Beam asked what we expected the audience to be, new members or more experienced members. She said that the leadership of RBMS is interested in new members' perspective on the section.

13. Liaison Reports:

- ACRL Professional Development Committee (Ellickson)
- ACRL Membership Committee (Palmer)

There was no report, but Raine commented that it is difficult for the liaisons to get to their respective meetings, because one conflicts with this committee's meeting, and the other conflicts with Information Exchange. Palmer stated that ACRL Membership is becoming more active.

14. New business

- Mailing labels

Traditionally, ACRL sends mailing labels to all of the section chairs on a regular basis. The purpose of the labels is to generate a mailing for new section members, reinstated members, and dropped members. As far as anyone knows, RBMS has never done anything with the labels. Recently, ACRL began sending the labels directly to the chairs of the membership committees for each section, and Raine recently received labels for the first time. He asked the committee if it had any ideas about what to do with them, other than sending out a welcoming letter to new members. He mentioned that he had a draft of a letter to new members, created by a former committee member. Schaad mentioned that she had examples of similar letters used by SAA, and that she would send them to the committee. Raine said he would draft a letter to new members, based on the old draft and on the SAA examples. He said he would ask Dan Slive if the letter should

come from the section chair, or from the chair of the Membership and Professional Development Committee, and if money would be available to pay for the mailings. Faulds, Schaad and Raine agreed to work together on drafting letters for new members and reinstated members.

Discussion ensued on the topic of dropped members. Ferguson asked if it would be possible to identify people who drop their memberships deliberately, as opposed to those who let their membership lapse inadvertently. The committee discussed the possibility of phoning dropped members rather than sending them a letter, which is what SAA does. Raine suggested drafting a brief letter to dropped members, asking for their reasons, and enclose an RBMS brochure, with contact numbers and email. He will send new members a brochure as well. The following people volunteered to work on addressing the issue of dropped members: Beam, Ferguson, Palmer (chair), Peña, and Schaad.

Raine thanked the committee and we were adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Schaffner