Minutes of the Women Scholars Network Meeting

1 Introduction; WSN Aims, Structure

RH introduced WSN and welcomed attendees. MJ provided an overview of history recounting the network's establishment in Tokyo 10 years ago and subsequent organization of panels in Rome 1990 (Ursula King).

MJ noted that overarching aim is to support women with their scholarship, that the committee previously and continues to offer mentoring. Noted the listserv and Facebook groups.

RH outlined WSN structure and goals – noting the website as a source of this information.

2 Introduction to Members of the Steering Committee

MJ noted apologies received from Terhi Utriainen (Finland), Marion Maddox (Australia) and Rachelle Scott (USA).

Those members of the Steering Committee in attendance introduced themselves: Rose Mary Amenga-Etego (Ghana); Sylvia Marcos (Mexico); Ursula King (England); Edith Franke (Germany).

It was noted that there was not representation on the Committee from China, India or South Africa.

Action: Coordinators/Committee to seek/appoint representatives from those regions

3 Achievements

RH outlined WSN achievements, noting:
– steady growth in membership;
– increased participation at IAHR meetings and business meetings;

– there were almost as many women as men as representatives of their national association at the previous day's IAHR meeting;
– many regional meetings have included impromptu WSN meetings;
– MJ's organization of three panels at this IAHR conference;
– Facebook at 300 members: Jenny Berglund and Sarah Gallant are administrators.

RH discussed the re-designed website. Requested photographed for use: any IAHR related meeting/conference/event, especially from Europe and Africa.

Thanks expressed to Jeremy Hughes, Darlene Juschka, Sarah Gallant and Jenny Berglund for all their work on the WSN website, list-serv and Facebook.

4 Improvements

RH reporting:
– confirmed Jenny Berglund (Sweden) will take on the role of coordinator. RH and MJ to step down at close of week. JB will appoint second coordinator in due course;
– requested submissions to further develop the Resources and Related Programs pages on the WSN IAHR website;
– aim to further expand regional representation on Committee.

5 Future Tasks

RH reporting:

Outreach: RH noted need to strengthen work and outreach in South and South East Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and South America.

History pages: RH noted aim to construct WSN History page for website, which could also contain region specific histories. Sylvia Marcos suggested the use of the term 'genealogy' rather than 'history'. This was debated with a suggestion to use both terms. Elaine Nogueira Godsey suggested interviews be conducted with the founders. Ursula King noted the need to be diplomatic and discrete as the history includes sensitive and difficult events and issues.

Also noted that long narratives may not be read and a summary best suited the website. Ipsita Chatterjee noted the material can be 'staged' (providing a range of detail levels utilizing different media forms). Amy Allocco noted it could also be used as a teaching resource.

MJ noted that she is currently writing a history of the WSN for the forthcoming Special Issue of Numen. Once published this article should be linked to website.

Academia Group: JB noted that a WSN Academia.edu site should be created: this platform is used by the vast majority of attendees at the meeting.

Action: Academia.edu group to be set up

6 Amy Allocco: AAR Funding Program

AA as Chair of the AAR International Connections Committee announced the Collaborative International Research Grants. Noted they fund $500 – $5000 and teams can apply for up to two years. AA is available to provide formative feedback on applications prior to submission. Application deadline October 1. See AAR website for more details.

7 Travel Fund Development

RH reported on aim to broaden notification of already existing funds to support conference attendance. IAHR does have a funding program.

Discussion regarding the need for supplementary support. For the WSN to offer a program it would have to undertake fundraising. Asha Mukherjee noted that it was problems with funds that resulted in a lower attendance of Indian scholars at the Erfurt meeting.

Action: call to members to suggest possible donors/sponsors to specifically cover cost of conference registration.

8 New IAHR Book Series (Equinox)

MJ reported on the recent launch of the series 'The Study of Religion in a Global Context' (Equinox), edited by Morny Joy and Tim Jensen, with Katja Triplett as Managing Editor. First volume published and another in press. See Equinox website for more details.

9 Publicizing Members Work

RH reported on the need for greater circulation of information about members' publications. This can be part of content on the Academia.edu page. Call for members to share – via posts – what they have been doing. Inform others about recent publications and awards.

RH raised the issue of translation. How many articles/key texts by women scholars had been translated into other languages? Is there a way the WSN can support this activity? It was also noted that there were fewer festschrifts for women scholars.

Action: Committee to consider ways of supporting translation/festschrift production

10 Website Photographs

RH called for photograph submissions for the website.

11 Matters Arising

Rose Mary Amenga-Etego (Ghana) announced the African Association's next conference, "Religion, Sexuality and Identity in Africa and the African Diaspora" July 26 – 29, 2016, Ghana.

Conference: "Religion Against Violence" to be held in Havana, Cuba, July 2016.

Mentoring scheme: success of SOCRAL (UK) mentoring scheme discussed. Further discussion about whether the WSN should develop a more formal mentoring program. Discussion concluded that no change should be made to the current arrangements.

Enormous thanks expressed to Rosalind I. J. Hackett and Morny Joy for all their work on establishing and running the WSN.

Meeting closed: 19.15.