

## Centennial Ad Hoc Committee

Informal Planning Meeting

Saturday, September 17

### Minutes

**Members Present:** Shannin Schroeder (chair), Lexey Bartlett, Ami Comeford, Carrie Fitzpatrick, Amy Gates, Brett Iarrobino, Diane Steinberg, Katie Mudd, Carie King [who provided most notes below], Autumn Koors Foltz, Anthony Quigley **Additional Board members present:** Matt Hlinak, Felicia Steele, Deane Reaves

Purpose of the meeting: informal brainstorming and “first ideas” for Centennial celebration in 2024. Shannin says we can consider big ideas and discussions.

Storage of Plans? Maybe Teams to share? (Katie had some suggestions and notes on limitations. Shannin wants to get away from DropBox.)

Shannin says that the Strategic Planning Committee has already started this discussion. The rebranding for the future can happen after the committee, but we may want to think about who we are—name, structure, etc. Katie agreed with Shannin that we need to rebrand under “English Honor Societies”—name, logo, etc. with SigTD, SigKD, NEHS under that brand. The rebrand would allow for a merging of social media and marketing. The names and logos are different; the merging of the identity would decrease the need for redundancy. Shannin stated that the connection was missing. Katie’s been thinking about this for 7 years—noting that rebranding needs to be merged. Amy states we could then stop saying, “We are not a sorority.” Ami shared shirt that said “Geek not Greek.” Shannin addressed “ENGLISH.” Perhaps it may be too narrow: e.g., Carrie’s comment on communication department.

She has been thinking for a few months, and several people have provided her ideas. \$19.24, \$192.40, \$1924 donations. She is thinking window stickers, bags, shirts for donations. She wants to tie everything to the date.

Carrie suggests that we follow the 20s theme. We did that for our 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary (in New Orleans). Ami says her students had a great time. (décor—feather boas, fedoras, etc.) 1924 is a great date for such themes.

1. Shannin, Ami, and Kevin have talked about common readers and speakers to celebrate and provide a recommended reading list for the 100 years. We could highlight writing awards from the past 100 years. That would inform students of poet laureates and other writing awards. Shannin likes the “alternate reading list” with parallels in the timeline of publications.
2. St. Louis aspect and pubs in 1924 might be a theme we could address. Amy suggests a cemetery pilgrimage to authors in this time.

3. Shannin says we don't have a database of the common readers and speakers; Ami had pulled speakers and authors from old programs. Katie says all of our records are archived in the NIU Library; she could go and investigate. Ami has from 1975; some of the programs are available via PDF. Diane says that Kevin Stemmler was the first to propose a common reader.
4. Diane asks about the date of the first convention. Shannin thinks the first meetings began in the 1960s? Carrie says that meetings were held but not consistently. Katie checks: 1925, 1928, 1931, and then 1970s every other year. Since 1994, we have had meetings every year except 2020 (COVID).
5. Shannin would like to expand archives and focus on providing the history. Bil Johnson will be interested in helping with the history. Shannin and Elfi discussed a student worker to help digitize artifacts; the issue is that NIU's HR is not getting student hires processed. We could ask the NIU chapter members to help.
6. Website info needs to be available: Shannin notes that Ami had shared that the red rose was the official organization; it's buried. Many chapters did not know. Amy and Ami say that their chapters give red roses at induction.
7. Ami states that we should consider honoring the oldest chapters. Shannin and Diane add that we could have awards for oldest shirt, program, picture from conventions. Amy suggests that we have a large magnet wall of photos. Shannin: a digital wall to make the digital media, which we can keep forever. (Current membership may not have physical photographs.) Amy: advisors might have photographs. We also want to not alienate current members. Virtually, we could create a collage of fades through history.
8. Shannin goes back to the idea of merchandise and of small and large giveaways. She proposed "swag on a budget." Ask students what they want; that matters. Stickers? Etc.
9. Autumn suggests that we also celebrate First Gen students—the start of new legacies.
10. Autumn has been looking at past conventions; she was looking at past conventions and logos (like those in St. Louis). She likes the retro logos and thinks that could be integrated into the designs.
11. Deane was thinking about 100 years of timeline (not conventions but historical literary events). Perhaps highlight each decade (e.g., Ami's suggestion of the poet laureate, what were people reading, etc.). Shannin: pull out underrepresented voices too.
12. Carie suggests an interactive scavenger hunt for attendees to find facts and items. Shannin: we could use the app. Katie says it was a feature in the first app; it depends on

the app we are using. This would use the physical space, so attendees are motivated to move around more in the convention space.

13. Kaitlyn says a 1920s theme would make for a great event. Thinking Gatsby, speak-easies, and our first members reading lists.
14. Ami: seek our oldest chapter members. See if older chapters have internal records with archives of oldest graduates. We could invite them, interview them, etc. We could also find out our first member.
15. Autumn suggests a common reader *and* a 1924 publication. (Carie found [https://www.goodreads.com/book/popular\\_by\\_date/1924](https://www.goodreads.com/book/popular_by_date/1924).) Several suggested that we look at texts more broadly to consider themes. Content from 1924 would be in the public domain, so we could use content.
16. Amy: we should talk about what MLA is doing per categories of writing. It would be interested in considering the classrooms of 1924. Who was learning? Where were they learning? Could we get to a picture of classrooms? (Consider traditional and non-traditional.) Ami: 1924 books, newspapers, etc. and create a display of artifacts. Tie the artifacts to the classroom. We could also do some time of VR world of the original classroom to provide an immersive experience.) Kaitlyn: we could ask chapters to create their chapter displays with archives.
17. Amy asks if the St. Louis museums might be willing to create an exhibit on the 1920s. She was thinking museums, but libraries might also be able to address “What else was happening?” Shannin: we need to think about other events, other people, exclusion, etc. Ami suggests we create a room with an experience with living timeline with video presentation. She says we could address the high rate of lynchings, jazz musicians, nationalism, economy, etc. to allow people to experience in 1924 OR by decade. Ami states that it would be a way to tell the “hidden” stories of history and make it immersive. (Shannin notes that several organizations have immersive experiences, like the LBJ Library.)

We need to recognize that the Centennial Year is beyond convention, so what are we going to offer students who cannot come to St. Louis? Shannin thinks that it might encourage students to come, but how can we encourage local or other activities?

1. Diane suggests *Rectangle* and *Review* with either additional content OR create a free-standing issue for 100 years of best publications.
2. Deane considers 100<sup>th</sup> chapter, inviting a representative. (Katie—1,179 chapters, 907 active chapters) Diane asked how many come to convention. We are not sure how many typically attend.

3. Shannin suggests setting goals, e.g., 100 chapters attending convention, or 21 new chapters. (Natasha's goal was 10 a year.) Or 3–4 per region.
4. Carrie: a time capsule. Shannin: one at Dakota Wesleyan, where the first chapter started, with plans to open in several years? or 2124? Carrie suggested the time capsule in the NIU archives.

Now that we've done some initial brainstorming, Shannin suggests separating our ideas into areas. We have discussed convention and the website.

1. Shannin: Merchandise? Banner for chapters to purchase (for promotion)—of material that, even though they are outdated, are available for celebrations and promotions that year? Printable canvas, to save costs?
2. Centennial shirts
3. Centennial tote bags (i.e., green, reusable)
4. Diane suggests a montage of old logos
5. Katie: a student suggested that we use the original seal. Shannin: we could have some items showing all the seals over the years.
6. Deane suggests a shirt with the old logo over the heart and the old one on the back—two logos on the shirt.
7. Ami suggests magnets, keychains, stickers, etc. Perhaps a logo for each decade. Small purchases would be appropriate for students.
8. Autumn specifically likes the 1995 logo. [She is quite attached!]
9. Amy suggests water bottles or glasses. (Anthony said he does not buy those kind of things.) Brett likes the idea of glasses. Amy: glasses/coffee mugs might be good with bags. Diane says one chapter sold mugs and did well.
10. Ami: pop-socket for phones.
11. Deane: she bought the ¾ zip-up.
12. Autumn says she would buy a bag with the 1995 logo.
13. Shannin: retro merchandise.
14. Deane: beanies/winter or stocking hat or pouch.

15. Kaitlyn says the alumni sold scarves and they were sold quickly (sold out multiple years).
16. Diane suggests umbrellas.
17. Anthony suggests journals.
18. Shannin suggests lacquer/enamel pins.
19. Amy: a “thrift store” with retro items that are no longer wanted.
20. Shannin: we could put designs together on one object, like a pillow (bad idea, she thinks). Maybe quilt or picnic blanket to upcycle.
21. Diane asks about a recipe book. Carrie says yes, her chapter did that and gave them literary titles. Literary cocktails. Carrie states that it was time consuming. Ami: has files but her chapter had not been able to get that project done. Amy: another group added their own narratives with recipes to frame context.
22. Lexey: a book sleeve with a pocket. Shannin expanded to tablet/laptop sleeve.
23. Carrie suggests socks.
24. Shannin suggests a “bookworm starter kit”: socks, coffee cup, common reader.
25. Shannin: a shirt with obscure punctuation.
26. Shannin: a goal-oriented gift to raise donations.
27. Lexey suggests magnetic bookmarks (that fold over the page). She likes the small vinyl sets (6–8). Shannin: a chapter sponsor could purchase the set as gifts.
28. Shannin: a pen that sells online—maybe a thank you pen for chapter officers, even called “The Officer’s Pen” as a gift intended for chapters to buy for their officers.
29. Diane: Leigh purchases stoles and has officer noted in embroidery.
30. Shannin suggests a Centennial stole for 2024 graduates. Autumn states that people tend to purchase graduation regalia. Shannin then says we could provide several designs of stoles.

Shannin then moved the discussion to scholars and awards and grants—specifically extras. How can we use the centennial to give away extras.

1. Shannin: Could we tally how much we have given away to date? We could offer a specific LIT Grant to have someone who research 100 years of literature.
2. Ami: a long-term grant for an oral history/historiography/local dialect study, which encourages students engaging with communities. (They could focus on talking to people.) Carrie suggested that we could consider any archival work, which could help us with ALA. Ami and Carrie acknowledged special collections projects.
3. Shannin suggests one hundred \$100 book stipends (\$10,000). \$100 gift cards around the nation that are minority owned (online shopping) and/or to our conference bookstore.
4. Carrie suggests a \$100 gift card for t-shirt contest, or for dressing up in costume,... to spread 100 gifts throughout the convention.
5. \$19.24 gift cards
6. Shannin asks if any other organization is 100 years old. (Carie found a page on Wikipedia; two other honor societies were started in 1924. Alpha Lambda Delta—<https://www.nationalald.org>—and an engineering honor society. Autumn notes the Linguistics Association—<https://www.linguisticsociety.org>. Felicia will see if the organization has a centennial committee.)

She also wants to consider how to tie recruiting in as part of the centennial.

1. Diane suggests that centennial chapters be named, and Shannin says we could shift the fee to \$19.24 or \$24. This would be a motivation to charter new chapters.
2. Diane: 2024 certificates should be noted with centennial. Shannin says the medallions could be on ribbons that say centennial.
3. Felicia suggests this might be a good opportunity to partner with the Association of Departments of English. (That might also help us build traction.)
4. Shannin thinks the *Chronicle of Higher Ed* might be willing to highlight us. We need a press release ready for January 2024. She says a PR with generic language that went to departments (communication, new members, no chapter), we might be able to get into local newspapers and use that for marketing.
5. *National Humanities Alliance*—Maybe they would highlight us.

Shannin states that we need to highlight 100 years of English and how to expand our identity. (This is no longer your great grandfather's degree.) We need to expand our language about ourselves, our targeted audience, our expected members, our career opportunities,....

6. Shannin: 100 jobs in English. Lexey said that Norton has a poster with “What to do with an English major.”
7. Felicia says that NCTE will include jobs for English degrees.
8. Shannin: We need to share that information to recruit members and also expand what English majors can do.
9. Ami suggested a “what does it look like in 2124” question.

Shannin explains that the next version of the committee will be some concentrated committee, like a task force or standing committee. The next group will research and narrow these ideas. What about a national Zoom meeting, so anyone could have an idea (outside the board).

**\*\*Maybe we celebrate High Plains Region (where the organization began), which does not always get the spotlight.\*\***

Shannin is thinking that she can post all of this on GoogleDocs, for now, for consideration.