

Convention Committee Meeting

29 March 2022

Sheraton Atlanta Downtown – Atlanta, Georgia

**Members Present:** Kayla Ashbrooks, Glen Brewster, Leigh Dillard (chair), Breanna Dittert, Elfi Gabriel, Tim Helwig, Brett Iarrobino, Katie Mudd, Joan Reeves, Shannin Schroeder, Diane Steinberg, Joshua Stinson

**Old business:**

Leigh addressed immediate needs for 2022 event:

- mask requirement clarification: please assist in reinforcing; presenters may remove mask while presenting only if they wish to do so
- be hospitable: direct traffic and answer questions
- help secure backup moderators and chairs: sign-up at registration table

Shannin offered details on Research in the Round, a new event for the 2022 convention. This event initially targeted students whose papers were not accepted to a regular session; others have been included so that we have 15 conversation hosts and roughly 90 participants, divided into two rooms.

Elfi, Shannin, Diane, and Leigh have been contributing to the post-convention survey, which will gather details from those who attended. See additional details below.

**Proposals for future conventions:**

- Leigh provided a reminder of the proposal discussed at earlier meetings to include **digital chapter displays** as a way for *all* chapters to participate in the chapter displays featured at convention, even if they aren't present. For practical reasons, this didn't work out for 2022, but perhaps it could feature as part of 2023.
- The initial response to the concept of **Research in the Round** has been favorable, and – hoping the event itself goes well on Thursday of the convention – Leigh and Shannin offer to help organize the second iteration for next year's convention. The assistance of the Student Leadership in this event has also been invaluable, and we're confident that if we do it again, a year of experimenting will help us better prepare for this collaboration, too.
- Leigh challenged committee to consider more **flexible presentation formats**, allowing for A/V, use of personal tech. For example, encourage presenters to prepare a digital space

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for their curated visual elements, and bring a scannable QR code for those in the audience.

- We discussed the possibility of **increasing travel/financial support** for students/chapters attending convention and decided that we will continue to discuss this complex issue in the coming year; it also might be considered as part of Strategic Planning. Potential options for support might include food (prepaid visa), hotel, registration. Multiple committee members voiced concern over how the support would be distributed and how we might ensure it's done equitably, not favoring any single region or neglecting those – like the High Plains – where conventions are less likely to be held because of travel costs. Moving forward, we might think of this as a way to support both local and distant participation (one winner from a nearby area, one from very far away).
- We also discussed the possibility of having the Centra Office provide tech support for regional (virtual) conferences, similar to that in the webinars.

### **New Business: Looking to Denver and beyond:**

Diane, 2023 Convention Chair, provided the following updates:

- Anyone who thinks that might want to chair a future convention -- 2024 or 2025, for example -- should ask Shannin to keep them or add them to the convention committee.
- We're going to collect attitudes – both in the survey and anecdotally – towards the changes and see if we want to keep them for 2023. Among the changes:
  - getting the board meeting done on Wednesday
  - starting the convention Wednesday night instead of Wednesday later afternoon
  - paper sessions early on Thursday morning
  - two speakers instead of three
  - Gala luncheon instead of dinner
  - having both SAs on the convention committee
- I do not yet have a Common Reader -- together Kevin Stemmler and I have read discussed and not adopted two different readers. We know that we are looking for a poetry collection because this year was prose fiction.
- Tentatively the theme is "Colorful Colorado"
- I would like to have a "Common Author" and to have special paper sessions and convention awards for papers about her works. The Common Author would be Toni

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Morrison, and I'd like to bring to the convention as one set of speakers the 4 authors of *The Toni Morrison Book Club* which combines both literary insights and ordinary readerly insights. The 4 authors are my colleagues in sociology, Af-Am Studies, English, and Gender Studies -- and all of them are in at least two of those fields at once.