

Annual General Meeting

10-11.30am Tuesday 10th July 2018
Robert Main Theatre, University of Loughborough

Minutes of the meeting.

AGENDA

Updates:

1. Chair's Report (Sarah Dillon)
2. Membership Update (Caroline Edwards)
3. Finance Update (Jennifer Cooke)

Announcements:

4. 2020 BACLS-WHN Conference Tenders (Zara Dinnen)
5. BACLS-supported Events for 2018-19 (Zara Dinnen)
6. Collaboration and Advocacy – how BACLS will represent members at national and international meetings, conferences and other events (Sarah Dillon)

Matters for approval:

7. VOTE FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE POSITIONS (Secretary, Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, Graduate Student Representatives, Ordinary Members)
8. Constitutional Changes (proposal to remove Executive Committee position of Chair-Elect)

Matters for discussion:

9. Website Members' Area – how can we develop this? (Sarah Dillon)
10. Anti-casualisation – how can BACLS support ECRs/ECAs? (Caroline Edwards)
11. Alluvium Journal Sub-Committee (Caroline Edwards)

Concluding business:

12. Organise AGM for July 2019 (to be held at a BACLS-supported event) (Sarah

Dillon)
13. AOB

UPDATES:

1. Chair's Report (Sarah Dillon)

The BACLS Chair Sarah Dillon welcomed the membership to the first AGM since the association formally launched when it opened membership in July 2017.

Chair's Report: BACLS AGM 2018

After a year of planning, BACLS was officially launched at *English: Shared Futures* almost a year ago to this day. In fact, we officially celebrated our first birthday on Sunday. Just as in a child's first year of life, this past year has seen massive development, lots of learning and many milestones to celebrate.

BACLS now has nearly 182 members from across the country, a healthy 1662 twitter followers and a regular newsletter collating information about everything that is going on in the field. We have two journals, *C21* (which will host a special issue from this Conference) and the graduate journal *Alluvium*, more on which later in the agenda. Both *C21* and *Alluvium* pre-existed BACLS, but drawing them into the purview of the Association meets one of our initial aims, which was to bring together existing activities giving them renewed and greater coherence and higher profiles by their relationship with the Association.

On Wednesday evening I will announce the first ever BACLS Prize Winners, across three categories: the BACLS Monograph Prize, the BACLS Edited Collection Prize and the Postgraduate Essay Prize. The quality of submissions to the Prizes was outstanding and the announcement of them will mark another milestone, with BACLS delivering on our goal to create esteem indicators for our field to match those of other more established fields and thereby heighten the legitimacy of contemporary literary studies to the benefit of all of us who work in it, not just the prize winners themselves.

Today of course marks the beginning of the first biennial BACLS-WHN conference. This too, of course, builds on the hugely successful WHN conference run out of Lincoln for many years and is another indication of the way in which BACLS is serving to join up existing activities into a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. This first conference is a huge milestone to achieve at the end of BACLS' first year and I have no doubt it is going to prove an immense success. As part of our commitment to postgraduates and ECRs, we have awarded three travel/accommodation bursaries of £300 each to support attendance at the conference. I hope that the next three days will inspire you all intellectually, develop your academic network and plant the seeds for future research collaborations. Such joining up of contemporary scholars was another key aim of BACLS. I hope this event might also encourage some of you to bid to run the Conference in future years.

As we move forward into the next year, our main initial focus will be redevelopment of the website. We will be investing in a redesign to improve functionality both in front of and behind the scenes. And we will be working to add further content to the Members' Area in particular. We are also in a healthy financial position, thanks to all of your support, and so as a Committee we will be looking at further ways to invest in and support our vibrant community. Members' feedback is of course invaluable, and

there are a number of items coming up on the rest of this agenda where we are seeking your thoughts and suggestions.

I would like to express my thanks to the Executive Committee for all their hard work over the past year. In particular, I would like to thank the outgoing Executive Committee Members: our postgraduate representatives, Kate Wilkinson, Sam Cooper, Andrew Rowcroft, and Sam Cutting; and our outgoing Ordinary Members, Dr Katy Shaw, Dr Nick Bentley, Dr Timothy Baker, Dr Carole-Anne Sweeney, and Dr Liam Connell. Enormous and special gratitude goes to Dr Caroline Edwards not just for her inexhaustible work as BACLS Secretary but for her instrumental role in setting BACLS up in the first place. Without her energy, vision and commitment, we would have no Association and none of us would be here today. Caroline – we owe you a great debt, and best of luck in the coming weeks and months.

2. Membership Update (Caroline Edwards)

The BACLS Secretary Caroline Edwards gave a brief update about the association's membership figures over the first year. BACLS opened membership in July 2017 at the English: Shared Futures conference at Newcastle. BACLS membership runs each year from 1st July until 30th June of the following year. The association has therefore recently celebrated its first birthday and membership figures for its second year are now available (although we're only 2 weeks into Year 2).

The membership numbers are:

174 BACLS members in Year 1

182 BACLS members in Year 2 so far (83 new members, 99 renewals)

Membership is banded into 3 rates: (1) Full Rate / Salaried Academics, who pay £40 per year; (2) Hourly Paid Lecturers, who pay £30 per year; and (3) Postgraduate Researchers, who pay £20 per year.

In Year 1, membership was divided across the 3 rates as follows:

- 51% at full rate / salaried academic
- 6% at HPL rate
- 43% at PGR rate

And in Year 2, membership is so far divided across the 3 rates as follows:

- 48% at full rate / salaried academic
- 13% at HPL rate
- 39% at PGR rate

Caroline noted that these membership figures indicate the strength of the BACLS membership and community in terms of a good balance between mid-and senior-level academics as well as postgraduate researchers and early career scholars.

3. Finance Update (Jennifer Cooke)

The BACLS Treasurer Jennifer Cooke presented the following finance report to the membership.

Achievements:

Since the inauguration of BACLS as an association and our first Executive Committee meeting in November 2016, the BACLS Executive Committee have:

- Successfully set up a business bank account with Santander as a not-for-profit association (no small task, as it turns out).
- Raised, overall, since our launch in July 2017, **£10,010.34** in membership fees.
- Helped fund travel to two executive meetings, one at Shared Futures, July 2017 and one in Nottingham in December 2017.
- Awarded 3 conference travel/accommodation bursaries of £300 each.
- Set up the inaugural BACLS What Happens Now Conference, with the conference fund of £500.
- Continued to fund our website.

Membership fees:

Membership fee	What we actually make
£40 FTE	£38.44 (PayPal transaction fee of £1.56)
£30 HPL	£28.78 (PayPal transaction fee of £1.22)
£20 PGR	£18.86 (PayPal transaction fee of £1.14)

Membership (28 June 2018 – 5 March 2018)	Amount raised
89 FTE	£3,421.16
11 HPL	£316.58
74 PGR	£1,395.64
TOTAL = 174	£5,133.38

Membership (5 March 2018 – 2 July 2018)	Amount raised
79 FTE	£3,036.76
22 HPL	£633.16
64 PGR	£1,207.04
TOTAL = 174	£4,876.96

*Dates run from our launch to just before the opening of the BACLS registration

** Excludes the 15 people yet to pay on 2-7-18. Includes 89 renewals and 76 new members.

Actual financial spending, 2017-18

Expenditure	Reason	Month & Year
£210.69	Website set up and costs	April 2017
£206.50	Exec. Committee meeting at Shared Futures	July 2017
£168	Postal box	July 2017
£103.81	Promotional printing (bookmarks)	August 2017
£347.40	Exec. Committee meeting at Nottingham	December 2017
£276.25	Website / online presence costs	June 2018

£500 approx.	BACLS conference fund (for performers)	Not paid out yet
£900	BACLS travel bursaries	Awarded March, not yet claimed
TOTAL (2017-18) £2712.65		

Annual Financial Commitments thus far

Annual Expenditure	Explanation
£1,700	Annual Exec. Meeting (travel @ approx. £100 per person)*
£450	BACLS conference bursaries (@ £900 every other year)
£250	BACLS conference fund @ £500 every other year
£275	Book prizes every two years (TBC) @ £550
£500	Sponsoring other events/conferences every other year @ up to £1K
TOTAL £3,175	

* Our previous 2 Exec meetings have not been representative, since one was held during an unprecedented English Association conference where many of us were there anyway and the other was re-arranged at the last minute, meaning many could not then make it.

Financial projections:

- Our membership raised approx. £4.9K in each of its first 2 years.
- BUT these are the launch year (excitement!) and the WHN conference year (obligation!). Next year will test what happens in the fallow years, between WHN conferences.
- RECOMMENDATION: we should keep £2K in the bank account as a minimum fund in case of an extraordinary Exec meeting or other unforeseen expenses.
- SUGGESTION: if BACLS funds a conference, all attendees should join membership? Advantages: raises our membership fees, but also allows us to be more generous, potentially.
- So far we have raised approx. 10K and spent approx. £3K. But we should expect to spend 3.2K a year as per our commitments (so next year too). If we leave a 2K minimum fund in the bank, and expect to spend 3.2K next year, we have approx. 2K left to expand our activities, without taking into account what membership next year will bring in.

BACLS-WHN conference 2018:

- The conference is financially disaggregated from BACLS membership funds. BACLS has this year paid a 'fund' to the conference costs.
- The conference has taken, from delegates, in registration and accommodation fees: £13,697. Fees include all food.

- The LU catering and accommodation bill is circa £7,180.
- The conference dinner bill is £3,175.
- The remaining money has been spent on: speakers travel, accommodation, and food; the performance; printing of posters & programmes; campus food for conference helpers and organisers. As this has not all been paid out/invoiced, we cannot yet tell how much it will be.

Financial challenges:

- We will always have a fallow year, when the BACLS conference is not operating.
- We currently have momentum. We need to make sure that we are always delivering membership benefits as well as supportive network in order to keep people renewing their membership.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

4. 2020 BACLS-WHN Conference Tenders (Zara Dinnen)

Zara Dinnen announced to the membership that the next BACLS-What Happens Now (BACLS-WHN) biennial conference will take place in July 2020. The tendering process is now open and members are encouraged to get in touch with Zara if they are interested in hosting the conference at their institutions, or have any questions about the tendering process. They can either email Zara at z.dinnen@qmul.ac.uk or write to the conference email at bacls.wnh@gmail.com.

Zara reported from her experience of co-organising the BACLS-WHN conference in July 2018 at the University of Loughborough with Jennifer Cooke that hosting the biennial conference offers a really rewarding experience – seeing the field of contemporary literary studies develop and having an active role in developing the themes and research questions that frame the conference panels and discussion. Zara said it has been a privilege to put together the programme for BACLS-WHN 2018 and the conference offers institutions the chance to host a prestigious international event on behalf of a UK subject association that represents a vibrant and growing community of scholars.

The deadline for applications to host BACLS-WHN 2020 is 31st October 2018. Application forms can be found on the BACLS website within the Members' Area at: <https://www.bacls.org/members-area/bids-for-conferences/>

The next Executive Committee meeting will be taking place in December 2018 and applications will be reviewed at this time.

5. BACLS-supported Events for 2018-19 (Zara Dinnen)

Zara outlined the association's plans for BACLS-supported events in "fallow" years when the biennial BACLS-WHN conferences are not taking place. The next "fallow" calendar year will be 2019 and the association would like to hear from members interested in applying for their events to be supported by BACLS. Zara informed members that there are 2 deadlines approaching for members to submit applications and apply for funding:

31st October 2018

31st March 2019

Applications are welcome from BACLS members who are organisers who are at any stage of putting together an event, e.g. a conference, symposium, workshop, training event, roundtable discussion, author event. A particular emphasis will be placed on supporting postgraduate event organisers, although the funding is available to all members. BACLS is offering £1000 per "fallow" year for supported events, divided into 2 funding pots of £500 (corresponding to the 2 application windows/deadlines). This money is intended to help members develop an idea for an event or to help subsidise a pre-existing event that is already taking place, and can be spent at the discretion of the organisers on things like room bookings, speakers' costs, and travel bursaries for attendees. The amount awarded by BACLS will be flexible, depending on the applications received and those that are successful.

Zara concluded by saying that there will be an application form for members to apply for funding for BACLS-Supported Events, which will be made available on the website shortly. Zara will circulate an announcement to the membership as soon as this is available, via the JISCMail BACLS membership listserv.

6. Collaboration and Advocacy (Sarah Dillon)

Sarah Dillon described how BACLS will represent members at national and international meetings, conferences and other events, noting that the Executive Committee is keen to expand the association's network beyond Britain, something that is particularly important in terms of forging ties with our European neighbours. Building these kinds of official affiliations will help BACLS and its members to keep abreast of scholarship happening beyond the UK and will support members' careers in terms of establishing the international reach of BACLS and its members' research.

Sarah noted that the Executive Committee have been discussing various ways to build such affiliations and what kind of financial commitment BACLS would need to make, e.g. in supporting members to attend international conferences in order to represent the association. For example, the Executive Committee is currently considering how to establish BACLS-"badged" panels at large international conferences, such as SÉAC (Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaines, based in France) or the Association for the Study of the Arts of the Present (ASAP, based in the United States). "Badged" panels would involve panel proposals in which BACLS members dedicated to examining contemporary literary studies that will also act to promote the association. Sarah suggested that organising BACLS-badged panels will require ongoing networking and communication among the membership – something that would be facilitated by the website upgrades planned for Autumn 2018 (e.g. setting up members' profiles on the website with keywords that are searchable so members can get in touch with each other – **see Item 9 below**).

Given the necessity of updating the BACLS website, Sarah informed the membership that further announcements about collaboration and advocacy, including BACLS-

badged panel proposals at international conferences and the funding available to support these panels, would be forthcoming after the next Executive Committee meeting which will take place in December 2018.

Sarah invited members to approach her with ideas for ways that BACLS might build relationships with cognate associations around the world that are dedicated to the study of the contemporary period, in the English language. Sarah herself will continue liaising with Chairs of other associations in her role as BACLS Chair.

The membership heard a brief report from Emilie Wazelak on behalf of SÉAC (Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaines), who introduced the association. SÉAC is the French equivalent of BACLS and is dedicated to the international study of British literature and culture. The association was established in 1910 and Catherine Bernard is its current Chair. Emilie told the membership that SÉAC's annual conference takes place in October. The next conference will be held in Toulouse at the Université Toulouse Jean Jaurès on 18-19 October 2018 and the theme is "Narrative Democracy in 20th- and 21st-Century British Literature and Visual Arts." The CFP is still open – for more information see here:

<http://www.laseac.fr/?p=711>

Emilie told the membership that SÉAC also organises a panel at the annual congress of the SIS (French principal association for researchers in English), which takes place in May each year. The association's journal is the *Etudes Britanniques Contemporaines*, which publishes conference proceedings and articles twice a year and is open access. For more information see: <http://www.laseac.fr/?cat=6>

MATTERS FOR APPROVAL

7. Vote for Executive Committee Positions

A vote by ballot box was carried out to elect candidates for the EC positions of Secretary, Vice Chair, Membership Secretary, Graduate Student Representatives (3 posts available) and Ordinary Members (4 posts available).

The votes were counted and the outcome was announced at the conference dinner on Wednesday 11th July. The newly elected EC members are as follows:

Secretary | Rose Harris-Birtill

Vice Chair | Katy Shaw

Membership Secretary | Mike Witcombe

Graduate Student Representatives | Caroline Wintersgill, Zoe Bulaitis and Chloe Ashbridge

Ordinary Members | Rachael Sykes, Timothy Baker, Nick Bentley and Diletta de Cristofaro

8. Constitutional Changes

The proposal to remove the EC position of Chair-Elect was passed by unanimous vote with no objections.

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION:

9. Website Members' Area (Sarah Dillon)

As mentioned above, Sarah asked the membership for feedback on ways to improve the BACLS website. Members discussed different kinds of functionality that could be incorporated into the website redesign, including:

- Responsive design so that the website can easily be viewed on desktop computers, laptops, tablets and mobile devices.
- A more user-friendly interface.
- Developing the Members' Area to include profile pages with keywords that can be searched via a search function.
- Building special themed groups or discussion threads focused around specific research interests and topics.
- Using the main website to advertise events around the UK and internationally that are not related to BACLS but would be of interest to its membership (N.C. Caroline Magennis, the BACLS Publicity Officer, responded to this point reiterating the need for members to send CFPs and other information to her so that such events can be published – both on the website as well as via the BACLS Newsletter).
- Uploading a News & Events form to the website so that members can submit events and relevant information more easily to Caroline Magennis, as Publicity Officer.

10. Anti-casualisation (Caroline Edwards)

The BACLS Secretary Caroline Edwards asked members how the association can do more to support Postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and Early Career Researchers (ECRs), who make up almost half of the association's membership. Some ideas were discussed, including:

- Petitioning universities to extend fixed-term lecturing contracts to 12 month posts
- Considering running a Summer Stipend to support ECRs over the summer months (when many fixed-term jobs have already ended and ECRs are unwaged). Stipends could be small (e.g. to cover childcare and/or living costs for 1-2 weeks) and designed to support ECRs struggling to complete discrete pieces of research (such as a journal article) at a time of unemployment.
- Establish a BACLS Mentorship Scheme partnering mid- and senior-career-level members with PGRs and ECRs. It would be particularly welcome for junior members to receive mentoring from senior colleagues at different universities to give them a broader perspective of the employment landscape across UK higher education institutions. Mentors could also act as referees on job and funding applications.
- Could BACLS offer PGRs and ECRs name@bacls.org email accounts during periods when they have no institutional affiliation?

Caroline asked for members to continue thinking about these important issues of casualisation and precarious employment for PGRs and ECRs. To continue the discussion, the Executive Committee has set up the following Google Document, where members are encouraged to submit ideas:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12N2nYFFQY2gdC_VqAfOB5NW9vWntp0RE0-0nj7ycCc/edit

11. Alluvium Journal Sub-Committee (Caroline Edwards)

Caroline Edwards briefly outlined Alluvium Journal, the association's postgraduate-run journal. Caroline founded Alluvium in 2012 as a short-form open access journal, dedicated to 21st-century writing as well as 21st-century approaches to the literary canon. The journal ran for 5 years until 2017, publishing 6 issues of 4 articles each year. Articles are 2-3,000 words and intended to reflect upon key issues and emerging trends in literature and literary criticism, and open up discussion through the site's message boards accompanying each piece.

When BACLS was formed, Caroline gifted Alluvium to the association with the intention that the journal would offer postgraduate members the chance to gain crucial professional skills in editing and producing a journal that has the latest digital publishing standards. A special Sub-Committee will be forming in Autumn 2018, run by the BACLS Postgraduate Student Representatives on the Executive Committee, who are looking for expressions of interest from any PGR members interested in becoming involved in the running of the journal.

Members can direct expressions of interest to Caroline Wintersgill, cowenwintersgill@yahoo.co.uk, or write to editorial@alluvium-journal.org.

CONCLUDING BUSINESS:

12. Organise next AGM for July 2019 (Sarah Dillon)

Sarah announced that next year's AGM will take place in July 2019. It is anticipated that this will take place at a BACLS-supported event, but this is to be confirmed. The membership will be notified as soon as the location and date of the AGM has been established by the Executive Committee.

13. AOB

No items of business were raised. Sarah Dillon formally closed the meeting, thanking everyone for their input.