**Report from the Secretary: AGM 2016**

After the excitement of 2014 and the moving of *Antichthon* to Cambridge University Press, things have been much quieter in 2015. This has enabled the consolidation of several issues, all of which will be brought to the 2016 AGM.

**Membership: pay up!**

Thank you to all the members who paid their subscription, even those of you who needed reminders. The new payment categories seem to be working well, and it is good to see postgraduate students taking up the offer of 2 or 3-year memberships.

The slowness of members to pay their dues remains a huge problem. We endeavour to send reminders only to members who haven’t paid up but this involves a LOT of work for those involved. Could we BEG you to pay your dues promptly. That way you don’t have to receive the emails and I don’t have to write them.

**Seeking a Secretary?**

As I foreshadowed in the September newsletter, this AGM is the last at which I intend to stand for the position of honorary secretary of the Society. I want to take the rest of my alloted time to persuade you, or at least one of you, that it is a worthwhile use of your time and need not be as time-consuming as you might assume.

The role over the last two years has been greatly reinforced by my ability to call on the President, the Vice-Presidents and and the Treasurer, along with other members of the Executive, as a sounding board and an inner council to advise on issues before they proceed to the full executive. This means that it does not rest on the secretary alone to make the running on agenda items or determine the importance of any single issue. The role of Vice-President has particularly come into its own as this habit has become normalised.

The duties of the secretary, as I see it, are to make sure that information flows from its origin to its relevant and interested audience and back again. Under this heading, the secretary runs both formal and informal consultations through the year. As technology develops, these consultations become easier to carry out too. I use Dropbox to allow members of the executive to read each other’s contributions as they are submitted so that although I summarise and collate opinions at a certain point the actual individual submissions are not lost.

The other large task is managing the Conference Program Review committee. In that role, I check all the abstracts as they come in and return those who don’t fit the guidelines. Then I anonymise the documents and organise their transfer to the CPR group. I then have to communicate the outcome to those who have submitted abstracts.

It IS the hardest thing I do in the ASCS Secretary’s year, but I have been using my experience to improve and streamline the procedure. We now have a coversheet with clearer indication of what is expected and the instructions on the website and the coversheet have been brought into line; I have a system using excel and dropbox to manage the entries which with a little tweaking is advantageous to everyone, including the conference convener, the committee chair and myself. It’s not much fun telling people their papers are refused, but because it is not actually my decision it is usually possible to find a sympathetic form of words to convey the unpalatable decision. It is also made easier by the absolute anonymity of the process, to the point where some committee members got their papers back for review. And the process is a work in progress: the executive is always looking for ways to make the process more efficient and fairer.

As it is a tricky duty, it seems only fair to offer to the civic-minded person who will take over this role in 2017 the same deal I received in 2013, that is, that the out-going secretary would maintain the job of managing the committee for at least one year while the new secretary shadowed and learned the ropes.

There is, also, the duty of maintaining the membership lists, a duty performed in close alliance with the Treasurer and Membership Secretary. This caused particular grief this year as our lists had to be reformatted to suit the CUP templates. However, because we had to go through that process, each of you now has an ASCS member number and the rolls are in very good shape. Furthermore, as you are all going to pay your membership dues on time and hassle your colleagues into coughing up too, the time taken in hunting down recalcitrants ought to decrease considerably in coming years.

Maintaining the website is one duty I have not been good at. I would like to say that the outdated material currently on offer is NOT the fault of the website manager. It is her duty to post things, not to create them. All I can say is that I currently have a folder entitled ‘Documents for the Web’ and in the next few weeks we will do a bulk update.

The role of secretary is a creative one, and not mere drudge or wasted effort. I get to interact with the postgraduate community, preferably by attending the Amphorae conferences (when possible) as well as the postgraduate forum at ASCS as observer and representative of the ASCS executive. I am happy to help the campuses which have taken on the burden of convening the conference, either physically on the ground or assisting with arrangements via electronic communication. There is a certain amount of trouble-shooting involved, but my theory is that it is better to have a hands-on approach to fixing problems- and a say in how things get done with a view to minimising the possibility of their arising in the first place.

I would also say that serving on the Executive has meant my getting to know some amazing people. I am looking forward to continuing my association with it and of working hard to advance our projects over the next year. I also want to stress that I would like to see every role rotated with reasonable and efficient predictability so that the work is shared and no one person has to shoulder the extra responsibility for too long. S, please, as the year rolls on, ask yourself whether you are up for an exciting challenge. Even if the answer is no, it is a great thing not to assume that the role will always be done by someone else. The Society needs its active citizens, just as individuals (I hope) benefit from their membership.

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