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Special Issue - Numéro spécial

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CANADIAN ACOUSTICAL ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, April 30th, 2020 2:00 PM – 4:30 PM (EDT)

Zoom video conference

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order 14:03 (EDT)

Present in room: Jérémie Voix (chair), Alberto Behar, Umberto Berardi, Bill Gastmeier, Bryan Gick, Dalila Giusti, Andy Metelka, Hugues Nélisse, Roberto Racca, Joana Rocha, Frank Russo, Mehrzad Salkhordeh, Benjamin Tucker.

Regrets: Michael Kieft

Guest: Romain Dumoulin, Olivier Robin.

Agenda approved: Moved by Jérémie, seconded by Dalila.

2. President's Report (Jérémie)

The Online Journal System (OJS) portal, which gives digital access to Canadian Acoustics and provides online management of memberships, has undergone major server upgrades; regrettably, this has led to problems with purchases of new memberships. A new version of OJS (v 3.2) is due to be rolled out soon, which will improve the access experience but will not address the purchasing bug which is being investigated separately.

New ways are being sought to recognize and enhance the impact and societal relevance of the journal to its readership under the terms of the Declaration of Research Assessment that the Association has endorsed. On that note a Task Force Group has been working on an article based on a survey of the Association's membership with special focus on sustaining organizations, now being finalized to be published in an upcoming issue of the journal.

Canada Wide Science Fair – The Board deemed not financially feasible to support a booth at this annual event, unless a local university can run it as will be the case in 2020 for Edmonton with Prof. Tucker.

The position of Standards Committee coordinator is vacant since the recent passing of the much missed colleague Tim Kelsall. Alberto Behar has been volunteering in the interim, but the torch has now to be passed to a new coordinator yet to be identified.

The ISO TC43 international standards committee for acoustics has been seeking a North American venue for its Spring 2023 plenary meeting, a large event. Montréal has been proposed as the host city and a small organizing committee has been formed; the CAA can benefit from participating in some official form in this important gathering.

The current restrictions on travel and large in-person gatherings imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic may require considering a virtual format for the next Acoustics Week in Canada annual conference (to be discussed as a later agenda item), but interesting new concepts being developed for Virtual Reality gatherings could warrant holding such events as a complementary feature also farther into the future. Jérémie is exploring a range of current and emerging solutions and techniques that could even provide a VR equivalent of the social interactions and side conversations that are part of the fabric of an in-person congress.

In discussion of the previous point, Frank mentioned that a trial experience the previous year of a virtual meeting of an international society had an overall negative impact, especially because it had not been generally felt as a necessity. The meeting had been organized with a hybrid format in which delegates had gathered physically in four cities around the world with virtual links between them; this had generated a negative reaction that could even affect future meetings and membership or the organization. Jérémie pointed to an online resource that lists technologies and discusses experiences for holding successful virtual events

Dalila raised the point of what to do with the online registration bug and problems with membership associated with it. Jérémie indicated that internal volunteer resources may not be sufficient to address the issue and it may be necessary to engage an expert

to correct the problem and potentially to recode the payment module. A contingency budget allocation of 2500\$ to cover this eventuality would be requested in the later discussion of finances.

Jérémie asked for suggestions of potential candidates to fill the volunteer position of standards coordinator, noting that a description of the role and call for interest had been posted on the web site. Mehrzad said he would contact a person he had in mind to and might be interested; Jérémie also suggested contacting the people currently involved in convening the 2023 ISO TC43 plenary meeting in Canada. An Action item was raised for Jérémie to provide further information on the role to Mehrzad and to approach the TC43 organizing committee members. Jérémie also noted the importance of having people mentored in essential roles such as standards coordinator to ensure continuity.

3. Past and Upcoming Meetings

AWC 2019 – Edmonton: (Jérémie for Ben Tucker, AWC 2019 chair)

- A comprehensive summary report for the conference was published in the December issue of Canadian Acoustics; the conference did well in attracting both delegates and exhibitors or sponsors. Jérémie complimented Ben to the Board for a well-organized and successful event.
- Dalila as CAA treasurer would still need to do a final review of the financials but based on submitted numbers the conference was profitable for the Association.

AWC 2020 – Sherbrooke: (guest Olivier Robin, AWC 2020 chair)

- Olivier stressed the difficulty to assess at that time whether the meeting could go ahead as planned. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, preparations were well underway on both the technical and social fronts, with venues identified and activities planned. Clearly all that had changed very rapidly.
- He outlined three options that his organizing committee had originally identified and considered:
 - Keep the conference as planned, hoping that the pandemic would have subsided by the autumn.
 - Postpone by a couple of months to give more time for the situation to return more normal.
 - Transform the event to an entirely virtual conference.

The committee saw the e-conference option as a potential opportunity but had concerns about their readiness and capability to set up such a new format and doubts about how well it would be received. Olivier then outlined another two options more recently considered in discussion with Jérémie and others:

- A hybrid solution with physical gatherings at local hubs that would also give greater opportunity to more students across the country to be involved, combined with digital feeds between the hubs. A corollary would be to stream live video of the presentations during the conference but also make a recording available after the event for a smaller fee than registration. Olivier stressed the opportunities that a flexible hybrid format could offer also for future events in normal circumstances.
 - Lastly, a full cancelling of AWC 2020 and return to the conventional scheduling and organizing of the event for autumn 2021.
- Olivier noted that regardless of when and in what format the next AWC would take place, a special topic session should be added to the program about the repercussions of the pandemic from an acoustics standpoint.
 - Considerable discussion took place among the participants, in which numerous points were raised and opinions voiced. In summary a few key ideas emerged:
 - It appeared unlikely that in October 2020 conditions would be back to normal, also considering the risk of a resurgence of cases in a second wave of the pandemic and the responsibility to the membership to provide a safe environment for a meeting.
 - Although some members raised the possibility that a breakthrough in the management of the pandemic might still enable a physical event to take place in 2020, it was clear that a cancellation would have to be decided soon, before any contractual commitments could result in costly penalties. Olivier noted that Sherbrooke university planned to reopen in the fall and have administration and faculty work as usual, but with the contingency on the ready to go to virtual teaching.
 - Transitioning AWC 2020 to e-format in the short time available was generally seen as unfeasible, and Board members expressed doubts that the feel of the event could be captured suitably in a virtual environment.

- o Various concepts were suggested for holding in place of the 2020 conference some combination of one-day local events and a digital sharing platform so that the annual occasion of the Canadian acoustics community to come together would still be preserved.
 - o Board members representing companies that regularly sponsor and exhibit at AWC stated the view, also in terms of future events, that virtual solutions would not work as platforms for personal contacts with clients and demonstration of products and services. They thought that although their own companies would remain supportive of any initiative proposed by the association, other more “conventional” exhibitors would shun a non-physical event.
- The unanimous decision of the Board was to cancel AWC 2020 and focus on finalizing as soon as possible the choice of dates and venue for AWC 2021 given that many other conferences were being rescheduled to that year and people’s calendars would likely be uncommonly busy. It was agreed that a discussion of alternative community events to hold around the time of AWC 2020 would take place separately through e-mails and online meetings, led by the few Board members who had expressed specific ideas in the discussion.

AWC 2021 – St-John’s:

- Jérémie and Dalila indicated that conveners Benjamin Zedel and Len Zedel had already made some key decisions regarding venue and basic infrastructure. It would be important therefore to determine soon in consultation with the respective organizers on whether to have a leapfrogging of Sherbrooke to 2022 or a linear shift of Sherbrooke to 2021 and St. John’s to 2022.
- An Action Item was raised for Jérémie and Frank to call a meeting with the conveners of AWC 2020 and 2021 to address this matter.

AWC 2022 – Ottawa?:

- Jérémie noted that at the 2019 conference Joana Rocha had informally expressed interest in hosting the event for 2022.
- Joana indicated that she had not given any thought yet to the organizing, but she would be open for a 2023 possibility under the current circumstances.

AWC 2023 – ?:

- No proposals have been made, but Jérémie remarked that at the 2019 conference there had been talk of bringing the event back west and possibly to an alternative locality like the Okanagan valley.
- With the current reshuffling, of course, Ottawa might become the 2023 venue.

ISO TC43 – Montréal 2023: (Jérémie)

- Jérémie provided some additional detail on that event that he had mentioned earlier, noting that it would bring together a large and diverse global community of delegates. Canada had been chosen as the ideal host country on the North-Central American continent because it did not preclude access to some ISO member countries as the USA would have.
- Both Toronto and Montréal had expressed interest; the latter was selected, and all is currently on course to host the event in spring of 2023.

AWC 2024 – Toronto?:

- Umberto Berardi has expressed interest in convening that event, but no specific plans have been made at this time.

4. Treasurer’s Report (Dalida)

Dalila had submitted ahead of time the report for the Board’s review and only gave a rapid overview of key points. Financial statements had been completed and taxes had been filed. Dalila noted that the financial position of the company as of 2019 remained strong with few changes from the previous year, though the exact yield of investments would only be known with some lag and their future performance given the economic downturn from the pandemic could not be foreseen.

The exact revenue from the 2019 conference was not yet finalized but the event had turned a modest net profit in the order of a few thousand dollars. Due to the decision made in view of the pandemic, 2020 would now be a calm year with no conference related financial activities. Dalila remarked that unpaid receivables had been accruing for the advertising income from the journal, and payments would have to be pursued with some zeal.

The full budget and financial forecast would be presented for approval, as customary, at the autumn Board meeting. Dalila noted that she would include in the expenditures the \$2500 requested by Jérémie to deal with the ongoing bug in the online membership system.

Motion to adopt the report was made by Dalila, seconded by Roberto.

5. Secretary's Report (Roberto)

Roberto began his verbal account noting that he had only circulated to Board members at the last minute a version of his written report with the current numbers for membership and subscriptions, as he had been working with the journal circulation team to ensure that the database tallying scripts had identified correctly the most recent updates. That notwithstanding, the latest numbers showed a drop in regular membership by over 25% year on year (on a basis of around 150) though the number of student members had increased since the last reporting; a few sustaining subscribers had also not renewed. A plausible reason from information just acquired was that notification emails sent automatically were reportedly not being received (a fact confirmed by various Board members), resulting in numerous people being unaware of their membership's lapsing.

Roberto noted that under the circumstances there would be little point in speculating on ulterior causes for the drop in numbers, and effort should be focused on reaching out with reminders to all recently lapsed members and subscribers. He pointed out that his practice of reaching out to sustaining subscribers upon every renewal with a grateful acknowledgement and offer of assistance with setting up their networked access to the journal had not changed, nor his best effort to ensure that any member experiencing technical issues with their renewal or access to the journal would be looked after. He also noted that the ongoing glitch with the payment system not enabling new members to complete the process might be taking a toll on the rate of new adhesions, as possibly only a small proportion would be contacting him directly for assistance compared to those who would just abandon the process or perhaps think that they had in fact registered and would be billed later.

Roberto also noted the still ongoing problem with indirect subscriptions to the journal (taken out through subscription agencies) that because of inefficiencies in the current renewal process with emailed instructions and offline payments often result in missed mailing of issues around the renewal time. He recommended that an improved process be considered, if possible, whereby subscription agencies would be able to renew online on behalf of their client institutions thereby avoiding delays and billing issues. A corollary to this would be a revisiting of the pricing structure currently in place for indirect subscriptions which had not been reviewed for years.

In discussion of these matters, the following Action Items were raised:

- Jérémie would identify in the database both recently lapsed members and new users who had not completed their membership registration for follow-up with targeted mailings, to attempt rebuilding the numbers lost to technical issues. On a related note, the matter of automated notification emails not reaching their recipients would be investigated and addressed, including efforts to increase the trust index of emails in the common heuristics of spam filtering.
- A small task group including Roberto, Dalila, Jérémie and Umberto (editor in chief of the journal) would revisit current policies regarding indirect subscribers with the aim to determine suitable pricing, enable if possible direct renewals online, and examine whether the option of providing online access to the journal site to all the members for example of a foreign institute of higher learning might not be superior to the current physical mailing of a copy of the journal to their library. On that note, the possibility of offering a digital-only option to the general membership was again raised for consideration.
- A further effort would be made to reach out individually to sustaining subscribers both current and lapsed to identify how they could be better engaged, to ensure that their contribution would be properly recognized (e.g. ensuring that all their contact information would be accurately and promptly reflected on the Association's web site).

6. Awards Coordinator's Report (Joana)

Joana noted that the deadline for award applications had just passed so she only had partial information, as not all coordinators of individual prizes had reported in yet. There had been no applicants for the Shaw postdoctoral award, the Fessenden Student

Prize in Underwater Acoustics, or the Bregman Student Prize in Psychological Acoustics, two applicants for the Eckel Student Prize in Noise Control, and one entrant each for the other named awards.

The point was raised, and discussion followed, on the matter of clarity in awards eligibility rules; in particular, there could be ambiguity in the status of a candidate regarding enrolment in a qualified academic institute for post-graduate work. The suggestion was also made to build into the rules a provision to limit the ability of a past winner of a major prize to apply subsequently for the same or other similar prizes, a criterion that otherwise would be applied pragmatically by debate among the Board as was the case at the present meeting for one of the awards. An Action Item was raised for Joana to propose suitably edited award rules to be applied in the future and amend the application forms accordingly.

Dalila recommended that because of the impossibility to hold the Canada Wide Science Fair in 2020 because of the pandemic, the Science Fair Award prize be reassigned to a different cause like a special 2020 award. Also, given the cancelling of AWC 2020, Dalila proposed to expand the Directors' Awards to additional student papers (increasing them to four) to take the place of the three student presentation awards. An Action Item was taken by Jérémie to facilitate with Joana and the Sherbrooke organizing committee the process of defining a suitable allocation of the 2020 conference awards, which could potentially still recognize outstanding student presentations given in an alternative event format should such an initiative take place.

7. Editor's Report (Umberto)

Umberto reported that the journal was in good shape; the March issue had been published reasonably on schedule and the June issue was coming together well, with three or four papers already accepted and others in the editorial process. Without AWC 2020 the September issue, which normally would be dedicated to the proceedings, will have to hold regular content; enough submissions are in the queue, however, that there should be no problem.

Representation of the various disciplines of acoustics was somewhat low in the areas of ultrasound, bioacoustics, and underwater acoustics. It would be very beneficial to have dedicated editors for those disciplines or at least stronger presence on the editorial board, especially to champion and expedite peer reviewing of papers in the mentioned areas of research.

Umberto noted that transition to OJS 3.1 for managing the papers workflow was well established and working smoothly; version 3.2 was due to roll out soon and no major problems were expected. A couple of new people on the journal staff had fit in quite well and the editorial and publishing process was continuously improving and becoming easier for the entire team.

Submissions of papers to the journal remained at steady and adequate level, with a couple of international articles and a few from Canadian authors being entered into the workflow at every quarter; one notable exception had been obtaining papers from award recipients; Umberto felt that it should be made a mandatory requirement for receiving an award so that the community would be aware of the quality of the work being recognized. The submissions could even be just summary papers or 2-page extended abstracts which would not require an extensive review process. Dalila suggested requiring that the paper be featured in the September issue for the recipient to receive the award at the AWC in October, or at least to have the prize money disbursed; missing the September issue would delay the payment. Frank made the additional suggestion that award winners be required to create a 30-second video describing their research; this would be posted on the CAA social media and provide greater visibility and impact for the work of young members of the Association – in a format widely appreciated by their generational peers. From this discussion an Action Item was raised for Joana to include these suggested conditions in the updated awards rules and forms along with other changes previously agreed.

Lastly Bryan proposed that the traditional "AWC proceedings" issue should still go ahead in 2020 with a collection of short papers, in a similar format as the usual conference issue. Umberto responded that it could not be assumed that such an approach would fill the September issue, but the contents should rather be a mix of regular full papers, the awards winners' submissions, and submitted short papers. This distinctive format would help sustain the idea that AWC was alive and well despite the challenges.

8. Social Media Editor's Report (Romain)

Romain gave a short slide presentation on how the social media program had evolved since its inception, including the approaches followed on Twitter and LinkedIn and related analytics showing an increase in following. He began by intensifying the frequency of postings by relaying any relevant content to build following, then focused increasingly on creating original content including video and advanced media.

He concluded by outlining his plan to work closely with the Canadian Acoustics editorial team to draw on any new publications for social media material and asked for continuing input of content and ideas from Board members and others. An Action Item was taken by Jérémie to include links to the CAA's social media platforms in all the Association's email templates.

9. Varia

Jérémie brought up once more the work of the Membership Task Force and the survey report that Alberto and he were drafting as a paper for publication in Canadian Acoustics. He mentioned that the manuscript had been circulated by email and asked for contribution from any interested members of the Board to its review and final authorship. An Action Item was raised for Alberto to review and consolidate any input and provide final comments to the Board at large.

10. Next meeting :

Date to be confirmed in October 2020; virtual meeting.

11. Motion adjourned at 17:03 (EDT)

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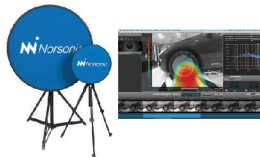
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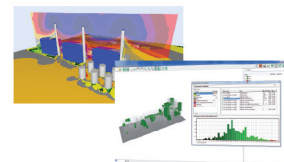
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