

CANADIAN ACOUSTICAL ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Friday, October 9th, 2020 5:00 PM – 6:00 PM (EDT)
by Zoom videoconference

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order 17:09 (EDT) by J  r  mie Voix (President),

J  r  mie Voix began by acknowledging the contribution of several members of the Board and Executive on the call as well as the invaluable assistance of C  cile Le Cocq, journal manager, in bringing Canadian Acoustics to press every quarter. He also mentioned that because of the current unavailability of the CAA's treasurer Dalila Giusti due to a professional obligation, the budget had not yet been reviewed and approved by the Board and would therefore not be presented.

About 25 people in attendance online.

After a brief outlining of the AGM agenda, adoption moved by J  r  mie Voix, seconded by Mehrzad Salkordeh.

2. President's Report (J  r  mie Voix)

J  r  mie gave an overview of the challenges that were faced over the year by himself and C  cile Le Cocq in maintaining the systems infrastructure on which the journal, conference and membership portals are hosted – especially without the assistance of a system administrator who could no longer dedicate time to the task. The most substantial task was to maintain the Open Journal System (OJS) platform that is key to the submission, editing and publication process for Canadian Acoustics; this was greatly simplified in a cost effective manner by migrating to a cloud hosted version with a commercial provider guaranteeing uptime, backups, updating and support of the environment. The migration took a substantial effort but in the process various shortcomings of the earlier system were addressed, from problems with the emailing module to a long standing bug that had frustrated the ability of prospective new members to join the CAA online and required manual interventions in various cases. An effort to align the structure of bulk and automated emails from the Association to its members with the most current standards is still underway; hopefully that will result in a much lesser incidence of blocking of emails by spam filters.

A membership recovery initiative has taken place earlier in the year to counter a critical loss in numbers. J  r  mie explained how the CAA executive felt that a combination of technical difficulties with the membership site and the preoccupations of the pandemic had likely impacted people's recollection or capacity to renew, and that it would be appropriate for the Association to extend support to its member base through a relief plan. This was rolled out in July by the automatic reinstatement until end December of all memberships that had lapsed in the previous year, and the addition of five months to the validity of memberships current at the time; email notifications also went out to all members affected. J  r  mie deferred to the Secretary's Report further details on the initiative and its effect.

J  r  mie informed the membership that the Association has been looking for a Standards Committee Coordinator to fill the role of the late Tim Kelsall. Alberto Behar, who has generously acted as interim coordinator, should see his role filled on a definitive basis. He appealed for any expression of interest or suggestion and pointed members to the relevant CAA web page for information on the Committee and its activities.

Lastly, J  r  mie mentioned the work of a Membership Task Force assembled to identify, mostly through a questionnaire survey sent out in June to the broad Association base, the aspects of membership that are relevant and motivational for people to join and be engaged. He stressed particularly the vital importance to the CAA of sustaining subscribers, institutional or corporate entities who choose to contribute to the advancement of the Association through higher annual dues. The findings of the Task Force and an action plan are being finalized and will be published as an article in the December issue of Canadian Acoustics.

3. Secretary's Report (Roberto Racca)

Roberto opened his remarks by pointing out that his role's main focus, during a period when technical problems hampered the CAA's online membership platform and affected successful email delivery, had been to provide the most open and helpful possible contact for members faced with renewal issues or related difficulties. That notwithstanding it was clear that the situation had led to considerable drop in membership numbers; preoccupations with and impact from the pandemic on people's lives and work likely had exacerbated attrition as the year progressed. He echoed Jérémie's earlier message that individual members and sustaining subscribers truly are the lifeblood of the Association and its activities, adding his gratitude for the steadfast support that many have provided over the years.

He then went on to summarize the substantial drop in membership and subscription numbers that had taken place in the early part of 2020 and had been brought to the attention of the Board at its April meeting. The situation brought to the decision already described by Jérémie to introduce essentially a "stimulus package" to inject new activity in the Association ranks through both the reactivation of recently lapsed memberships to last until the end of December, and the free extension of current ones by five months. A similar reinstatement was introduced to assist recently lapsed sustaining subscribers, whose decision not to renew might have been a consequence of current economic uncertainty. Roberto showed how the reactivation plan had impacted the totals especially for individual memberships which almost doubled in active number from their April low, to 250 between regular (198) and student (52) members.

In summing up, Roberto made the point that a lasting benefit from this relief measure will only be realized if the Association succeeds in engaging its reinstated members and sustaining subscribers so that they will feel motivated to renew come the end of December (or any time before). He appealed to the audience to be alert to renewal notices and aware of the possibility that they might be quarantined by oversensitive email blockers in the current climate of rampant email threats. He closed by exhorting members to follow the CAA's digital media platforms (web and social networks) where valuable information and notices are regularly posted, and not to hesitate to contact him with any questions, comments, and suggestions.

4. Awards Report (Joana Rocha)

Having just officiated the awards granting ceremony online immediately prior to the AGM, Joana limited her intervention to mentioning the current intent of the Association to explore the creation of new awards and noting that she would be proposing some ideas to the directors and executive in the coming months.

5. Social Media Editor Report (Romain Dumoulin)

Jérémie spoke on behalf of Romain, beginning with a brief overview of the role of Social Media Editor that had been announced at the previous AGM as the centralizer of all the Association's web and social networks postings. He went on to present some statistics from Romain's report showing the standing of the CAA's accounts on LinkedIn and Twitter, both of which have increased by 15-20% in following over the past year with steady posting activity. Jérémie noted that Romain's role includes the moderation of any potential content to ensure that it is factual and free from open commercialism. The content developed or selected for posting is organized in specific categories to give it a well-structured form; categories include "CAA members (and sustaining subscribers) in the news", "Canadian acoustics news", "Gems from the past", "Canadian Acoustics history", "Acoustics 101", "Acoustics jobs", "Acoustics training", "Acoustics Week in Canada", and more. Lastly Jérémie mentioned for full transparency that Romain had recently transitioned from an academic position at McGill to a private consultancy and that safeguards would be in place against any perception of conflict of interest in his role, though he vouched also on behalf of the Board for his well-proven reliability and integrity.

6. Questions & Comments from the Floor

Jérémie opened the meeting to questions and remarks from the floor as some messages had been entered on the chat line.

- Kathy Pichora-Fuller asked what had come of an award in honour of John Bradley, which had been debated at the time when she was a member of the Board of Directors but seemingly had not progressed. The question prompted interventions by long-standing Board members in attendance who recalled that after considerable mediation efforts, the process had been abandoned due to difficulties with the conditions under which the funding by the prospective donor would have been provided. It was also noted by some that the idea of an award honouring John Bradley has great merit, and ways should be sought to realize it.
- Kathy also inquired about the category of Emeritus Member which appeared in membership tallies with only a single count; Jérémie indicated that it was a legacy classification not currently used, but he would take an action item to look at

what the original motivation could have been. Kathy suggested that the CAA adopt the model of other professional organizations who offer to retired members still active in the field a limited set of privileges for a reduced or no fee; this would keep older members engaged and provide advantages from mentorship to potential donations. Jérémie noted the point and mentioned that this fits well with current discussions about introducing membership levels such as fellow as special recognition; Annabel Cohen intervened to point out that the emeritus and fellow categories fill different roles and should be considered separately, to which Kathy concurred and reiterated the importance to cater to all demographics. Roberto noted that such subjects are regularly discussed at Board meetings; he cited the recent difficulties the CAA has faced in retaining its core membership as reason for having focused more on the fundamentals, but expressed confidence that these very valid suggestions will be addressed in the near term.

- Kathy commented on how the online format of this day's events had enabled people to attend who might not have been able to afford the travel costs and time for a conventional on-site meeting. She advocated a continuing emphasis on remote participation as a means of broadening accessibility to the activities of the Association and thus helping to secure and retain the engagement of a larger spectrum of membership.
- Bill Gastmeier suggested, and Kathy supported, that the CAA should also consider increasing its funding base by encouraging planned giving among its members and patrons – especially in support of legacies such as awards and scholarships for upcoming generations of acoustics experts.

7. Upcoming Meetings

AWC 2021: Sherbrooke, QC (Chair: Olivier Robin)

Olivier expressed his wish that by autumn of 2021 the COVID-19 crisis will have receded to the point that a full in-person meeting will be possible just like before the pandemic, but recognized that at this point only cautious hope is possible. The intent under optimal conditions is still to have a physical meeting at the same venue and with the same level of dissemination of knowledge from the acoustics research group at Sherbrooke University through site visits. The situation will be assessed in consultation with the CAA Board of Directors in April and a decision will be made on whether to proceed with planning a fully physical meeting or a hybrid format. He noted how the organizing of the one-day virtual event now winding down had been a most valuable training for how to handle the technology and structure of an online meeting of this nature.

Both Alberto and Jérémie expressed great satisfaction at how the day's "exercise" had played out, Jérémie also noting that the coordination between himself and Olivier to make the event come together had been limited by busy schedules and other commitments, which bode encouragingly in case the 2021 conference required a similar undertaking. Olivier agreed and stated in conclusion that he and his committee would be ready to handle any possibility, from a fully physical event to a hybrid format to a wholly virtual meeting if need be. Jérémie thanked him on behalf of all participants for having had the vision to encourage and spearhead holding this one-day "acoustics celebration" after the Board rescheduled AWC to 2021.

AWC 2022: St-John's, NL (Co-chairs: Benjamin Zedel & Len Zedel)

Jérémie reported that the local team was willing and prepared to hold the event in 2022 and the hotel venue was secured.

AWC 2023: Ottawa, ON (Chair: Joana Rocha) – Preliminary commitment.

ISO TC43 Montréal 2023 (Jérémie Voix) – On track for successful convening.

AWC 2024: Okanagan Valley, BC? – No committee (would be local or nearby based) or plans yet.

AWC 2025: Toronto, ON @ Ryerson? (Chair: Umberto Berardi) – Still very preliminary.

8. Election of the Board

Jérémie informed the AGM that of the Board members serving on four-year terms none were slated specifically for replacement or reconfirmation this year, and all were willing to stay on. Noting the challenge of holding a vote in the current online meeting format he moved that as default action the current Board be reconfirmed in its entirety. Roberto seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by show of hands. Jérémie thanked the directors for their ongoing dedication and service and declared the Board reconfirmed.

9. Varia

Kathy Pichora-Fuller mentioned that the World Health Organization had intended to launch the first World Hearing Report the past May but because of the pandemic had postponed the event to 3 March 2021, World Hearing Day. She indicated that numerous academics were working with the WHO to build strong momentum behind the report and induce countries to take action to prevent hearing loss through noise management and other initiatives germane to the interests of the CAA. She suggested the Association consider participating in related activities taking place in various Canadian cities; as an example, she mentioned the global conference of the International Federation on Aging to be held in Niagara in November 2021, which will feature a strong message about the importance of hearing and acoustics for healthy aging. Jérémie committed to engaging a dialogue on how to engage the CAA in these initiatives and asked Kathy to forward any pertinent materials to him.

10. Next AGM

Jérémie noted that AWC 2021, whether physically in Sherbrooke or in some other format, would be held from the 12 to the 15 of October 2021. Based on the typical scheduling, therefore, the next AGM will be held on **Thursday 14 October 2021**.

11. Motion to Adjourn

Moved by Alberto Behar, seconded by Peter VanDelden.
Meeting adjourned at 18:08 (EDT)

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