



British Association of Film,
Television and Screen Studies

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Sunday 26 June 2011

Birkbeck College London

Chair: Alexander Marlow-Mann (St. Andrews)

Minutes: Tim Bergfelder (Southampton)

1. The chair opened the meeting, and appointed TB to take the minutes. Several apologies were received and noted. About thirty-five people were present.

2. The meeting proceeded to a presentation on how BAFTSS had developed. Sarah Street (Bristol) reported on the first meeting of a small group of academics in February 2011 who discussed the idea of launching a new subject association for film, television and screen studies. She argued that there was widespread belief that a complementary body to existing organisations (such as MeCCSA, SCMS, or NECS) was not only desirable but urgently needed. Paul McDonald (Portsmouth) added that there was a 'gap in national representation'. This triggered a lengthy discussion regarding MeCCSA's current status as the only representative body for the field, and BAFTSS' relationship with MeCCSA. John Ellis (Royal Holloway, also on the executive committee of MeCCSA) raised a number of concerns regarding the foundation of BAFTSS, and warned that the existence of parallel organisations could impact on the effectiveness of representation at a national level. Drawing on his own experience of working with various organisations, he warned of the dangers that energies might get dissipated in the organisational efforts of keeping a separate body going, rather than being more productively used in campaigning. His second warning was that parallel bodies could be played off against each other. At the same time, JE conceded that certain areas (in particular film studies) had not been as well represented through MeCCSA as other interests, but he said that it was up to film studies scholars to make the organisation work for them. He also noted that unlike other areas covered within MeCCSA, Film was a more 'diasporic' field.

PMcD responded that because MeCCSA is by now an established organisation with a clearly defined members profile, it would be difficult to create a sub-grouping within MeCCSA, not least because there is a substantial number of people and departments in the UK who are not and never have been members of MeCCSA. Andrew Higson (York) echoed this, saying that there is a notable lack of involvement in MeCCSA from certain sectors, but he was wondering whether this was primarily an issue for Film Studies, and whether this lack of connection was equally applicable to television and other screen studies scholars.

Jacqueline Maingard (Bristol) enquired whether there had been any conversation between MeCCSA and BAFTSS. It was noted that BAFTSS had been in contact since the beginning, and that although differences in opinion were clearly evident, BAFTSS remained committed to engage with MeCCSA in further discussions about how the most productive and effective form of collaboration can be coordinated.

As up to this point the discussion was conducted mainly between the original launch members of BAFTSS and a member of MeCCSA, other attendees were encouraged to voice their views. The general feeling in the room was in favour of BAFTSS and its aims. Erica Carter (King's) picked up on the 'diasporic' nature of Film and argued that



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BAFTSS might represent a different kind of plurality, pointing out that her post was a joint appointment between Film and a Modern Languages department, and that specific film-related groups were already operating separately from MeCCSA (such as French Cinema Studies group). Emma Sandon (Birkbeck) argued that film and media studies were often fragmented within Universities across different departments, and that a more focussed group could address current problems with REF and funding. A number of contributors to the debate (Lydia Papadimitriou, Liverpool John Moores; Nick Hall, PhD candidate from Exeter) stressed that while they felt that MeCCSA had never 'addressed' them, they felt spoken to by the BAFTSS initiative. Nick Hall also argued that BAFTSS should proceed, and if the warnings that JE had raised earlier would come to pass, a subsequent merger with MeCCSA could be envisaged at a later stage. Kevin Donnelly (Southampton) said that he felt he had more in common with colleagues he met at international organisations such as NECS and SCMS than with MeCCSA, and he welcomed the idea of a new British body. Misha Kavka (Auckland) said that she found the idea behind BAFTSS timely and exciting, especially in the organisation's inclusion of film and other audiovisual media. She also said that any developments in the field in the UK would be closely followed in New Zealand. James Chapman (Leicester) rejected the idea that proliferation necessarily has to lead to fragmentation, pointing to his own involvement with IAMHIST (the International Association of Media Historians). Taking a different stance, Ewa Mazierska (Central Lancashire) warned of duplication and fragmentation, drawing on her own experience with an association for Eastern European film studies.

The discussion then moved on to the subject of the constitution. JE raised the issue of quorum and provisions for dissolution (para 6.1.5 and 8.4 respectively in the constitution), suggesting that these percentages were too high, and that this should be looked at again. AH and JM also advocated that at least one member of the executive committee should be constitutionally a PGR student.

AMM reported on other activities that had taken place since February, in particular the establishment of a website and a discussion list. By the time of the AGM, 155 people had signed up in support of BAFTSS, while 366 had joined the discussion list.

3. Two PGR students, (Rachael Keene from Portsmouth and Victoria Kearley from Southampton) outlined their ideas for a PG network within BAFTSS (and its relationship with the existing PG network within MeCCSA), which gained approval and acclaim from the meeting. Plans included PG-centred events, knowledge exchanges and training opportunities, possibly in cooperation with non-academic institutions and cultural organisations such as the BFI. Greg de Cuir (Belgrade) suggested syncing these activities with national student bodies. AH also argued that there should be a designated PG section on the BAFTSS website.

A PGR student from Queen Mary in attendance who is involved with the NECS PG network offered support and suggested collaboration between BAFTSS and NECS.

4. Election: Given the fact that many of the people who had nominated themselves or were nominated prior to the meeting as potential members of the executive were not present at the AGM, a different strategy for the coming year was suggested by AH and adopted by those present. It was decided that for the coming year, an Interim Executive

Committee should be established to move the BAFTSS agenda forward, but which should also test the feasibility of the organisational structure and hierarchies stipulated by the constitution. It was felt that some roles envisaged by the constitution required considerable time investment, and that therefore a greater amount of delegation could persuade more people to become involved. The interim committee would propose candidates for election to the main posts (chair, vice-chair, secretary, treasurer) at a later stage. The interim committee will consist of all the nominees who put themselves forward, including the two PG representatives, and Dr Stefano Baschiera (Belfast) who volunteered at the meeting. The Interim Executive Committee¹ thus consists of the following (Volunteers not present at the AGM were contacted subsequently and have by now confirmed their willingness to serve on the Interim Executive Committee):

- Joe Andrew (Keele)
- Stefano Baschiera (Belfast)
- Tim Bergfelder (Southampton)
- Chris Berry (Goldsmiths)
- James Chapman (Leicester)
- Anna Claydon (Leicester)
- Rajinder Dudrah (Manchester)
- Paul Elliot (Worcester)
- Dina Iordanova (St Andrews)
- Victoria Kearley (Southampton)
- Rachael Keene (Portsmouth)
- Yosefa Loshitzky (UEL)
- Alex Marlow-Mann (St Andrews)
- Paul McDonald (Portsmouth)
- Andrew Moor (Manchester Metropolitan)
- Lucia Nagib (Leeds)
- Sarah Street (Bristol)
- Brian Winston (Lincoln)

5. Subscription Rates: There was some discussion about the rates, what they would be spent on, and whether they should be higher or lower. AH suggested that in order to foster a recruitment drive, for the next year a fixed rate of £20 for staff and £10 should be advertised as an incentive to join (the 'early bird' option) before a more structured and tiered system can be introduced the following year.

6. Discussion of Priorities: Under this heading, several ideas such as journals and conferences were listed. The general feeling at the meeting was that it was too early to investigate these things; that lobbying should be the body's top priority, and that other priorities should be developed in more concrete terms by the interim executive in time for the next AGM. Richard Paterson (BFI) alerted the meeting to the current film policy consultation conducted by the DCMS and urged BAFTSS to become involved in this.

TB 4 July 2011