

**Burlington Writers Workshop  
Meeting of the Board of Directors**

Date: Saturday, December 16, 2017 at 10 a.m.

By phone

Board of Directors Attendees:

Lauren Bender  
Partridge Boswell  
Terry Cleveland  
Deena Frankel  
Rebecca Starks  
Danielle Thierry

1) November 29 Board Minutes accepted

2) Calls are automatically recorded, if useful for minutes.

3) MSR update by Rebecca.

A) recap of emails from Rebecca and Erin summing up what bubbled up from the MSR staff meetings:

- 1) Community--readers especially would like to feel integrated into the journal's working, be mentored, and receive professional development. An editor expressed feeling underqualified for her role and others agreed. Everyone seemed keen on the idea of workshops with professional editors from local journals or universities. People want to meet but it always seems to fall apart. There was a preference that meetings be scheduled far in advance as a regular thing. There is interest in online platforms that may help with community when meeting in person becomes challenging. Erin will do follow-up on this.
- 2) Editorial structure--staff would like a clearer understanding of existing roles and deadlines surrounding publication. Documents detailing this exist but need to be re-provided as staff has turned over. Danielle will provide, making clear these are living documents. The idea of a co-EIC was proposed and was seen as a positive with some caveats: people would ideally be aligned/complementary in personality, aesthetic vision, & skills. In this case there would not need to be a managing editor--the two editors would divide up those tasks. Alternatively the managing editor could take on more. The idea of tapping the universities around us for interns and for readers met with broad support (understanding that interns require someone to manage them).
- 3) Publication schedule—our recommendation, from what was discussed: that MSR publish online bimonthly; that we have defined one-month reading periods with a one-week grace period in which to respond to all submissions from that month and choose the final pieces to edit, pair art with, etc.; that we pay these 24 contributors (based on income we can generate through manuscript reviews) \$50, \$100 if possible; and that we put the print issue on hold indefinitely, unless the staff decides in a particular year to take it on and can raise the \$3000 funds and do the extra work of finding submissions, designing the issue, editing and proofing, without falling behind on responsibilities for the online issues.

Rationale for the shift: paying contributors is seen as an even greater draw than having a print issue in today's changing media climate.

Our general recommendation: make the changes in #3, announce them with a call for new staff members across the board, rather than for particular positions--"anyone interested in contributing to MSR; write a paragraph expressing your interest and detailing any relevant skills and experience in editing, publishing, community building, etc."--and then we would hope to have enough people apply in a 2 week period that out of the volunteers we could fill all needed roles. Our hope is by dramatically reducing the work load in #3, people will have more time for meetings, professional development workshops, creative ideas, etc. (which helps solve #1) and that this will encourage people to apply for positions, stay in them, and move up as editors (helping solve #2).

Proposal: we announce this plan to MSR staff for a final comment period this week.

Details from Erin Post: Emphasis on:

- Professional Development "workshops". Gets people together and gives something back to volunteers. (Deena: this would support Best of editors as well.)
- Online communication tool, e.g.: readers using the tool to host a regular meeting around current submissions to understand more about how the others on the team read and evaluate. Genre co-editors could use the tool to come to consensus on what to recommend to the EIC
- Mentoring of readers. We talked about genre co-editors potentially being "prepped" for this as part of their role. They're editors but also team leaders. How do we keep readers connected to the journal, and hopefully learn and grow enough to want to take on additional roles?

Noted the managing editor could take on more: website maintenance, interview wrangling, creating process documents, organizing workshops or professional development, etc.

In terms of making the call for staff, we talked in both meetings about building on relationships we have with people at Champlain College, St. Mikes, and UVM.

## B) Board response: unanimous yes to all recommendations

- Financial impact: \$1200/year to pay contributors for 6 issues (can consider this a marketing tool only double what we paid this year to advertise) vs. \$2800 for print issue.
- Programming: will schedule professional development/editing skill workshops, beginning in Jan with in-house editors, then reach out to others when funds are available and we can schedule it in advance. Proposed beginning with 4 workshops a year. Would be valuable for Best of editors as well.
- Danielle: will see if we can add a "how did you hear about MSR?" question to submissions.
- Rebecca will circulate a draft of description for a new call for staff, in conjunction with an announcement of these changes. Community builders, etc.
- Interns: can be readers, do feedback requests, etc. Lauren will send Jen's intern description. We were contacted by the intern manager at Champlain.
- Submittable: easy to open and close it to submissions. Provides more marketing opportunities when you announce openings/closings.

- Deena's support for the proposal: Purpose: keeps spirit & intention alive in a robust way that can be sustainable and not a struggle.
- Downside of fewer issues: fewer authors published. But deeper connections with those who are published. More time to focus on interviews. Can always revisit down the road, if staff feel inclined to put out more issues.
- Lauren will send message to staff and ask for comments/questions within a week's time.

4) Budget: Terry sent but no one received. All agree will decide on final budget at the January 18 board meeting. Terry will circulate a revised document before then and we can comment by email. She will update the budget after MSR discussion to reflect dropping the print issue and paying contributors.

5) Danielle talked to landlord. Lease can be renewed one or two years. Rent increases based on CPI. Obtaining copy of lease to review to know penalty if had to break two-year lease for any reason.

6) Retreat: Jan 6, 9-12 (since updated to 10:30-1:30). A large enough group that Deena will ask library. Deena will meet with Liz Dallas on Mon/Tues, and Danielle hopes to be able to attend too.

7) Nonprofit planning consultation with Scott McArdle: either Jan 23 or 30. Deena, Terry, Danielle, and Rebecca plan to attend.

8) Programming: Partridge reported on authors who have committed; schedule will soon be posted so other events can be filled in around. Will have a lottery for high-demand workshops

9) Next Open Mic: Partridge will shoot for March 12 at Lampshop, in conjunction with the LitClub. He will send particulars for Opps & Announcements description.

10) Digital Project: Deena recapped email, all are on board with Rose's committee (including adding someone from MSR, to help create unity in the website as well; and in case there is a way to do manuscript fundraising without paying the Submittable fees).

11) Fundraising: update from Danielle on testimonials and a matching anonymous donor for new gifts during the month of December.

12) Agenda item for next meeting: Looking at how Committees are structured, and creating Fundraising & Membership Committees.

13) Next official board meeting: Thursday Jan 18, 6:30-8, at the BWW space.