**Minutes of the AGS Business Meeting**

**78th Meeting, Mary Immaculate Collage, University of Limerick**

**3 September 2015, 4.30pm**

Committee present: Sarah Colvin (president), Margaret Littler (vice-president), Steffan Davies (treasurer), Frauke Matthes (conference), Ben Schofield (publicity), Anna Saunders (membership)

1. **Welcome and Apologies**

SC welcomed all present, and noted that the minutes from the Business Meeting 2014 were available online. There were no matters arising.

Apologies were received from Henrike Lähnemann and fellow German medievalists, who were attending their biannual conference.

SC announced the desire to recruit a postgraduate and early career representative onto the Committee. Nominations and seconders were invited to be put to the closing business.

**2. President’s Business**

a. *Members’ news:*

Appointments, promotions, retirements and deaths for the academic period 2014-15 were announced.

b. *Conference dates*:

The 2016 conference will be held in Newcastle, from 31 August – 2 September, with the theme of ‘Trauma Narratives’. The president’s guest will be Angelika Overath.

The 2017 conference will take place in Warwick. Proposals were welcomed for 2018 and 2019, with the suggestion that 1968 could be a potential theme for 2018 (50th anniversary).

The membership was reminded that the September date is to be trialled for three years, before a final decision will be made.

c. *President’s report*:

i. The Hochschulrektorenkonferenz took a recent poll of institutions, in which 60 German universities said that they offer targeted support to refugees, which includes a whole host of subventions, financial and social support. It is encouraging to see that so many universities recognise this humanitarian and social duty.

ii. The University of Ulster at Coleraine has announced its intention to close the School of Modern Languages. This would mean no German provision at tertiary level in Northern Ireland. SC encouraged those present to write letters of protest.

iii. Languages in schools: News was mixed here, with A-level participation rates in England having gone down a further 10% this year (thus 50% since 2005), but with one language having been made compulsory at primary level since 2014. Other encouraging developments include the proposal for a compulsory language until 16 as part of the EBacc, and the revised A-level syllabi. In Scotland, the proposed 1+2 language policy (from 2020) is also encouraging, although it remains to be seen how this will play out in practice. In Wales, the modern languages element of the Welsh Bacc has been cut, but a 2+1 language policy was recently announced in Cardiff (English, Welsh + a ML). In Northern Ireland the modern language element at primary level has been cut. The Guardian report ‘Living Languages’ was highly recommended, as well as the ‘Born Global’ report by the BA, soon to be published. UCML encourages the use of #languagepolicyUK to promote the importance of modern languages.

iv. REF: The decision to restrict quality funding to 3\* often influenced institutional decisions regarding which staff to submit. This has had an effect on some people’s careers, but the wider picture is unclear. A number of statistics are problematic: only 35% of black staff in the UK were submitted, compared to 56% white and Asian; 51% of female staff compared to 67% of male staff. The merging of sub-panels into one larger panel meant that linguistics-heavy panels were inclined to do well, whereas ML-heavy panels were less inclined to do well. Almost all requests for double-weighting were accepted on the ML panel. It was noted that the Humanities didn’t shine as much as some other areas, although Classics was ranked 8th (also for impact).

**3. Committee Reports**

a. *Vice-President:*   
Members were reminded of the submission dates for publication subventions (31 August) and travel scholarships (15 January and 15 August). Successful applicants will be featured more strongly on the new website.

b. *Treasurer:*   
i. Thanks were extended to Matthew Philpotts for his help during the handover period, and for producing the accounts for this year.

ii. A slight loss was made in 2014 due to the heavy subsidisation of the Manchester conference; however, the accounts remain in a healthy state.

iii. AGS was forced to close its Irish bank account in the previous year due to the sale of the bank. This has meant that members paying in Euros by standing order were not able to pay their membership fees in 2014; members affected by this were thanked for their patience. The Euro balance was transferred to the Lloyds sterling account, and a new Irish account will be opened during the conference at the Bank of Ireland branch in Limerick.   
  
iv. Members were reminded to update their standing orders to the current rate of £30, as a large number are still paying the old rate of £25. Similarly, recently graduated postgraduate members were reminded to upgrade to full membership.   
  
v. The AGS account holds a substantial balance; this should be put to good use. A considerable sum came to AGS when it merged with the AMGS. Members were asked for opinions on suitable activities which would remain true to the remit of the AMGS. It was suggested that some funds could be used to support teachers through the A-level and GCSE curriculum changes; this could provide an opportunity for German studies.   
Views from members:

* such a proposal was considered too English-focused; however, a broader project would be welcomed
* it was suggested that this was not AGS’s remit, but rather that of BIS
* given the relatively small sum of money, it was suggested that it would be more effective to support the postgraduate community
* the suggestion was made for an innovation prize which focuses on postgraduate engagement, innovation and creativity; alternatively a prize for best PhD.

It was noted that the money is not strictly ring-fenced, although the aspiration is to use it for a purpose close to the remit of AMGS.

c. *Membership:*   
i. Membership is currently healthy, with a good intake of new postgraduate students this year.

ii. Online registration and payment will soon be available on the website.

d. *Publicity:*   
i. The new website is currently under construction; it will be a much more visual and interactive site which will work on mobile devices. All material on the site has been re-drafted and old material archived. New features will include a ‘past conferences’ section with photos and reports, as well as a hub for the regional German Networks and online registration and payment. A new ‘news and reports’ section will also profile on-going national debates concerning modern languages.

ii. Members were encouraged to tweet; twitter is proving much more effective in reaching people than the facebook page.

c. *Conference:*   
i. Thanks were extended to Christiane Schönfeld and the team at MIC for hosting a highly successful conference.

ii. The proposal was made to replace the chronological panels with themed panels that would cut across all periods. There was concern to emphasise that this does not reflect a desire to turn the conference into a C20/C21 event, but rather to actively encourage dialogue across the full range of periods.   
A wide variety of views from members were expressed, ranging from support for chronological panels to support for thematic panels; there was concern to be as inclusive as possible, and for contributors not to feel limited in their submissions.

A poll was taken, and the majority of those present were in favour of keeping chronological panels with invited themed panels. It was agreed that some of the calls should be expanded, and that panel convenors could be more creative.

**3. External reports**

a. *DAAD (Georg Krawietz):*

i. The situation regarding the German language appears to be mixed in Great Britain and Ireland: the recent batch of reports from LektorInnen revealed some areas to have seen increasing numbers, while numbers are going down elsewhere. In Ireland, the central position of Germany in Europe appears to have provoked increasing interest in German in schools. In the UK, however, A-level figures are down (only 4009 in German), which has influenced university intake; the DAAD and the Embassy will be looking to address this situation. 8-9% of all DAAD LektorInnen are located in the UK and Ireland, and GK stated his desire to maintain this status quo; however, this may prove difficult in future if numbers continue to fall.

ii. Initiatives:

* The regional German Networks have been very active, working with schools and businesses. There are ca. 10 networks; members were asked to promote these as much as possible.
* As usual, the Hochschulsommerkurse have proven very popular, and provide students with a high degree of motivation. First year students are eligible to take part.

iii. The DAAD has met with the British Council to address the question of what universities can do in both countries to promote the German language; they hope to encourage more activity, and to promote more PhDs and visiting professor programmes.

iv. A ‘Deutschland Zentrum’ will be opening in Cambridge from 2016, meaning that the DAAD will support two centres in the UK: in Birmingham and Cambridge.

v. The DAAD is supporting the ‘Universities for Europe’ campaign led by Universities UK.

vi. The DAAD’s new funding brochure is now out, and should be with all institutions. Please contact GK if this is not the case.

b. *IMLR (Godela Weiss-Sussex):*

i. The Institute has a new director: Professor Catherine Davies (Spanish and Latin American Studies).

ii. Members were reminded of the Institute’s mission: to facilitate, promote and initiate research within the ML research community. It is keen to promote/collaborate on publications, conferences, networks etc. Please contact them directly with ideas for research co-operations.

iii. A review of the Institute in 2015 concluded that it is fulfilling its role, but that it should engage more fully in: a) providing balanced support to all languages, and b) bringing languages together where possible, by highlighting the trans-lingual / transnational etc. In order to address these two points, the Institute is advertising two new posts: Lecturer in French and a part-time post in Transnational and Translingual Research.

iv. The conference ‘What is Modern Languages Research?’ was a success, and will provide the springboard for a series of workshops.

v. Events:

* 29-30 October: Minority Writings in Europe conference
* May 2017: Transnational Film Adaptations conference
* ‘Encounters’, a new series organised with Nottingham University, will invite authors and their translators to take part in workshops in order to examine how text is produced together.

vi. Competitions:

* Together with the British Museum and the DAAD, the competition ‘Dinggedichte’ relating to the exhibition ‘Germany: Memories of a Nation’ was highly successful, with many entries. The overall winner was a Chemist.
* A new competition on translation will soon be launched, with a deadline of the end of November. Organisers would particularly like school teachers to get involved; the regional Networks were particularly encouraged to help promote the competition.

vii. Members were reminded that the Institute is there for the whole community, not just for those in London.

c. *GSAI (Sabine Egger):*

i. The GSAI has three platforms:

* Annual conference: the next one will be held at NUI Galway on 13-14 November, on the theme of ‘Germany and Islam’.
* Yearbook: the theme this year is ‘Constructions of Happiness’; next year it will be ‘Transit Spaces’.
* Website: this is currently undergoing an updating process following funding. Like the new AGS site, it is to be more interactive.

ii. The GSAI also runs an annual postgraduate workshop. Last year it encouraged participants from other subject areas; this year it will address job opportunities for Germanists beyond academia.

iii. The economic and immigration crises in Europe have led to increasing interest in German in Ireland. However, the primary school ML initiative ended a number of years ago, and nothing has since changed. A ML strategy is due to be published in 2015, but has not year appeared.

d. *UCML (report sent from Roel Vismans):*

i. Members were reminded to check that their institutions are still paying their annual UCML subscriptions (£200)

ii. The HEFCE catalyst bid led by Newcastle has gone through.

iii. Action was encouraged on two points: a) where possible, help to make materials relating to the new A-level set texts available; the pooling of resources could be useful in order to help recruitment at university level; b) take an active role in the EU referendum debate.

iv. All members are invited to the plenary sessions in January and July. In January, quality issues and new QA benchmark statements will be discussed.

v. Members were encouraged to use the new UCML website, where there are several post-mortem REF documents concerning Panel 28.

d. *GLL (Margaret Littler):*

There have been some changes to the editorial board, with John Sandford and Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly both retiring after 35 and 25 years’ service respectively. Steffan Davies and Rebecca Braun are new members of the editorial board. Members were encouraged to continue reading and submitting to GLL; apologies were made for the absence of the journal this year, as Wiley had failed to send copies.

**5. The German Networks and the AGS** (Robert Gillet)

The need for a platform for all networks was expressed. It was suggested that the AGS conferences could provide such a platform to talk about and to showcase network activities, especially at network-active places, which was welcomed.

**6. Translation as Research** (Ben Schofield)

After a brief introduction of the manifesto, it was decided that the AGS would sign it.

**Closing Business, 4 September, 12.30pm**

**1. Postgraduate Representative**

Postgraduates agreed to take this on and nominate a representative. However, a job description was first requested; this will be sent to the list in due course.

**2. Conferences**There were offers from Bangor in 2018 and Bristol in 2019.

**3. AoB**The question was raised as to whether the Committee should have an Irish representative, given the different contexts. SC responded that the AGS was a research organisation rather than a campaigning organisation, therefore this was not necessary; it was also noted that if the committee were to have an Irish representative, then it would also need Scottish and Welsh representatives.