MINUTES, MRSC Board, 08-24-17

The Board of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Center (MRSC) met at 2:00 pm on Thursday, August 24, at Barnes & Noble Café in the University Center. Present were Jacob Baum, Peter Briggs, Julie Couch, Francesca Di Poppa, Janis Elliott, John Howe, Angelamariani Smith, and Abigail Swingen. John Beusterien had a conflicting department meeting.

I. INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW BOARD MEMBERS:

Welcomes were extended to Baum, Briggs, Couch (returning after a term off), and Di Poppa, who were attending their first Board meeting after their elections to the Board for 2017-2020.

II. REVIEW OF ONGOING PROGRAMS:

On-going programs were summarized by Howe—the graduate certificate, support for students attending interdisciplinary medieval and Renaissance conferences, and support for special events. The new Board elected to continue these without change. Discussion centered on a decline in incoming pre-modern graduate students in History, which has reduced enrollments in MRSC 5301, and on some logistical difficulties in making relevant English graduate courses more accessible to non-English majors. Steps are being taken to find additional potential sources of enrollment, particularly among Museum students.

Two grant initiatives were in progress during the last academic year, one of which is continuing on track:

1) The $218,000 grant for an NEH Summer Institute on "The Horse in History" was not funded for summer 2018. Howe is awaiting the receipt of panelists' comments before determining whether this project will have a subsequent career.

2) The ca. $26,000 proposal to curate an exhibit in the Museum of Texas Tech University on "The Study of the Bible in the Pre-Modern World: Celebrating the 500th Anniversary of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible" has received $19,000 from the Helen Jones Foundation and has a Humanities Texas Major Community Programs grant in preparation for final submission. This exhibit should be available in the Museum from August 2018 through February 2018: it will feature original manuscripts, facsimiles, and a narrative of the development of biblical studies, a pre-modern academic tradition that laid the groundwork for Reformation biblical studies and culminated in the production of the Complutensian Polyglot Bible. The project will offer useful community education and also a point of tangency with Texas Tech (the University of Alcalá de Henares, the home of the Complutensian project, is also the proximate source of Texas Tech's Spanish Revival architectural style).

III. TEMA 2017 at BAYLOR:

In 2017 the Texas Medieval Association will meet in Waco TX at Baylor University from September 29-Oct 1. See https://www.baylor.edu/tema/index.php?id=942196. The call for papers has been extended to September 1, but hotel reservations at the block rate are supposed to be made through August 28. The Board voted to provide mileage if needed to help cover transportation costs for TTU students. Please mention TEMA to students who might be interested in participating in this student-friendly conference. Please inform Howe
about any who might need a ride. The Marriott Hotel option appears to be the more popular among the Texas Tech contingent. That contingent seems to be relatively small, due in part to organizational glitches, the early conference date, and the lack of a preliminary program.

IV. TEMA 2018 at TEXAS TECH

Planning continues for the 2018 TEMA meeting in Lubbock. Despite the lack of a solid football schedule, planning is proceeding for a meeting on Friday/Saturday October 18-19, 2018, preceded by a one day mini-conference on Thursday October 17 that will be focused on the Bible exhibit. Plenary speakers at the main TEMA conference will be on Friday George Greenia (emeritus, College of William and Mary, modern languages and pilgrimage studies) on Saturday Maureen Miller (History, University of California Berkeley). Frans van Liere (History, Calvin College, will speak on Thursday at the Bible study symposium). TTU last hosted his conference in 2008, and did a superb job. A success in 2018 would greatly advance MRSC’s mission to promote medieval and renaissance studies.

V. MRSC FACULTY STATUS for MATT HUNTER

The application of Matthew Hunter was considered and unanimously approved for membership in the MRSC Affiliated Faculty. Hunter, a highly qualified new member of the English Department, replaces Marlis Desens as its Shakespeare expert.

VI. SEARCH for MRSC DIRECTOR(S):

Filling the directorship: John Howe and Connie Scarborough, the previous co-directors, announced, prior to the last Board election that they would not seek additional terms. So MRSC needs to find a new director, or quite possibly new co-directors, given that the previous system provided interdisciplinary leadership and kept a co-director on campus even when one or the other was away on research. The director or co-directors would be named by the Board, subject to the approval of the Dean of Arts & Sciences (the MRSC, although it also draws support and members from VPA and other units, exists administratively as a center within A&S). The director or co-directors should be a member of the MRSC Affiliated Faculty and operate as a member of the Board, but yet the candidate or candidates do not necessarily need to be members of the currently elected Board (a confirmed director or confirmed co-directors would automatically be on the Board ex officio).

The Board decided, for now, to officially designate Howe “Interim Director.” The intent is to consult the membership in order to determine how to proceed toward a more permanent solution.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

It was again suggested that a medieval/renaissance undergraduate minor is needed and would advance MRSC goals. Swingen and DiPoppa volunteered to inquire about aspects of establishing such a program. Given the magnitude of the job, they would probably welcome volunteers who want to help with this project.

The meeting concluded at 3:00pm
--John Howe, acting scribe