

The Board of the Medieval and Renaissance Studies Center (MRSC, formerly CMRS) met at 3:30 pm at Barnes & Noble Café in the University Center. Present were John Beusterien, Julie Couch, John Howe, Stacey Jocoy, Brian McFadden, and Connie Scarborough. Board members Janice Elliott, Angela Marianni Smith, and Abby Swingen had weighed in by email on some agenda items. Jocoy carried Smith's portfolio; Beusterien Swingen's.

I. Center Name Change: The Arts & Science's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies was established under the CMRS name. However, at the Provost's level the two courses to be offered by the Center were assigned the new prefix MRST on the grounds that if courses offered by centers were allowed to begin with C it would be a potential source of confusion. Although the CMRS co-directors were not convinced, the change was mandated. Given this *fait accompli*, the co-directors suggested that the Center name be altered in order to conform better to the prefix of its course offerings. This proposal was relayed to the affiliated faculty members for optional comment on August 16 (2 replied favorably, none negatively). Now at the September 14 meeting, the Board unanimously approved it (with MRSC to serve as the acronym).

The new name will require changes in A&S and Budget documents as well as in the Center's registration at CARA, but there should be no significant economic consequences since this action precedes final pamphlet, stationary, and Web designs.

II. Support for Students Attending Interdisciplinary Medieval/Renaissance Conferences: Debate was lively on this item, not because of disagreement on the desirability of facilitating student travel to conferences, or on the proposed size of the funding (\$200 per student), or on the need to restrict the proposed support this year to the meetings of the International Congress on Medieval Studies (in 2012, as always, in Kalamazoo) and the Renaissance Society of America (in 2012, in Washington DC), but on the best way to craft a policy that would allow the MRSC to award its limited funds without giving rise to charges of favoritism. Complicating the discussion were existing disparities among various departments in the amount of support presently available to students presenting papers at conferences (a relatively difficult proposition at both the ICMS and the RSA because of their nine-month lead times for paper proposals but still a potential issue). Two conflicting strategies were advanced by the co-directors: 1) to set up some sort of a committee to evaluate the merits of student funding applications and to provide that committee with clear guidelines; vs. 2) to set up guidelines for awards so narrow as to limit the applicants to a relatively small pool and then to automatically fund all applications that fell within those guidelines.

There was no unanimity in regard to these two approaches. Option 2) tentatively won out, but it was accepted with the express caveat that it would be policy for this year only and that, in the future, an awards committee might prove to be necessary. Board members reluctantly decided to restrict awards this year to graduate students, who could probably get their \$200 grants matched by the Graduate School and who are more closely linked to the new MRST graduate certificate program. Last year the Center subsidized four students, only two of whom were graduate students, and, since we could probably

handle up to eight without breaking our budget, the hope is that this year eligible graduate students will be able to count on our support as they evaluate their possibilities for attending these two major conferences next spring. A majority of the board members present affirmed that if conflicts were to arise preference should be given to students who lack other sources of funding, but the intention of the present policy is to be able to help fund all of our graduate students who will attend the conferences in question and will be funding them in considerable part out of their own pockets. Language is to be written specifying that the \$200 grants will only be paid against expenses (to eliminate the possibility that some enterprising student might finagle more than 100% support by simultaneously applying to other centers and departments). The exact terms and wording of the final policy will require wordsmithing that the members of the Board have decided to handle by email.

III. A Policy for Supporting On-Campus Speakers. The Board postponed the drafting of the policy that will ultimately be needed. Instead, it took up on an ad hoc basis the request by Carole Edwards (CMLL) for support with an on-campus lecture in the week before Thanksgiving by Dr. Matthieu Chan Tsin (World Languages & Cultures Dept., Coastal Carolina University), who proposes to speak on "Military Realities and Chivalric Ideals in the Late Middle Ages." Assuming a MRSC Web site will be up and running in time, the affiliated faculty members would be happy to help publicize this interdisciplinary lecture through that medium and would encourage publicity to be sent to our members for help in spreading the word. In addition the Board offered \$150 to help with visit expenses (although this might not be applicable to honorarium expenses, depending upon possible restrictions on our available funds). One Board member volunteered to ask his Department for possible additional support.

IV. MRSC Web Page. An ad hoc committee was established --consisting of John Beusterien, John Howe, and Stacey Jocoy—to investigate the available resources and restrictions related to a Center Web site and to begin the process of getting one in place. The committee would be delighted to hear from other members of the affiliated faculty interested in helping out with this initiative. Given the fungibility of images and text in today's electronic world, the Web content is likely to spill over into pamphlets and other publicity media that the Center might require.

Minutes by John Howe & Connie Scarborough

