

## Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Publications (2008)

### Contextual remarks

Over the past several years, a significant number of members have raised questions relating to the Society and *Legacy*, as well as to issues of publishing more generally. In the late spring of 2007, I appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Publications to study some of these questions. The committee has presented its report, and I want to share with you some of their conclusions and invite you to respond to their recommendations. Many thanks to Alfred Bendixen, Deb Clarke, Donna Campbell (chair), Paul Lauter, and Malea Powell for their hard work in completing this report. The questions to which the committee responded, with summaries of their comments, follow below.

As members respond to these recommendations, especially those related to *Legacy*, please remember that, as specified in the Bylaws and Constitution, the journal has a significant voice in the Society via membership on the Advisory Board and the Executive Committee. Because the Bylaws and Constitution are silent on this matter, members may not know that the Society currently has no control over *Legacy* in terms of editorial content; selection of editors, Editorial Board, or Editorial Collective; finances; or day-to-day operations. The report of the Ad Hoc Committee is therefore *advisory only*, considering the interests of Society members. I agree with the committee that it would be an advantage to clarify (via the Bylaws and Constitution) the Society's relationship to *Legacy*, and further, with the Advisory Board consensus from the 2007 annual meeting that for the Society to enter into any financial or legal relationship with *Legacy*, the SSAWW must have some kind of oversight, voice, or representation in *Legacy*.

The current arrangement, which has many advantages, is in part a residue of *Legacy's* predating the founding of the Society, which is unlike the example of many other societies, which established journals subsequently. I know that Nicole and the editors of *Legacy* always welcome discussion, and when I hear from members, the Executive Committee and I will take whatever action seems most appropriate. The Society's relationship with *Legacy* is of course only one issue, though an important one, considered in this report; I will also be eager to hear your thoughts on the question of a juried online journal, an online resource for recovery texts, and a reprint series. What publication efforts are most appropriate, and what will be most useful to you? Please email me at [academic@karenkilcup.org](mailto:academic@karenkilcup.org), and Donna Campbell at [campbelld@wsu.edu](mailto:campbelld@wsu.edu) with your thoughts and ideas.

Karen Kilcup, President

### Report

#### **1. How well does the current relationship between Legacy and the Society serve our members? What relationship might be more desirable? Is such a change possible?**

The financial relationship between the Society and *Legacy* was unclear to the Ad Hoc Committee, and they recommended that if possible this relationship be formalized in some way "in order to increase the transparency in SSAWW's practices." The committee agreed that both the Society and *Legacy* "were more supportive of nineteenth-century projects than of 20th and 21st-century projects; members doing work in more modern authors feel excluded from conferences and from the journal. We would recommend that if *Legacy* keeps its current nineteenth-century focus, it should not serve as the sole organ of SSAWW."

#### **2. Should the Society consider sponsoring a "sister" journal to Legacy that covers areas that it does not? How feasible is this option?**

The committee endorsed the idea of starting such a journal "to increase coverage of areas in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries." The committee offered two alternatives: first, "to increase the subscription of *Legacy* to four issues a year, with spring and fall devoted to *Legacy* and winter and summer issues devoted to the new journal" (temporarily identified as "Progeny"). Another option under this first alternative would be "to continue to have two journal issues mailed to members each year but to have members indicate which journal they'd rather receive (*Legacy* or "Progeny")." The second alternative would be starting a separate journal. The committee cited a number of advantages, such as a potentially larger pool of submissions for a post-1900 journal; for the four-issue model, no resistance from libraries that are already subscribed to *Legacy*; and express willingness on the part of some institutions and faculty to do the editorial work so that the current editors would not be burdened. They also noted some disadvantages, most notably the competition from other journals publishing twentieth- and twenty-first-century materials; and the logistics of implementing either an expansion of *Legacy* or the development of a new journal (especially, in the latter case, finding a new editor and establishing an editorial board).

The committee also discussed ideas for enabling *Legacy* to be more inclusive of twentieth- and twenty-first-century authors. Strongly supportive of the recovery emphasis of *Legacy*, the committee proposed two options: "1. One issue might have an editor or guest editor who would do an interview with a major scholar (on 20c. women's poetry, for example) and pull together essays focused on this issue. 2. Another possibility would be 'the twenty-first century recovering the nineteenth century.'"

#### **3. Should Legacy remain as an "affiliated" journal ?**

"If it is able to meet the needs of all the membership and not just those of scholars working in the nineteenth century, we would agree that *Legacy* should remain affiliated. We would like to have the relationship spelled out more clearly, however."

**4. Should the Society consider sponsoring a serious, juried, online journal for members that would encompass the research of all members? What kind of contributions should we encourage? What would the journal look like?** “ No. We all agreed, very strongly, that an online journal was not a good option. Online journals are, to date, not as well considered in promotion and tenure decisions as print journals, and there is a strong likelihood that whatever ended up in the online version rather than the print version would be seen as less credible.”

**5. A number of members have expressed concern about the speed with which newly recovered material goes out of print. Should the Society seek to gather such work (going out of print) into an online resource for members? Should we attempt to link with a publisher (such as Blackwell) for this or other endeavors, such as an online journal?** The committee was unable to come to a conclusion on this issue, citing a variety of advantages (availability of resources to teachers; cost-effectiveness for students; access to reliable texts for scholars far from research libraries) and disadvantages (the potential for reducing the already slim audience for printed recovery texts; logistics/cost/editorial direction and standards; who would have access). The committee concluded, however, that “a system that could allow print-on-demand versions for a reasonable price would be worth investigating.”