# Minutes of the IBHA board meeting

14 July 2016

Potgieterszaal

University of Amsterdam

Present: board members Mojgan Behmand, Craig Benjamin, David Christian, Lowell Gustafson, Andrey Korotayev, Lucy Laffitte, Jonathan Markley, Esther Quaedackers, Barry Rodrigue, Fred Spier, Joe Voros (through Skype), chair of the publications committee Cynthia Brown, chair of the Advisory Council Pamela Benjamin and office manager Donna Tew.

Absent: board member Sun Yue

### Welcome

Outgoing president Fred Spier welcomes everybody, including new board member Lucy Laffitte, and explains that after a new president will be elected, he will leave the meeting.

### Election of the officers

Craig moves nominating Lowell Gustafson for president, which is seconded by Esther. Lowell accepts the nomination, which is uninimously approved.

The board thanks Fred for everything he has done for the IBHA and big history, and offers him a plaque.

Barry moves nominating Craig for vice-president, which is seconded by David. Craig accepts the nomination, which is unanimously approved.

Esther nominates Lucy for secretary, which is seconded by Mojgan. Lucy accepts the nomination, which is unanimously approved.

Craig nominates David for treasurer, which is seconded by Mojgan. David accepts the nomination, which is unanimously approved.

Craig nominates Barry for international coordinator, which is seconded by everyone. Barry accepts the nomination, which is unanimously approved.

### Thanks and remembering

Craig thanks Esther for organizing the conference.

Lowell thanks Jonathan for organizing the conference program.

Craig thanks Donna, Lowell and Pamela for organizing the conference.

Jonathan thanks the program committee members and Donna for organizing the confence program.

The board remembers William McNeill, who passed away on 8 July 2016.

### Reports

Outgoing vice-president and incoming president Lowell Gustafson reports about the great things that happened in the field of big history over the past two years or will happen soon, such as the publication of the textbook *Between Nothing and Everything* by David, Craig and Cynthia, the upcoming publication of a big history series on Curiosity Stream featuring Jonathan and Craig, the upcoming publication of Cynthia’s book *Big History, Small World*, the development of the Big History Institute and MOOCS, the attempts at bringing together different institutes, the progress in teaching on all levels, the achievements of the editors of the Big History Anthology and Uchitel, and so on.

Outgoing secretary Esther Quaedackers refers to her report (see appendix 2). A note in that report about how, according the the IBHA’s bylaws, board meetings should be held after members meetings instead of the other way around, which has always been the case, is discussed. It is concluded that before the next meetings in 2018, a small group of people will need to look at the bylaws for such rules and either make sure the board sticks to them or delete them from the bylaws.

Outgoing treasurer Craig Benjamin refers to his report (see appendix 3). Incoming treasurer David reinforces Craig’s great management of the IBHA’s finances.

International Coordinator Barry rodrigue refers to his report (see appendix 4).

As a result of Barry’s efforts in outreach, a discussion starts about the availability of open source materials available electronically for students of all levels, in all parts of the world. Some work is already being done to create such materials: for instance, Macquarie is involved in translating and adapting the Big History Project Materials. But an IBHA subcommittee could perhaps take a closer look at this, and create some kind of plan to further encourage the development of such materials. Mojgan, Barry, Andrey, Lucy and Esther volunteer to form such a group.

Chair of the Publications Committee Cynthia Brown refers to her report (see appendix 5). The responsibility of the program committee is discussed, but no clear decision on that responsibility is reached.

Chair of the Advisory Council Pamela Benjamin reports that the Advisory Council hasn’t done much, because it hasn’t been given any tasks. It is suggested that the Advisory Council could make strategic planning recommendations for 2018.

### Next conference

Candidates for the next conference are discussed. Korea was, but no longer seems an option, partly due to the weakened big history position of Seohyung Kim. David notes that Macquarie may be willing to host the conference at some point in the future, but not in the near future.

Barry conveys a message from Symbiosis International Univeristy in Pune that they would be willing to organize (one of) next confernce(s). Villanova University has also offered to host the next conference. The pros and cons of Villanova and Symbiosis are discussed, and Craig moves to hold the 2018 conference in Villanova and to consider Symbiosis for the 2020 conference. The motion is seconded by Lucy, and adopted unanimously.

### India

The Big History Association of India has asked for an official association with the IBHA. The question is how to set this up, what the BHAI will get, and what the IBHA will get. Joe reminds everyone about the tiered fee system he and his futurist colleagues have used in the past: a system with three fee categories for individual members, based on World Bank classifications, and an institutional membership categorie.

This leads to a slightly different discussion on how accessible the IBHA is to the poorest people in the world. In response, Craig moves to adopt a the three tiered, World Bank based, model for the IBHA as well, without institutional membership. This is seconded by Mojgan. After a discussion about the practicalities of such is system, Craig withdraws the motion. A new motion is proposed to add a lower categorie that will allow people who make less than $30.000 per year and live in what according to the world bank are middle or low income countries to become an IBHA member for less than $30 per year [did we talk about exact numbers? I cannot remember… Sorry!]. This motion is seconded by Jonathan and unanimously approved.

The discussion shifts back to the association with the BHAI. It is moved that in exchange for a formal association between the IBHA and the BHAI, the BHAI members will get the newsletter Origins, and the IBHA will get the BHAI’s mailing list. Craig seconds the motion, which is unanimously accepted.

### Meetings and terms

Plans for more frequent board meetings and a limitation of amount of terms board members can serve do not seem urgent, as the president already has the right to call a board meeting when he thinks it is important, and term limits will become more important in the future, when the IBHA will have grown into a mature organization and new perspectives are required.

### Archives

Barry adresses the need for the establishment of some kind of big history archive. Lucy and Mojgan agree this could be important, but are thinking more about archiving important IBHA and member documents electronically, whereas Barry is talking about storing physical documents from himself and other members. Mojgan might be able to create an institutional searchable repository at Dominican University of California. She will look into this possibility with Lucy, whereas Barry will keep thinking about a physical archive.

### Fund raising

Difficulties to find funding are discussed, and it is noted that it may be necessary to develop concrete plans in order to be able to raise money. A variety of such plans is discussed, and the board settles on the idea that it may be good to create some sort of situation in which people or organizations that have a little money to spare can opt to donate it to the IBHA for three specific purposes: they could donate it to a student fund that can be used to for instance bring students to IBHA conferences, or to create student awards. They could donate it to a materials fund, that can be used to provide big history teaching materials to people who otherwise wouldn’t be able to afford it. Or they could donate money to a scholarly research fund, that could be used for small scale research project.

### Journal

The progress of the journal is discussed, and the question is raised whether the journal will be open access or not. The board agrees on a delayed open access model, in which IBHA members will get access to the journal’s content immediately after publication, whereas other will need to wait for at least one year before they will gain access.

### Approval of the 2014 minutes

After some confusion as to whether or not the minutes of the 2014 board meeting have already been approved or not, it is concluded that this has already been done.

**BREAK**

After the break, Pamela and Craig led a Strategic Planning sessions. The results of that session are recorded in a separate documents.

# Appendix 1: Board Meeting Agenda

**IBHA Board of Directors Meeting; July 14th, 2016 Amsterdam**

**9:30**

* Meeting opens. Introduction and welcome to new and returning board members
* Approval of 2014 Board Meeting Minutes
* Election of executive: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, International Coordinator
* Reports: President

Secretary

Treasurer

International Coordinator

Publications Committee Chair

Advisory Council

**11:00-11:30: BREAK**

**11:30**

* Location of 2018 & 2020 conferences
* Board member term limits
* The IBHA research fund
* The need to apply for grants
* Establishing parameters for the IBHA connection with other big history associations
* Setting up big history and IBHA archives
* More frequent virtual board meetings
* Other new business (including IBHA Journal)

**1:00-2:00: LUNCH BREAK**

**2:00**

* **Strategic Planning Session**

Distribute board member responsibility sheet

1/3/5 strategy (1 major goal for IBHA for next 2 years; 3 strategies to achieve goal; 5 activities to achieve each strategy)

* Recognition and thanks

**3:30: ADJOURNMENT**

# Appendix 2: Secretary’s report

**Secretary’s report**

Between the San Rafael and Amsterdam conferences, there have been two board member elections.

In 2015, David Christian, Craig Benjamin and Jonathan Markley were nominated for the 3 vacant board positions and were elected by IBHA members. After the election, the IBHA board agreed on trying to increase the transparency of the election process and offer more choice for members during the next election.

This attempt succeeded to some extent: in 2016 an attempt was made by the members to nominate Lucy Laffitte. This nomination was eventually adopted by the board, that nominated 3 additional candidates, Lowell Gustafson, Andrey Korotayev and John Mears for 3 vacant seats. John Mears received two votes to little to become a board member.

Hopefully, the board will be able to increase the transparency of the election process and number of candidates further in the next few years.

Officer elections were also held in September 2015: all sitting officers were reelected by their fellow board members by acclamation.

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It has come to our attention that the board meetings have been planned before the members meetings. According to our bylaws, that is not allowed. Next time, the board meeting should be planned after the members meeting.

# Appendix 3: Treasurer’s report

**IBHA Board Meeting: Amsterdam July 14th 2016 Treasurer’s Report by IBHA Treasurer Craig Benjamin (Prepared July 9th 2016)**

Since our last Board meeting in California in 2014, the IBHA’s financial situation has remained stable. Attached to this summary is a copy of the IBHA’s 2015 US Tax Return.

Please note the following points:

**2015 US Tax Return**

Thanks to the excellent work of our accountant, Andy Bos of Eastown Financial Services in Grand Rapids, we are in complete compliance with all IRS financial obligations for 501(c)3 non- profit organizations. The tax return demonstrates that the bulk of our income in 2015 ($18,047) came from membership dues ($17,266). Our total expenditure was $21,120, of which $17,307 was on wages. The net loss of $3073 for the year is a reminder of just how important conference income is for the Association in alternate years. Because of the Amsterdam conference, we can anticipate a reasonable profit for the 2016 tax year. By the time of the Board meeting on July 14th I should be able to provide a clearer idea of projected profit from the Amsterdam conference.

**Lake Michigan Credit Union Accounts.** (The IBHA currently has four accounts with LMCU) A Savings Account that was opened when we first began our relationship with LMCU (**$50**).

A Research Fund that was opened on July 30th, 2015 after IBHA member Heathe Kyle Yeakley informed us that that he would like to make donations to a research fund to help support future Big History research at the graduate level. That account currently stands at **$1871.87**, all of which has been donated by Heathe and a colleague of his, Cynthia Leonard.

A 5 Year Certificate Interest Bearing Savings Account that was opened on February 2nd 2015 with an initial deposit of $40,000. Currently this account stands at **$41,095.54**, meaning we have earned $1095.54 in interest since opening the account about 16 months ago. It we can leave this fund untouched for the full five years, we will earn an estimated total interest income of approximately $5000 for the IBHA.

A Free Checking Account, which is the main operational account of the IBHA. As of July 9th the balance of this account was **$84,536.54**. This amount includes conference registration fees and other conference related income. We have yet to pay our catering and other bills to the University of Amsterdam, so this balance will drop once these bills are paid. But we are also anticipating some late conference income. I will be able to provide an updated balance at the Board meeting on July 14th. I will also have our transaction record book available at the meeting to be able to give a full account of expenditures from this operating account.

**IBHA GVSU Account**

This account is used almost exclusively to pay the wages of IBHA Office Manager Donna Tew. Donna’s rate of pay remains $15.00 per hour x 20 hours worked per week, a rate that has not changed since the IBHA office opened in 2011. Her remuneration package includes no benefits of any kind. GVSU Rules stipulate that a part-time employee can never work more than 20 hours a week, so from time to time it is necessary to supplement Donna’s wages from our main operating account, particularly in the weeks leading up to a conference when she works considerably more hours for us than we are permitted to pay her from the GVSU account.

Knowing that I was going to be in Europe during the second half of 2016, on February 17th 2016 I deposited a check for $10,000 from our LMCU Checking Account to our GVSU Account, to ensure that there would be ample funds available to pay Donna’s wages.

The current balance is this account is just over **$13,000.**I will be happy to respond to any questions at the July 14th meeting.

***Craig Benjamin.***

IBHA Treasurer

# Appendix 4: International Coordinator’s report

IBHA

International Coordinator Report

Barry Rodrigue

7 July 2016

In 2014–2015, we arranged for membership of the IBHA in the Network of Global & World History Organizations (NOGWHISTO). David Christian and Fred Spier had attended the founding meetings of NOGWHISTO in 2008 and 2010. So I reactivated correspondence with their directorate, which is based in Leipzig, Germany. In April 2015, board members Sun Yue and Esther Quaedackers spoke for the IBHA at the NOGWHISTO meeting in Leipzig, and the IBHA was officially entered as a constituent member. This membership then allowed us to participate in the 2015 International Congress of Historical Sciences (ICHS), see below.

At the NOGWHISTO board meeting, held at the ICHS conference on 28 August 2015, Lowell Gustafson and I were selected as board members to represent the IBHA, along with Sun Yue as a reserve member. The next NOGWHISTO board meeting is scheduled to be held in Moscow in 2017. One of the NOGWHISTO initiatives has been generation of a website that includes materials about its constituent groups, so I developed a description of big history and the IBHA with an accompanying bibliography, which was reviewed by the IBHA board. This website is active at (<http://research.uni-leipzig.de/~gwhisto/home/>).

I organized the IBHA panel for the 22nd ICHS conference in Jinan, China—*Big History: Our Shared Diversity*. It convened on 28 August 2015 with Seohyung Kim (Korea), Sun Yue and Qi Tao (China), Lowell Gustafson and myself (USA). Liu Shanshan, a Ph.D. candidate at Tsinghua University in Beijing, entered a poster on the little big history of the Royal Palace in Amsterdam, which won an ICHS top poster award. Sun Yue and I also met with the Deputy Governor of Shandong Province and his Director of Education, as well as with the Director of the World History Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to discuss big history and its inclusion in Chinese academia.

During this East Asian tour, I also met with two groups of big historians in Korea and Japan.

In Seoul, on 19 August 2015, I met with Korean big historians, who form a section of the nascent Asian Big History Association (ABHA). Discussion was held about the ABHA and the recent interest in big history by university professors at Jeju National University.

In Yokohama, on 5 September 2015, I met with members of the Institute of Global & Cosmic Peace (IGCP). They had invited me to make an internet broadcast on my personal reflections about big history and society. This encounter led to their new book, *Applying Big History: Nature, War, and Peace*, a volume in Japanese, Chinese and English that was discussed in the June issue of *Origins*. The IGCP promotes universal studies, of which they see big history forming a component. The first Japanese course on universal studies and big history is being taught this year at J.F. Oberlin University in Tokyo.

I have been engaged for the last three years in forming what has now become the Big History Association of India (BHAI). It is based at Symbiosis International University, in their School of Liberal Arts (SSLA) in Pune. The BHAI president is Shweta Sinha Deshpande, an archaeologist and deputy director of the SSLA, while the vice-president is Rana P.B. Singh, a geographer from Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi. This was presented in the July issue of *Origins*.

In my personal research and scholarship, I seek to network my contacts into IBHA engagement. As a result, I encourage people to write for *Origins*, as, for example, when Alex Mirkovic wrote a creative article about opera and big history. I also seek to develop sub-networks of big historians working in disciplinary areas, as with psychologists in Russia, Madagascar, Vietnam, Nevada, and Kyrgyzstan, and with archeologists in France, Sudan, Somalia and India. Most recently, Andrey Korotayev and I have begun working with a teacher in Egypt who is developing a big history course for students in a network of elementary schools.

# Appendix 5: Publications Committee report

Report from the Publications Committee to IBHA Board July2016

1. The Publications Committee does not have oversight over the *Journal of Big History,* recently approved by the board, since the editor of the journal reports directly to the board. The three editors of the journal are members of the Publication Committee, and two other of its members have joined the editorial board of the journal. Hence, five of the seven members of the Publication Committee will be involved with the journal. At the same time, the Publication Committee wishes to continue as a committee, in order to deal with any issues concerning official publications of IBHA other than the journal.
2. After the previous two IBHA conferences the Publication Committee arranged with Uchitel Publishing House to publish anthologies that included some conference papers and some others. For this third conference the *Journal of Big History* will have first access to conference papers. The committee has not yet reached any recommendation about whether to publish another official IBHA volume. Uchitel is willing to publish another such volume, but some members of the committee question whether this is a good idea, even if papers used by the journal are reprinted. The committee will present a recommendation to the board, perhaps by the beginning of 2018, based on recommendations from the editors of the journal and its editorial board. Both Andrey Korotayev and Leonid Grinin will be on the editorial board of the *Journal of Big History*, which will facilitate this decision-making.
3. The Publication Committee does not have any mandate, written or oral, from the board about what it expects us to do. Any clarification of our mandate would be welcome. The committee plans to deal with one small project, that of revising a brochure that Barry Rodrigue and Lowell Gustafson designed in 2011 to circulate in Beijing. Barry needs an updated brochure to use in his networking efforts.

Cynthia Brown, Chair