OCNS Board of Directors 2019 Meetings Minutes
July 13, 2019 (9.30am – 5.30pm)
July 15, 2018 (12.40pm – 2:30pm)

Aula Ramon y Cajal
Universitat de Barcelona

Present July 13, 2019: Volker Steuber, Sharon Crook, Leonid Rubchinsky, Astrid Prinz, Ingo Bojak, Tony Burkitt, Hermann Cuntz, Anca Doloc-Mihu, Boris Gutkin, Peter Jedlicka, Renaud Jolivet, Bill Lytton, Thomas Nowotny, Cecilia Romaro, Taro Toyoizumi, Sharmila Venugopal, Pierre Yger, Martin Zapotocky, and Ankur Sinha by video conference

Present July 15, 2019: Volker Steuber, Sharon Crook, Leonid Rubchinsky, Astrid Prinz, Ingo Bojak, Tony Burkitt, Hermann Cuntz, Anca Doloc-Mihu, Boris Gutkin, Peter Jedlicka, Renaud Jolivet, Bill Lytton, Thomas Nowotny, Cecilia Romaro, Taro Toyoizumi, Sharmila Venugopal, Pierre Yger, Martin Zapotocky, and CNS*2022 local organizers: César Rennó-Costa, Antonio Roque, Renan Moioli

Approval of the agenda and addition of points: Approved
Approval of 2018 Board Meeting minutes: Approved

Legal matters

Executive Committee Membership: We discussed the roles of the Vice President/Secretary. It was decided that these positions will stay together. We discussed the gender balance of the Executive Committee. Also, Pierre is rotating off the Executive Committee, and we voted that Ankur will replace him for practical reasons. It was moved and seconded that Martin move into the Vice President position. Martin was elected unanimously to the Vice President/Secretary position.

Director Elections: Election for the Board will occur after CNS*2019. We discussed what positions are needed. We also need to keep in mind that Tony will be the local organizer, so it was decided that Anca will be the Tutorials Chair. It was decided to elect 5 new Directors.

Program Committee (PC) Membership: We discussed dual membership on both the PC and Board when not by design. The Board members seemed to agree that this is generally not a problem. However, it was decided that currently, it is best if Renaud remains on the Board but resigns from the PC so that the Program Committee position can be filled by someone else during this cycle when there are many interested volunteers. We discussed whether individuals in the labs of PC members should be eligible for orals since three years is a long time for labs to be ineligible for oral presentations; however, there are good reasons for this rule. We will keep things as they are.

Board Member Duties: The Google doc with Board member job descriptions has been sent to the Board for updates.

OCNS Membership

Report on membership:
　　　　　- 235 faculty members (2018 202, 2017 185)

- 209 postdoc members (2018 145, 2017 120)
- 317 student members (2018 265, 2017 195)
- 1778 inactive members (2018 1617, 2017 1420)

We will start sending out an email to inactive members with a reminder to renew their membership every year. When people have been inactive for five years, they need to be removed unless they opt in. They will stay on the inactive list for five years due to US Tax laws. The Board Member assigned to Membership Approval, the Website developer, and the Secretary will work on a procedure for this. We might also target different populations such as course attendees to become members. Board members will send Sharon ideas for advertising for memberships. This is something that the Membership Approval could do every year. We also should check on how Memberclicks deals with bounced emails and whether there are registrants to the meeting who are not members (who could be sent an invitation to become a member.)

Added Value for OCNS Members: Regarding added value for members, last year we discussed adding fellowships for students to visit labs. We can discuss this with the educational and training items. The largest issue is the budget.

Members meeting agenda:
   Reports from President, Treasurer, PC Chair
   Ask for comments on the meeting format.
   Mascots (Volker and Local Organizers)
   *CNS*2020 presentation (Tony)*
   *CNS*2021 call for proposals (ongoing, deadline October 1 2019)*

CNS Meetings

Post-meeting Survey: We need to evaluate whether attendees are happy with the new meeting format for CNS*2019. We will charge Ankur with creating a post-meeting survey. Ingo suggested another idea to engage members by using a phone app during the member meeting to obtain feedback on different topics.

*Report on CNS*2020:* Tony provided a report on CNS*2020 planning. There is a great deal of support in the scientific community for the meeting. The local council and state government also are very supportive and are providing resources. They are planning for 400-500 attendees at a modern conference facility in the downtown area. They are encouraging attendees to make it a destination. We discussed having one day of the workshops at the University to save costs. Further discussion of this will take place informally after the meeting. $40,000 Australian has been committed from the government toward the meeting. In part this is meant to help increase travel awards to encourage attendance. There was also discussion of the need for affordable student housing.

Program Committee Report: Thomas reported on Program Committee issues. There was a discussion of the Confmaster System and the amount of added work that was necessary this year. There were major problems with the voucher system this year even though it worked well last year. A subcommittee of the website chair, President, and the Program Committee members was created to obtain a decision on Confmaster. Confmaster needs to be informed that they are not reaching our expectations. There was some discussion of other companies. If there will be a switch considered, it should be tried before committing. Options could be OpenConf or EasyChair. The Board is supportive of looking into an alternative and we will move forward with this after the meeting.

It was reported that the PC committee worked well as a team. There were 474 submissions with a few withdrawals. 126 requested an oral presentation. Top countries were the US, Germany, Spain with many submissions from Europe, due to the meeting location in Europe.

There was some discussion of the meeting size and relation to new meetings that are taking off such as the Mathematical Neuroscience and Computational Cognitive Neuroscience meetings. It was pointed out that other European CNS meetings (other than Paris) have had around 500 attendees which is smaller than the attendance of this year, but there is some interest on the Board in growth for CNS. There is a suggestion to approach people to organize workshops and tutorials with focused areas that will target particular communities (experimental techniques, bio-inspired machine learning, and BMI). Reaching out toward the experimental community including electrophysiology and neuroimaging might be the best option for growth. Next year we should reach out to machine learning community through a workshop. Another idea is to have workshops suggest keynote speakers on the same topic. We could do this around more than one topic. There is enthusiasm around a service to bring experimentalists and modelers together but worries that it is not practical. Leonid will contact the Mathematical Neuroscience meeting organizers to discuss future coordination of meetings.

We should figure out how to invite specific program officers from various funding agencies to the CNS meeting. We should form a list of agencies and program officers to invite year to year with a formal communication from the President. Sharon will gather suggestions from Board Members.

Thomas presented the list of people rotating off the PC and suggests adding one more member to the PC to help with the workload. This would result in adding five new members on the PC this year. This was approved.

We have a sponsorship deal with Frontiers regarding a research topic. Frontiers will sponsor 50% reduced submission fees for the first 20 articles received. Frontiers paid 2000 Euros toward sponsorship. It is not clear how much work this will be but may depend on the number of people who submit manuscripts. We will try it this year and see whether it should be continued in future years.

There was some discussion of late poster submissions. If this were allowed, there is agreement that people will shoot for the latest possible deadline, and many poster submissions would come in last minute. For this reason, it is decided that this will not be allowed. There is a decision to only do this as an extreme exception on a case to case basis at the discretion of the Program Committee chair in consultation with the Program Committee.

Tutorial Planning: Hermann reported on the tutorial planning for this year. This year for the first time they asked for proposals for tutorials, and there was very good response. There was discussion about free registration for tutorial organizers. Hermann would like the tutorials to have the same free registration provisions as the workshops. Currently the workshops have one to three free registrations depending on the length of the workshop and one travel award per workshop. The Board approved.

Workshop Planning: Martin reported on the workshop planning for this year. We discussed whether we should cap the number of workshops. This year we have 15 to 16 per time slot, which has worked out ok since we have enough rooms. Looking at previous meetings, the number of workshops seems to scale well with the size of the meeting from year to year. There is agreement that things seem to be working so we decided to put this off any cap until future years if there are issues.

Martin also brought up the financing for workshops. Each has one travel award and also one to three free registrations depending on the length of the workshop. In the call for workshops, we should include information about the financial support and also encourage organizers to find workshop sponsorship.

In future years, we want to use workshops to build meeting attendance and will provide larger budgets for these "invited workshops". For the "invited" workshops, we agree that we should call them symposia since they are organized differently, and we do not want to create tiers of workshops. There was discussion about the possibility for symposia to be sponsored or "named". A subcommittee was appointed to decide on symposium topics, which will include Martin, Sharmila, Tony, Thomas.

Recording of Talks: There was further discussion of recording of tutorials or workshops. There are issues with obtaining legal permission to include people in videos. We can't let workshops do whatever they want because they may not consider legal implications. One suggestion is to allow for three workshops to do this and let organizers apply to include their workshops. There was further discussion of the advantages to the meeting to doing this versus the amount of work. Some people don't feel it will help promote meeting attendance. There was discussion of allowing tutorial and workshops to use a screen and voice capture technology, do their own editing, and we will host and advertise and ensure quality. But people are still worried about impact and quality. There seems to be agreement to focus on the keynote speakers, use professional videographers and editors, and promote the organization through very professional videos. Tony will need to check into how much it will cost for very high-quality videos for the four keynote speakers. The Executive Committee will make a final decision.

Call for CNS*2021 (preferably in Europe): The deadline is first of October. There have not been any emails about this so far. Brainstorming ideas brings up Oslo, somewhere in the UK such as Nottingham, Warsaw, and somewhere in Switzerland. Astrid will talk to Gaute first and report back.

Decision regarding CNS*2022: We need to decide between the meeting proposals from Brazil and Chile. These are both very good proposals. After discussion of transportation, the venues, weather, and other issues, we voted to have the meeting in Brazil. The CNS*2022 local organizers attended the Board meeting on Monday, and there was discussion of the dates for the meeting since a meeting in August would cost less. We strongly prefer a meeting in July so with discounts perhaps this is not an issue. The local organizers will obtain dates in July.

Financial Matters

Treasurer's Report: We currently have more than 610 registrants for CNS*2019. Our surplus is around the budget for funding one meeting, which is what our target should be. Currently, it looks like CNS*2019 will come in at around a $5,000 loss, which is ok. There was some discussion of budget category costs relative to previous meetings.

Financial planning for 2020: We should attempt to increase the travel awards if the budget allows, including both more awards and counting on a need for more larger awards. In general, we agree it would be good if we could increase funding in each category. In the future, our request for meeting proposals should communicate that affordable student housing is a requirement. It is not clear how much we can increase the budget for travel awards, but we do know that Tony has obtained some local funding towards travel funding.

One item of discussion included issues around need-based travel awards. These ideas were tabled due to lack of enthusiasm.

Sponsorship: Bill has plans to contact more possible sponsors in the coming year. There is a need to create a spreadsheet with information to use year to year about how much sponsors should be required to pay and who pays for sponsorship each year. Bill has created a brochure, which can be given to potential sponsors. Also, the Sponsorship chair can work with workshop organizers to find sponsors around targeted topics.

Budget approval: The current budget was unanimously approved.

Publications and Communications

Education and training update: Sharmila reported on new activities in this area. There is now a formal process that courses and meetings can use to apply for OCNS sponsorship. The website has been updated to include this information. The Poster judging system has been updated to member-only participation. The poster judging will be online using Google forms and there are categories for undergrads, grads, and postdocs. Finally, there have been updates to the plan for the Professional Development Workshop. There are plans to include panelist sessions, mentoring activities, and job networking through the workshop this year. The website will include information based on these activities. Future work may include a formal mentoring network, a more formalized job fair at the meeting and possibly job listings online, and a way to share information about graduate programs and summer workshops. We might think about ways to enhance science outreach and communication around computational neuroscience.

Communications committee and outreach: There were no responses for the request for people to volunteer for a communications committee. We have delegated jobs better now so maybe it isn't necessary. If one is needed, relevant Board members should reach out to people individually.

Abstract Publication: Ingo reported on the publication of abstracts. The formatting work is reduced this year due to improvements with entry forms at Confmaster and has been going well. BMC Neuroscience is adequate but not without issues. The biggest issue is the large lumped files, which messes up citations. The cost has gone up but is not unreasonable. Ingo will look around a bit for alternatives but this is not a high priority.

Miscellaneous and matters arising

OCNS support letter policy: What policy should we have regarding letters of support? There may be issues with multiple OCNS members applying for the same grants, and there could also be issues with the workload. We decided to create a few template letters that comment on general support for modeling and tool development as an approach toward neuroscience research (11 for, 3 against, 3 abstain). This is as far as we can go without issues. What would be more valuable would be to lobby on behalf of our area with funding agencies.

Jean-Marc Fellous request for emerging areas: Jean-Marc is filling a temporary role at the NIMH. We would like him to come to the meetings, we would like to engage with him, perhaps we could help with a task force or workshop or something along these lines. Sharon will contact him to explore the opportunity.

Membership categories: We voted to add an emeritus membership category. Leonid will propose an amount, which will be approved by the Executive Committee.

Communications Technology: We discussed the use of SLACK. Generally, people do not want to use a different application. The consensus is that we need to stick with email for most communication.

Named lecture: We discussed naming a lecture after Wil Rall. Perhaps in the first few years it might be on a topic that is relevant to the work of Rall. We agree we should select speakers the way we do every year. The Rall lecturer could be any person on the list and at the discretion of the program committee. The Board voted to have Thomas run this by the program committee.

Use of Science Exchange: We discussed the idea to aid in linking experimentalists with theoreticians. There is some enthusiasm for running a symposium around this topic but we are worried about the practical issues around trying to do something online.

INCF training space: The OCNS is very obviously missing from this online forum. This is an area that the tutorial organizer should look at. We may want to be involved and represented there.