OCNS Board of Directors 2020 Meetings Minutes
July 24, 2020 (16:00 – 19:50 CET)

Held online by video conference
Votes recorded through Slack channel of OCNS Board

Present: Volker Steuber, Martin Zapotocky, Leonid Rubchinsky, Astrid Prinz, Ingo Bojak, Tony Burkitt, Anca Doloc-Mihu, Boris Gutkin, Peter Jedlicka, Renaud Jolivet, Bill Lytton, Thomas Nowotny, Sharmila Venugopal, Ankur Sinha, Christiane Linster, Jorge Mejias, James Bower, Rodica Curtu, Thomas Knösche, Laure Buhry
Absent: Cecilia Romaro, Malin Sandstroem

Opening assessment (Volker): Thanks are due to all who contributed to organizing the CNS meeting in the unusual and stressful circumstances of this year. The Covid lockdown required us to switch to fully online format, with a relatively short time frame for preparation. Crucially, we were able to quickly recruit volunteers from our membership who worked jointly with board members on the organizing committee. A particularly demanding role was played by Ankur in his double capacity as OCNS webmaster and as coordinator of technical aspects on the web organizing committee. The initial feedback from our community on the online meeting has been clearly positive.

Approval of the agenda and addition of points: Approved (by vote on Slack)

Approval of 2018 Board Meeting minutes: Approved

Legal matters

Board membership after 2020: The board discussed the positions to be filled following the rotation of board members, and the needs for continuity. Ingo volunteered to stay for an extra 3-year term as publications chair, but encourages any potential replacements to step up earlier; approved. Thomas N volunteered to stay as assistant to PC Chair Christiane, to help organize the new submission system; approved. Anca volunteered to stay an extra year as tutorials chair; approved. It was decided to elect 3 or 4 new Directors.

Webmaster transition: Shailesh (postdoc member who worked on the organizing committee this year) was proposed as new webmaster once Ankur's term is up. The webmaster is traditionally appointed ex officio as specific technical skills are required. The board finds it preferable to relying on newly elected board members, especially when we have an already tested candidate ready. Shailesh approved as webmaster assistant and ex officio member of the board.
Jim proposed to consider renumeration (e.g. travel allowance) for selected ex officio members, and to specifically define the voting rights of ex officio members. This will be discussed in the executive committee.

Election of President and Treasurer for the next 2-year term:
Volker agreed to candidacy for his 2nd term as President; elected by unanimous vote.
Leonid agreed to candidacy for his 2nd term as Treasurer; elected by unanimous vote.

Executive Committee Membership: The following executive committee composition was approved: president, ex-president, vice-president/secretary, treasurer, program committee chair and webmaster.

Nomination committee membership: For this year's election, we approved the nomination committee consisting of Sharmila, Renaud, and Ankur in his capacity as webmaster.

OCNS Membership

Report on membership:
- faculty members 189 (2019 235, 2018 202, 2017 185)
- postdoc members 155 (2019 209, 2018 145, 2017 120)
- student members 266 (2019 317, 2018 265, 2017 195)
- inactive members 2081 (2019 1778, 2018 1617, 2017 1420

We need to update the database of inactive members while complying with new GDPR requirements. This to be done simultaneously with the planned transition to new version of MemberClicks. The number of active members is down as this year's annual meeting had no fees, but we can target the inactive members following this successful meeting and encourage them to renew a multi-year membership. This communication to be done by Martin and Volker.

Revised definition of membership categories: To address cases of technicians and research assistants who felt they did not fit well into existing categories of student/postdoc/faculty, Astrid and Rodica prepared an updated definition, introducing a non-profit affiliation category (with fees as for postdocs). New definition of membership categories approved.

Emeritus/retired membership: Extensive discussion took place on how to set fees and encourage membership for emeritus/retired faculty. Is there a need to introduce a category separate from active faculty? We do have a provision for people who are unable to afford membership fee due to special circumstances. Discussion without conclusion, delegated to membership team.

Members meeting agenda:
Reports from President, Treasurer, PC Chair
Mascots (Volker and Local Organizers)
CNS*2021 presentation (Thomas K)

CNS Meetings

*Report of post-CNS*2019 Survey:* We received positive feedback especially on the quality of keynotes and featured talks. The new 5-day format of the meeting (as implemented in Barcelona) was the preferred option in the meeting format survey.

*Report on CNS*2020:* The board discussed if an alternative mechanism (feasible in the online meeting) could still be used this year to award poster prizes. No suitable mechanism was agreed on.

*CNS*2021 planning and potential integration with ICMNS*: Following the decision made at the 2019 board meeting, we have communicated with the organizers of the International Conference on Mathematical Neuroscience series on possibly integrating our annual meetings. Thomas N circulated a draft program structure based on joint keynote sessions and parallel regular sessions. The board views the joint program as feasible. Leonid pointed out that an agreement on the joint registration fee structure has not be reached and may still become a stumbling block.

The decision on the format of the 2021 meeting, and on the possible integration with ICMNS, cannot be decided until the Covid situation becomes more clear. The dates July 3-7 were any case fixed. A local organizing agency will be employed in Leipzig (in case of onsite meeting), which will limit the number of student volunteers receiving the registration waiver. However, up to 15 registration waivers will be carried over from this year for the web organizing committee volunteers.

We extensively discussed the possibility of planning for a hybrid meeting, with both onsite and online component. This was viewed as a complex decision. A hybrid meeting would increase the total participation numbers and facilitate diversity of participants. However, it would mean a more demanding organization (both a local organizing team and a web organizing team), and it is unclear how mixed poster sessions could be implemented. The onsite and online participants may have different perceptions of the quality of the meeting. A major financial risk to OCNS would arise from the uncertainty regarding the size of the onsite vs online component (affecting the venue size and the amount of registration fees). The board is in agreement that the priority is to preserve a strong onsite meeting and stable finances The board approved the formation of a committee that will evaluate the meeting format options and report by December (with Thomas K, Lenid, Jim as initial committee members).

Use of Sched platform in future meetings: The board agreed that Sched, which was used to display and navigate the online program at this year's CNS, provided significant added value to the participants at reasonable cost to OCNS. The proposal to keep Sched for next year (irrespective of the format of the meeting) was approved.

Program Committee Report: Thomas reported that this year, only 2 members volunteered as candidates for the program committee. As we had 20 candidates last year, there is no shortage. The reason for this year's reduced interest is unclear, the call was issued similarly to the previous year.

Tutorial Planning: Anca reported that this year's tutorials and showcases were very well attended. She proposed to keep the showcases category also next year; approved.

Workshops and Symposia Planning: Symposia (essentially, invited workshops with increased financial support) were approved as a prospective category at the 2019 board meeting. In early 2020, a subcommittee discussed several candidate symposia that would be a good fit for the onsite meeting in Melbourne. One of these, a symposium combining theorists with "local" experimentalists would be particularly appropriate also for the Leipzig meeting, given the strength of experimentalist community in Germany. The selected symposia should be announced as soon as possible following the selection of keynote speakers, and in any case before the call for regular workshops is sent out. A committee was formed (Thomas K, Jorge, Peter, Christiana, Martin) to propose candidate symposia for the Leipzig meeting and make recommendations on their implementation.

Financial Matters

Treasurer's Report: approved.
Budget: approved.

Publications and Communications

Special interest groups (SIGs): SIGs were introduced this year to improve the presence of OCNS in the community throughout the year, beyond the CNS meeting. We have received good initial feedback on SIGs from members. The board agreed these group should be driven by OCNS members, with board members just helping them to get the resources they need. The board should not "own" the groups, it's OK if some of them do not work out. Online participation in SIGs can improve diversity (remote countries, participants with reduced funding). SIGs can also directly strengthen the CNS meeting, should be encouraged to organize an event / report at the meeting. For example, a hackathon right after the annual meeting organized by infrastructure SIG; postdoc/career workshop participation by outreach SIG. Concern about most groups dying out if not started carefully, hence suggestion to limit the number of supported groups and possibly bring in already active groups from the community. Further discussion on implementation of SIGs will continue through Slack. The continuation of SIGs was approved by board. Jim volunteered to lead SIG on the Future of Scientific Publications.

Report on interaction with INCF and Neurospaces: As OCNS representatives, Leonid was elected to the Governing Board of INCF, and Sharmila joined the INCF Council for Training, Science and Infrastructure.

Use of ConfMaster management system: Thomas N, Volker, Ankur pointed out our strongly negative experience with ConfMaster. Consensus is that ConfMaster is unresponsive to our needs and has poor technical support. However from publications standpoint, we reached a point of maturity using ConfMaster, with Word input now usable for abstracts; important to not break this when we transition to a new system. The newest MemberClicks platform (not the one we are using currently) can handle abstract submissions, and their support is very responsive. Peer review can be handled there as well. A working group (including Christiane, Thomas, Jim) will evaluate further. The board approved the termination of contract with ConfMaster if another suitable system is found.

Publication of proceedings in BMC Neuroscience: The bundling of multiple abstracts under one doi is a clear negative, leads to distorted indexing in databases. Lack of consensus on the question if indexing on PubMed important for us. If not there are other solutions available, and self-publishing can be considered. Alternatives to BMC Neuroscience need to be evaluated, same working group as for ConfMaster.

Miscellaneous and matters arising

Named lecture in honor of Wilfried Rall: the inaugural lecture of the series was given as a keynote at this year's CNS.
Establish honorary OCNS fellowships?: unresolved.
Other matters arising: none.