

4S Governance Review

report by the 4S Governance Review Committee to 4S President and Council

September 16, 2013

Introduction

On 30 October 2012 the 4S Governance Review Committee was appointed by 4S President Trevor Pinch, after consultation with President-elect Gary Downey and Secretary/Treasurer Wes Shrum. The committee consists of:

Wiebe Bijker (chair)
Sheila Jasanoff
Mike Lynch
Judy Wajcman.

The committee was asked by Trevor Pinch "to review our governance and operating procedures and if necessary recommend changes. As always any changes suggested will be debated, voted upon, and, if need be, implemented by the elected Council of the Society on behalf of the membership. In deliberating over these issues I ask that the Committee review the governance and organization of 4S as compared with our sister societies such as SHOT, HSS, EASST and other relevant professional societies." (see Annex for the full text of the committee's charge)

Work process of the committee

The committee first consulted extensively with Wes Shrum, which led Wes to write a "4S Secretarial History & Analysis" (dated January 2013). This very detailed, insightful and reflexive document formed the basis for the committee's further deliberations. In addition to this Secretarial History & Analysis, the following documents also played a role (copies are available on the 4S website):

4S Charter;
Visions Committee Report 2002.

The second step was to conduct a preliminary review of the governance and organization of sister societies (SHOT, EASST, HSS, PSA). This was done on the basis of public documents and interactions with some officers of these associations.

We then identified key issues that we felt needed to be addressed in reviewing the governance of 4S, and the committee had a series of email and Skype interactions.

A draft of the resulting report was shared with President Trevor Pinch, President-elect Gary Downey, and Secretary Wes Shrum. We benefited from their comments, which led to some clarifications and adaptations. Still, this report is wholly the responsibility of the four authors.

Background

The Society for Social Studies of Science (4S) is almost 40 years of age. Since the establishment of 4S, the landscape of the field of STS has changed beyond all recognition. The number of universities, journals, handbooks, learned societies, and other organizations engaged in some form of STS has expanded. The 2012 annual conference (4S jointly with EASST) had 30 concurrent sessions and was the largest ever. The field is increasingly international, with major STS networks and societies having been formed in many parts of the world, and with 4S meeting more frequently with these sister organizations. The number of 4S prizes has increased, styles of scholarly output during annual conferences have extended into film and digital media, and 4S members are increasingly engaged in outreach activities and policy advice. In addition to becoming more global, the field has become more professionalized, and 4S may be expected to support the increased number of junior scholars—many of whom face difficult career prospects and financial stringency—with new career development initiatives, travel scholarships, mentoring opportunities, and so on.

All this calls for 4S to play a more active and strategic role at a variety of levels. Reviewing the style and structure of the society's governance allows for some adaptation to better meet these new challenges. The recommendations that follow are meant to allow for an even more effective use of the intellectual strengths within 4S, with continued or perhaps enhanced transparency, responsibility and accountability.

Recommendations to President and Council

We recommend that:

1. The 4S Charter does *not* need to be amended.
2. Some changes in 4S governance are to be implemented. Since these changes remain within the 4S Charter, they can be adopted by Council and implemented immediately after informing the membership in the 2013 business meeting. These changes relate to:
 - a. Formulation of a new "statement of purpose" for 4S
 - b. Splitting the Secretary/Treasurer roles of the Society into two functions
 - c. Appointing a new Secretary
 - d. Appointing a new Treasurer
 - e. Developing a new set of practices for 4S annual meetings; one key element in this new practice is to work with a new officer: the 4S "meetings planner"
 - f. Reorganizing the schedule of Council meetings
 - g. Changing the organization of committees

These recommendations need to be discussed in Council before being decided upon. They may take effect immediately after the Council's decisions have been communicated to the 4S membership.

Changes in 4S governance

We have reviewed the roles and functions in the governance of the Society (see Table 1 for a summary). Many of these already exist, some are prescribed in the 4S Charter, and a few are new and will be elaborated below. They fall into two categories: officers and technical support staff. Officers are members of Council, and support staff are not. Key distinctions are whether the persons who perform these roles are elected or appointed, have voting power in Council or not, and receive financial remuneration or not. One person can combine and fulfill different technical support staff roles.

	Roles/Functions	Elected/appointed	Voting/non-voting	Unpaid/remunerated
Society's officers	President	Elected	voting	Unpaid
	President-elect	Elected	voting	Unpaid
	Secretary	Appointed	non-voting	Unpaid
	Treasurer	Appointed	non-voting	Unpaid
	Former Presidents	Ex-officio members of the Council	non-voting	Unpaid
	Council Member (9)	Elected	voting	Unpaid
Society's technical staff	Meetings Planner	Appointed	Not member of Council	Remunerated
	Webmaster	Appointed		Remunerated
	<i>Technoscience</i> editor	Appointed		Remunerated
	ICT manager	Appointed		Remunerated
	Membership manager	Appointed		Remunerated
	Registration manager	Appointed		Remunerated
	Associate treasurer	Appointed		Remunerated

Table 1. Summary of roles and functions in 4S' governance

Our committee proposes a variety of adaptations in the governance of 4S, which we discuss in the following sections.

a. Formulation of a "statement of purpose" for 4S

The 4S Charter summarizes the Society's mission with the following succinct statement: "Its purpose is to promote research, learning and understanding in the social analysis of science."

Any charitable organization (with the same legal status as 4S—a US 501(c)3 organization, nonprofit, tax exempt) is expected to have a mission statement that could well be more elaborate to answer such questions as: "what will it do with your money and how?" Having a mission statement that further elaborates the statement of purpose in the 4S Charter would provide some guidance and act as a touchstone for leadership decisions and discussions about strategic and policy choices that the Society needs to make.

Drafting a more elaborate mission statement is a subtle task. Such a statement should be inclusive enough to allow for the broad range of activities that 4S has established over its more than 30 years of development, and it

should be open enough to allow for future development without need for frequent redrafting of the mission statement. Yet, it might also address such questions as:

- What are the topics of study of the Society? (not only science, but also technology, medicine, ...)
- What is the intended membership of the Society? (in terms of nationality, professional background, level of education, ...)
- What does the Society do to promote members' professional development? (opportunities for young STS scholars, special or regional meetings, use of Technoscience...)
- What are the means of realizing the Society's goals? (annual meetings, publications, curriculum development and teaching support, ...)

We recommend that Council discusses the possibility of drafting a more detailed mission statement; this could be done by establishing an *ad hoc* committee to draft such a mission statement before next year's Council meeting.

b. Splitting the Secretary/Treasurer role into two functions

We propose to split the function of Secretary-Treasurer into two officers. The increased complexity of the Society's functioning, the growth of the field served by the Society, its growing financial resource base, and its multi-faceted and international environment call for such a division of labor.

Elaboration: we propose to express the highest possible gratitude to Wes Shrum for his many years of dedicated service in these two positions combined. He has played a crucial role in the Society during more than 25 years. Many of us in the Society know how important Wes has been for 4S during that period. As past presidents, the authors of this report all have experienced the tremendously supportive role that Wes played in serving the Society, including the creation of a support staff that is taking care of much of the functioning in a decentralized and volunteer-based way. In his interactions with our committee, Wes has indicated that he would like to step down as Secretary-Treasurer (and ideally accept another role; see below).

c. Appointing a new Secretary

We propose that 4S appoint a Secretary with the key duty to support the President in running the Society. The Secretary's tasks would include at least the following (of which the first three are currently stipulated in the Charter).

- The Secretary shall communicate the agenda of Council meetings, and transmit committee reports to members of the Council, at least twenty days before each Council meeting.
- The Secretary shall keep the minutes of Council meetings, and shall be responsible for the administration of the Society, and the safe-keeping of its records.

- The Secretary shall be responsible for the conduct of elections.
- The Secretary shall conduct the correspondence of the Society and maintain a record of the same, and monitor and guide all external communications of the Society, such as via the 4S website. The Secretary will be helped in this task by the editor of the 4S newsletter *Technoscience*, who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget; and by the 4S Webmaster, who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget.
- The Secretary shall support the functioning of the committees, and shall solicit timely reports to be presented to Council.
- The Secretary shall maintain a Manual of Proceedings, tracking all key steps in the yearly cycle of the Society's functioning, so as to guide all (new) officers of the Society. (The current 4S website provides a good starting point for such a Manual with its information on the governance of the Society; interviewing the out-going Secretary-Treasurer Wes Shrum about the current decentralized and automated governing practices would be a crucial second input.)

We recommend that the Secretary serve for a 3-year term, with the possibility of one extension of a second 3 years. The Secretary will be member of Council without voting rights.

We recommend that this "appointing" is done by the President, in consultation with the President-elect and Council, and after publicly soliciting applications.

d. Appointing a new Treasurer

We propose that 4S should have a Treasurer, in addition to a Secretary. The Treasurer's tasks would at least include the following (of which the first three tasks are currently stipulated in the Charter).

- The Treasurer shall receive and have custody of the funds of the Society.
- The Treasurer shall transmit a statement of the Society's financial accounts to the Council at least twenty days before the annual business meeting of the Society.
- The accounts shall be subject annually to an audit by two members of the Society or by a certified public accountant or the equivalent, and at other times when requested by the President or by a majority of the Council. The Treasurer will be helped in this task by the technical officer "Associate Treasurer", who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget.
- The Treasurer shall be responsible for membership management and providing adequate membership statistics to Council; the Treasurer will be helped in this task by the technical officer "Membership Management" who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget.
- The Treasurer shall be responsible for the information technology support for meeting registration and membership management; the Treasurer will be helped in this task by the technical officer "Information & Communication Technology (ICT)", who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget.

- The Treasurer shall be responsible for supporting the Travel Grants Committee in administering and organizing the travel grants scheme. The Treasurer will be helped in this task by the technical officer "Associate Treasurer", who will receive appropriate remuneration as budgeted in the 4S annual budget.

We recommend that the Treasurer serve for a 3-year term, with the possibility of one extension of a second 3 years. The Treasurer will be member of Council without voting rights.

We recommend that the Treasurer is appointed by the President, in consultation with the President-elect and Council, and after publicly soliciting applications.

e. The current practice of organizing 4S annual meetings is consolidated and further developed, in particular by appointing a "4S Meetings Planner"

We propose that 4S appoint its own meetings planner, rather than hiring an outside professional consultant. The President appoints this 4S Meetings Planner, with the Council's approval, with the key responsibility of planning, organizing and managing the practical and local details of the annual meetings within the conditions set by Council. Tasks of the 4S Meetings Planner will include:

- Investigating possibilities for housing the meeting (both hotels for the participants and meeting spaces for the conference), negotiating prices and conditions, and securing the venue.
- Advising Council and President on the offer(s) received, upon which the President will decide, after discussion with Council.
- Organizing and managing the practical and local details of the annual meetings, including registration, web portal, volunteer support, catering, book exhibition, etc.

The 4S Meetings Planner will receive an appropriate remuneration, to be decided by the President, after consulting Council.

Elaboration: Wes Shrum has expressed interest in acting as 4S' first Meetings Planner. We recommend that the President appoints Wes Shrum for a period of 5 years, during which period a process should be developed to facilitate transition to future appointees to this role.

We also propose that the Program Committee continue to organize and manage the program of the 4S Annual Meeting.

f. A new schedule of Council meetings

We propose an expansion in the Council's meetings for governing the Society. At the occasion of the 4S Annual Meeting, Council could meet twice:

1. *On the Wednesday, 1 pm – 6 pm, before the start of the Annual Conference.* The agenda of this meeting would primarily consist of

discussing and approving reports of all standing and ad hoc committees, and taking care of 4S' regular annual business.

2. *On Sunday, 8 am – 12 am, after the close of the Annual Conference.* The agenda of this meeting would primarily consist of reflecting on the annual meeting, discussing strategic questions, and identifying important issues for next year's 4S' governance.

We recommend that Council should consider adding an extra meeting of two days in the Spring to discuss long-term questions that are relevant for the Society and the field of STS. (This practice is successfully used by SHOT. SHOT covers travel expenses for the Council members and other officers who attend the Spring meeting)

g. Committees

We propose that the President, in consultation with the President-elect and the Secretary, should appoint all committees, and appoint a chairperson for each committee. These committees include the following *standing committees*:

- Edge Prize committee
- Fleck Prize committee
- Carson Prize committee
- Mullins Prize committee
- Bernal Prize committee
- Publications committee
- Program Committee
- Future Meetings committee
- Travel Grants committee
- Nominations committee
- Ethics and Public Affairs committee
- New Initiatives committee

At this moment the following *ad hoc committees* are in operation:

- Handbook committee
- Digital Publication subcommittee
- Ethnografilm Festival committee

It would be good practice for most committees to include at least one member of Council. Another good practice would be to secure some continuity in committee functioning by prudently choosing members and staggering their terms of appointment.

Comments. *This proposal stays close to current 4S practices, in which the members do not separately vote on all committee members (as happens, for example, in SHOT). This proposal is different from the current practice in that the prize committees are treated as regular committees and are not by default exclusively constituted by Council members.*

Annex

Governance Review Committee of 4S,

As charged by President Trevor Pinch, 30 October 2012

Background: It is now 36 years since the Society for Social Studies of Science was formed. In the intervening period the landscape of the field has changed beyond all recognition. The number of universities, journals, handbooks, learned societies, and other organizations engaged in some form of STS has expanded. Our latest annual conference (joint with EASST) had 30 concurrent sessions and was our largest ever. The field is increasingly an international one with major STS networks and societies formed or forming in many parts of the world. We have more prizes, we are carrying out more joint meetings with other international organizations (the latest being one we hope to hold in Buenos Aires with our Latin American colleagues in 2014), and with possible expansions into films and digital publication (both mooted at the last council meeting) more and more demands are being placed upon us. Also as the field becomes more professionalized and global we may need to help support more young people and disadvantaged scholars with new career development initiatives, travel scholarships, and so on. The Society is also wealthier now than any time in our history.

It is wise for 4S as the major professional organization in the field to not only take stock and revisit some of the issues around our governance and operating procedures but also to examine the immediate challenges our Society faces. With this in mind I am forming a new committee which, for want of better words, I propose to call the Governance Review Committee.

Charge: To review our governance and operating procedures and if necessary recommend changes. As always any changes suggested will be debated, voted upon, and, if need be, implemented by the elected Council of the Society on behalf of the membership. In deliberating over these issues I ask that the Committee review the governance and organization of 4S as compared with our sister societies such as SHOT, HSS, EASST and other relevant professional societies.

Membership: The committee will consist of four members to be appointed by the current President in full consultation with the President elect. The membership will be made up of former presidents of the society. There should be a balance between recent presidents and presidents from earlier eras. The committee should be representative in terms of gender and major geographical areas (ideally two members should be based in the US and two in Europe or other areas of the world). The Chair of the Committee will be appointed by the current president.

Scope: Although in principle all or any aspect of our governance and procedures can be reviewed I would suggest attention be primarily focused upon the following three topics:

1. Role of officers

Do we need to have more officers and if so for what purposes? Should all 4S officers be elected and if so for what term lengths? Should the

Secretary position be separate from the Treasurer/Associate Treasurer (currently the 4S Secretary also acts as Treasurer and the associate treasurer reports to the Secretary)?

2. Financial matters

Is the society financially stable? What are the current and future risks to the finances? Can and should 4S grow more, and in what respects (membership, dues, products, services)? How much of the annual budget should be allocated to, say, new initiatives and other sorts of activities, and how should these decisions be made?

3. Prizes

Should (as is our current practice) all Council members serve on prize committees, moving each year between different prize committees? Could we involve other scholars more in the prize-decision process (as we currently do for the Bernal prize)? What other models are there for awarding prizes in 4S's sister societies?

When it will report: This committee will need some time to do its work. For one thing it has to collect information about what other professional societies are doing and it also has to have extensive discussions with our current officers over current procedures and financial matters. A report prepared in time for discussion by Council at the San Diego 4S meeting in November 2013 would be optimal!