

Background to Revisions of the NASSR constitution

History

NASSR was founded at the University of Western Ontario in the Fall of 1991 by Tilottama Rajan, Angela Esterhammer, and three graduate students who have since gone on to productive careers: Ranita Chatterjee (now Professor at California State University-Northridge), Daniel Wilson (Senior Consultant, Ontario Trillium Foundation), and Julia Wright (Professor, Dalhousie University). Without their help, organization, and enthusiasm NASSR would not have come into being.

Rationale

The existing Constitution was drawn up on October 25th, 1991, and ratified by the membership on August 29th, 1993, at the Business Meeting held at the first NASSR conference at Western. In view of the growth of the Society and the evolution of the profession, this original constitution, which provides for a governance and administrative structure consisting of an Executive Committee and an Advisory Board, is in need of revision. To guarantee the future stability of the organization, the current Executive Committee therefore proposes a new governance structure and a revised constitution for NASSR.

The proposed revisions foresee a Board that combines the roles and functions of the current Executive Committee and Advisory Board into a single group, shifting the leadership of the Society from the current Executive and the original founders, who will step down, to this group, with changes to ensure representation of key constituencies. For example, Board members would include a representative of international scholars beyond the United States and Canada, and two graduate student representatives, to give the rising cohort of scholars a significant voice in the Society's concerns.

The revised constitution foresees an expanded role for the Chair of the Board, who will have a longer involvement with the governance of NASSR than the current Advisory Board Chair, and who will, with the assistance of a Vice Chair, the Secretary-Treasurer, and many others, be responsible for the overall operation of the Society. Each Chair will serve as the leader of the Society for a two-year term. To maintain the North American mission of the Society, Chairs will rotate between Canadian and American scholars. To prepare individuals for taking on this role, each Chair will serve initially as a Vice Chair for two years, working closely with the Chair to gain essential experience.

In order to strike a balance between elected, rotating representation of NASSR's diverse membership, as provided by the composition of the Board, and the need for continuity of its administrative operations and the preservation of "institutional memory," the constitution proposes the continued participation of Senior Advisors drawn from NASSR's founding members and previous Board Chairs. Senior Advisors will join the Board in its annual meeting and may be called upon by the Chair, Vice Chair, and Board for advice.

The fundamental mission of the Society will remain unchanged. It will continue to serve as a central forum for the discussion of Romanticism across disciplines and languages, for scholars in the United States, Canada, and beyond, and will through its annual conferences, its affiliation with *European Romantic Review*, and its many other activities, encourage a lively scholarly interchange about a wide range of matters of concern in the field.