

President's Report
2018 General Meeting
Swedish Association for American Studies (SAAS)
September 30, 2018

The present Board of SAAS was elected at the General Meeting in Gothenburg on October 1, 2016. During the term, the board has consisted of Adam Hjorthén (President), Chloé Avril (Vice-President), Eva Zetterman (Treasurer), Maria Holmgren Troy (Secretary), Jenny Bonnevier, Bo G. Ekelund, Oskar Nordell, Joel Frykholm (Deputy Board Member), and Katherina Dodou (Deputy Board Member). A Nominating Committee was elected at an Extraordinary General Meeting in Stockholm on December 9, 2016, consisting of Iulian Cananau, Liz Kella, and Anders Olsson.

The Board has had nine meetings, of which five have been digital/online-meetings: in December 2016 (Stockholm), February 2017 (online), June 2017 (Stockholm), September 2017 (online), January 2018 (online), March 2018 (Stockholm), March 2018 (online), May 2018 (Stockholm), and September 2018 (online). In addition, the Board also called the Extraordinary General Meeting on December 9, 2016.

Activities During the Term

The Board has during the term focused its work on three areas of activity: 1) administrative and organizational development, 2) the organizing and co-organizing of academic events, and 3) the work of the Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS).

(1) We have made an effort to develop and update the SAAS website, <http://www.saasinfo.se>, making a major clean-up of old pages and outdated information, and added new sub-pages and links (such as a list of Grants & Awards, a page with Resources, and pages for Future and Previous Events). We have previously had a doctoral student at Karlstad University who helped us update the website, but to facilitate making more frequent updates and changes, the President has during this term assumed control of managing the website. As part of the update of the website, we have also — through the generous help of Ulf Jonas Björk, Dag Blanck, Gunlög Fur, Rolf Lundén, Anders Olsson, and Erik Åsard — compiled a list of all past SAAS Conferences and SAAS Presidents, now available on the page “History of SAAS.”

Since the SAAS Board usually is dispersed at a range of universities throughout the country, it has for some years been the practice to conduct some of the board meetings online. Previously, those meetings have been made through email. In order to facilitate the online discussions and to make it easier for the secretary to write the meeting minutes, we have since February 2017 transferred all online meetings to Google Docs. This platform has enabled board members to contribute to the discussions throughout the duration of the meeting (which usually lasts for 4-5 day), as well as to more easily get an overview of each point on the agenda.

As part of the refurbishing of the platform for online meetings, we have also created a digital archive for SAAS on Google Drive, to which all members of the board have access. This archive contains past and current membership lists, past meeting minutes, and documents concerning the organization of SAAS. We have managed to track down meeting minutes dating back to 2012, which are now stored in the digital archive, but minutes older than that are unfortunately yet to be located.

The Board has also sought to streamline the administrative process of collecting membership dues, and reporting membership lists to NAAS and EAAS. At a meeting in March 2018, the board adopted three documents pertaining to the organization of the association. First, we have adopted principles for the payment of SAAS membership dues, establishing a set of cut-off dates and descriptions of when to pay in order to receive a full annual subscription of ASiS (Appendix I). These dates and descriptions are now posted on our website, on the page “Join SAAS.” The main reason for the changes was to facilitate the payment of dues to EAAS and NAAS, and to manage the subscription list for ASiS. Second, we have adopted a document outlining the areas of responsibility for each member of the SAAS board (Appendix II). This document is primarily intended to facilitate the introduction of new board members. Lastly, the board has made an oversight of the SAAS Constitution and proposed a number of revisions. These changes – which will be presented separately at the General Meeting – are intended to make the Constitution conform to how SAAS in recent years has developed as an organization, as well as to make it comply to the statutes of NAAS.

(2) Our main academic activity during the term has been the planning of our 10th Biennial Conference in Stockholm, on September 28–30, 2018, with the theme “Open Covenants: Pasts and Futures of Global America.” The organizing committee has consisted of Bo G. Ekelund, Adam Hjorthén and Oskar Nordell. We have also had invaluable assistance from Alice Sundman, PhD Candidate at the English Department, Stockholm University. The

conference has garnered unprecedented attention, and is our largest event to-date. At the time of writing, we expect 80 participants, of which 66 will present papers, from sixteen countries (Sweden, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Qatar, Austria, Poland, Serbia, Finland, China, Turkey, Spain, Italy, Hungary, and Japan). Although Sweden is the most represented country, with 35 participants from thirteen different universities and colleges, the majority of the participants this time comes from abroad. We are pleased to have received financial support for the conference from Magnus Bergvalls stiftelse, the English Department at Stockholm University, and the U.S. Embassy in Stockholm, as well as to be cooperating with ABF Stockholm for the panel discussion “The End of the American Century?” on September 30, 2018.

As the national association for the field of American Studies in Sweden, SAAS has during the term partnered on a set of activities with the country’s only center for American Studies, the Swedish Institute for North American Studies (SINAS) at Uppsala University. We have done so by co-sponsoring two events arranged by SINAS: a January 2017 lecture of Jørn Brøndal of the University of Southern Denmark, who gave a talk about “African-American History and the American Dilemma,” and a December 2017 lecture of Fredrik Logevall of Harvard University, titled “Making Sense of the Vietnam War.”

On May 22–25, 2017, the 25th Biennial Conference of the Nordic Association for American Studies (NAAS), “American Colors: Across the Disciplinary Spectrum,” was held at the University of Southern Denmark in Odense. The SAAS Plenary Lecture was presented by Professor Danuta Fjellestad of Uppsala University, titled “Touching Color: Toni Morrison’s ‘Epidermal’ Fiction.” The conference had ca. 160 participants, of which a significant share came from outside the Nordic countries.

(3) The SAAS Board has, through the President who serves as its representative on the NAAS Executive Board, been active in the work of NAAS. The NAAS Board has during the term had three meetings: in February 2017 (online), May 2017 (General Meeting in Odense), and June–August 2018 (online).

One issue in particular has defined the work of the NAAS Executive Board during the past two years, namely the future publishing strategy of our journal *American Studies in Scandinavia* (ASiS). In order to secure the financial standing of the journal, it has become necessary to find a publisher that can offer a gold open access standard – this is nowadays a requirement to receive long-term grants from NOS-HS, which together with membership dues are the main source of income for ASiS. This development has been closely monitored and

discussed by the SAAS Board. On behalf of the board, the President in April 2017 submitted a statement to the NAAS Board concerning an offer from SAGE (Appendix III), and in June 2018 wrote another statement concerning an offer by Helsinki University Press (HUP) (Appendix IV). The SAGE offer was found to be economically untenable, and thus turned down by the NAAS board in August 2017. The HUP offer is still in consideration. The NAAS Board is currently looking into two other options, Universitetsforlaget in Norway and Stockholm University Press, to be able to make a comparison and thorough evaluation of the options. The NAAS Board will prepare a suggestion for a new publisher of ASiS to be presented during the upcoming conference in Bergen on April 25–27, 2019.

Adam Hjorthén
President of SAAS
Stockholm, September 25, 2018

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APPENDIX I

Princip för betalning av SAAS medlemsavgift

Antaget vid styrelsemöte den 9 mars 2018

1. Betalande 1 januari – 31 mars

- Blir medlem i SAAS innevarande år
- Får ASiS nr 1 och nr 2 innevarande år
- Får mailutskicka till och med februari efterföljande år
- Får mail i januari om att betala medlemsavgiften
- Får mail i februari med påminnelse om att betala medlemsavgiften

2. Betalande 1 april – 31 september

- Blir medlem i SAAS innevarande år
- Får ASiS nr 2 innevarande år
- Får mailutskicka till och med februari efterföljande år
- Får mail i januari om att betala medlemsavgiften
- Får mail i februari med påminnelse om att betala medlemsavgiften
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3. Betalande 1 oktober – 31 december:

- Blir medlem i SAAS efterföljande år
- Får ASiS nr 1 och nr 2 efterföljande år
- Får mailutskicka till och med februari efterföljande år
- Får mail i januari om att betala medlemsavgiften
- Får mail i februari med påminnelse om att betala medlemsavgiften

APPENDIX II

Principdokument för fördelning av ansvarsområden inom SAAS styrelse

Antaget vid styrelsemöte den 9 mars 2018

Nedanstående dokument är avsett att tydliggöra vilka uppgifter som SAAS styrelse arbetar med samt att fördela dessa ansvarsområden mellan styrelsens medlemmar. Detta är tänkt att vara ett "levande" och föränderligt dokument. Det är avsett att främst konkretisera ansvaret för de styrelsepositioner som anges i SAAS stadgar, samt att underlätta introduktionen av nya medlemmar i styrelsen.

Styrelsens gemensamma ansvar är:

- att verka för att stimulera amerikastudier i Sverige
- att planera och leda SAAS verksamhet
- att fatta beslut, genomföra dessa beslut, och rapportera till medlemmarna vad som blivit gjort

Ordförande:

- är sammankallande till möten
- är SAAS ledamot i NAAS styrelse
- är ansvarig för maillistan
- är ansvarig för hemsidan
- skriver verksamhetsrapport inför varje General Meeting

Vice-ordförande:

- övertar ordförandens ansvarsuppgifter när ordinarie ordförande har förhinder att uppfylla dessa uppgifter
- är ansvarig för att SAAS "digitala arkiv" på Google Drive är väl organiserat

Kassören:

- är firmatecknare
- är ansvarig för löpande finanser och betalning av räkningar
- är ansvarig för att medlemslistan är aktuell och att den uppdateras löpande i Google Drive
- skriver ekonomisk rapport inför varje årsmöte

Sekreteraren:

- skriver protokoll vid styrelsens möten

Ledamöterna:

- deltar i styrelsens möten

APPENDIX III

Stockholm April 25, 2017

SAAS statement concerning the proposal of moving *American Studies in Scandinavia* (ASiS) to SAGE Journals

The board of the Swedish Association for American Studies is positive to the idea of making ASiS an online, Gold Open Access journal on a major academic platform. It is, however, the opinion of the SAAS board that the pros, cons, and consequences of such a move needs to be thoroughly investigated before any final decisions are made. The current proposal by SAGE might eventually be worth pursuing, but it is our opinion that we need to look into different options before we sign on to any contract.

There are clear benefits with SAGE. It is a Gold Open Access platform with global distribution, which has become an increasingly important requirement to receive funding. On the other hand, SAGE has a focus on social sciences, and not on the humanities, which after all is the primary field of American Studies. It is noteworthy that a more popular platform for similar journals, including *American Quarterly*, is Project MUSE. Can SAGE provide the best competence for ASiS? Are there other, better, options? It is of course not evident that it is beneficent to be on the same platform as similar journals, but it is a question that is worth considering. Moreover, it is also important that any eventual contract clearly state that NAAS will continue to appoint the editors of ASiS; the editorial work of ASiS should not be relinquished to SAGE or any other platform.

A consequence of making ASiS an online open access journal is that it (likely) will cease to be issued in print. This, in turn, will have consequences for the collection of annual fees of the national organizations. Today, a considerable proportion of the annual fee of SAAS is earmarked for the cost of printing ASiS. Making ASiS an open access journal will eliminate this fee. If there are not any new fees associated with the online platform (something which also should be investigated), then this calls for a lowering, and probably also a restructuring, of the national membership fees. One option, at least for SAAS, would be to lower the membership fee and make it valid for a two-year period (instead of one year, as it is now) and payable at the time of the biennial conference. This way, the membership would be connected to participation at conferences and not on the journal subscription.

The question of making ASiS a pure online journal has been discussed by previous NAAS boards. At the meeting in Karlstad, there were strong opinions that ASiS should continue to be a print journal. There was also uncertainty whether a change to open access would demand that we would have to apply again to be listed on bibliometric indexes. We believe that the discussion of these issues at previous board meetings call for the question to be brought up at the NAAS General Meeting.

For the reasons stated above, it is the opinion of the SAAS board that we should not rush into any deal with SAGE. The question of making ASiS an open access journal should rather be discussed at the NAAS General Meeting. At this meeting, it would be advisable to have at least two open-access options to consider. We should not turn down the SAGE deal yet, but considering the consequences such a move would have, and with the previous NAAS board

discussions in mind, it is important to thoroughly investigate the question before we reach any decision.

On behalf of the SAAS board,

Adam Hjorthén,
SAAS President

APPENDIX IV

Stockholm, June 7, 2018

SAAS statement regarding the proposal of moving *American Studies in Scandinavia* to Helsinki University Press

The Swedish Association for American Studies (SAAS) had a board meeting on May 25, 2018, during which we discussed the topic of a possible move of *American Studies in Scandinavia* (ASiS) to the gold open access platform of Helsinki University Press (HUP). I would hereby like to share the following thoughts and opinions of the SAAS board.

First, as stated in our previous discussions about SAGE, we want to reiterate that SAAS is positive to the idea of making ASiS a gold open access journal.

Second, it is important to consider that ASiS cannot afford a period of trial-and-error. The previous editor, Ari Helo, did a terrific job in getting the journal up to speed again. We must make sure to not make any decisions that risks interfering negatively with the operation of the journal. HUP might certainly be able to provide a good service in the publication process. But it is worth noting that HUP is a brand new press, which has yet to publish any journals. As a consequence, their offer (as stated in their “Cooperation suggestion...”) is framed in a set of goals and aspirations. Their aims might very well be fulfilled, but we have yet to see examples of that. How confident are we that a move to HUP will go smoothly? Could there be reason to wait until the platform has been properly launched before we make a possible move?

Third, we should consider the long-term economic sustainability of ASiS, and how that is affected by our decision. The financial proposal from HUP sounds a bit expensive (it seems like it would entail a cost for NAAS of roughly €500 per published article), even if the offer does seem to match the current contract with the University Press of Southern Denmark. In addition, we must also take into consideration how gold open access changes our stream of revenue. For SAAS, a change to open access means that we have to restructure our membership fees. We will no longer be able to charge anything from our members for the journal. Does a gold open access option mean that the €10 000/year must be covered entirely through grants? And if so, are we confident that we will be able to receive that amount every year in the foreseeable future? Since the financial aspect is central to the argument of now moving ASiS to an open access platform, it is important to analyze the long-term financial consequence of such a move.

Fourth, and as a consequence of the comments above, we think it is necessary and important to also consider other options before moving forward with HUP. Chloé Avril of the SAAS board has previously this spring, through correspondence with Mikko, supplied the NAAS board with the suggestion of looking into two other options, DeGruyter and Ubiquity Press. If we consider it a benefit to keep the journal at a press in the Nordic countries, then Stockholm University Press or Universitetsforlaget (in Norway) might be options to consider; both already have many journals on their platforms, and at least Universitetsforlaget has a track record of publishing good quality journals.

We want to emphasize that we are not opposed to the idea of moving ASiS to HUP. HUP does make an interesting offer, and it might certainly be the case that HUP can

offer services that their competitors cannot. It is, however, difficult to make a detailed assessment of the HUP offer without a viable alternative to compare with (SAGE was, in hindsight, not a viable alternative). It is therefore the suggestion of SAAS that we should ask for at least one, maybe two, additional offers before we make a final decision.

On behalf of the SAAS board,
Adam Hjorthén