

Comments on the Statutes

Generally, I agree with most all of the proposed changes to the Academy's "revised" statutes as explained in considerable detail by Catherine Jami as Chair of the Working Group that submitted an earlier draft of revised statutes for the Academy. She has explained why the revised statutes put forward by the Academy still require significant changes, and has done so very clearly and in detail.

I believe that it is in the best interests of the Academy at this point, if it is to survive, that as many qualified candidates be proposed and elected to membership as possible. I do not think arbitrary limits should be set on how many qualified candidates can be elected on any given ballot, and I also do not believe that anyone should have to pay in order to vote. Thus, any duly elected member should have the right to vote on matters that come before the Academy. Those who cannot afford to pay, or who for whatever reasons choose not to pay, should not have access to other amenities the Academy has to offer—like publications, participating in assembly meetings of the Academy, attending what used to be the annual Academy dinner at each of the ICHST meetings, etc. But in return, elected members should know that what they are paying for has some merit. In fact, I believe most academies expect elected members to pay annual dues. In the US this is true of both the NAS and AAAS, but in return, members understand that these academies support any number of important projects, including grants, fellowships, prestigious publications, scholarly meetings of wide general interest, more specialized forums, etc.

In any case, the more important issue for me is how elections of new members are handled. My own preference would be to make clear exactly what the minimum criteria are to be nominated and considered for membership. If there is to be an annual membership fee for active members, this should be disclosed at the outset so that it does not come as a surprise to anyone after election.

I also believe that everything possible should be done to ensure that the number of qualified members may be increased as much as possible. Thus, I would not set any predetermined limit to the total number of members that might be elected.

I would also support continuation of the two levels of membership (as do Frank James and Noel Golvers, among others who have posted opinions on this forum). I do so for the following reasons: "Corresponding" members should include younger members who show substantial promise by having met a certain minimum set of qualifications—perhaps one substantial book or at least a reasonable number of published articles in peer-reviewed journals, say four or five. "Full Members" would then be those more senior members of the Academy with several books to their credit, a substantial number of articles, etc.

In essence, this would amount to the distinction that might be made between an Assistant Professor and a Full Professor. This would ensure that the Academy could include a substantial number of younger members as "Corresponding" members. As their careers continue to advance they could expect to be elected at some point to "Full" membership. They would in due course join the ranks of more senior members of the Academy with substantially more academic accomplishments than the "Corresponding" members of the Academy.

Without this distinction, I think the qualifications for election would have to be such that the Academy could not sustain itself with a reasonable number of members if all needed to be "distinguished" at a fairly high level in their careers. I think there is no reason not to admit

scholars earlier in their careers who show substantial promise, if not yet so far along as those who would be considered senior or full members of the AIHS.

I must admit I don't fully understand the point of "Electoral rules. Article 1.2 Nomination regarding under-represented fields." Surely everything should be done to encourage qualified members from all fields, but should election of new members at times be limited to only those in "underrepresented" fields? Eliminating the cap on total membership to 500 would obviate the point of this provision entirely—and it seems to me that anyone who is qualified and wishes to be elected to the Academy should be encouraged to seek nomination for membership.

I also agree with the suggestion that as nominations are received, some sort of evaluation process might be implemented whereby an Electoral Committee would determine whether a given nomination met certain minimum criteria for election. This would prevent nominations who were deemed not-qualified from being placed on the ballot. As for how many of those nominated should be elected, I would suggest that all members who are eligible to vote may vote to elect as many of those nominated as they believe are qualified for membership—not limiting each member to approve no more than a certain arbitrary number. Then, I would take anyone receiving at least 50% (or perhaps a higher number) of affirmative votes for election should be counted as elected. This would leave open the possibility that anyone on the ballot who was truly deemed not worthy of election would not be elected, but allow most of those deemed qualified and listed on the ballot to be duly elected. This should assure a sufficient total number of well-qualified members from year to year resulting in a healthy and growing number of members of the Academy.

Finally, I congratulate the Working Group headed by Catherine Jami for all of the time, thought, and effort that went into the work of first of all drafting new statutes and then replying in such detail to the problems with the AIHS Council's subsequently issued draft for new statutes. I hope that all of this effort will indeed result in a version of the Academy that we can all support and indeed encourage to grow in both its numbers and stature within the larger community of historians of science throughout the world. This would require the AIHS to increase its profile and reputation within the international community of historians of science with a truly prestigious journal and on-going activities that would involve younger members as well as senior members of the Academy alike.

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