ADHO Governance Proposals

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Introduction

The following draft proposals are the outcome of a strategy meeting authorised by the ADHO Steering Committee involving a small group who were able to coincide in London 4-5 November 2015. A document that describes the basis and conduct of the meeting as well as all other related documents mentioned in the following can be accessed in the ADHO Wiki.

Strategic context

The key strategic drivers underlying the creation and continued existence of ADHO may be summarised as:

1. A collaborative framework for member associations to work together.

2. A structure that supports and promotes the development of digital humanities world-wide, including the formation and support of new associations.

3. A coherent basis for advocacy.

4. A strong, well supported annual conference.

5. A strategic approach to publications and publication venues.

6. Support for and encouragement of cultural and linguistic diversity, locally and globally.

7. Support for young scholars.

The formal strategy review meetings in London in February 2014 were convened in response to the very rapid growth of ADHO over its first 10 years, and the recognition that the structures and operational processes that had served the organization well through that period were becoming unwieldy. The focus therefore was on structure and process, accepting the overall strategic objectives of ADHO, and acknowledging the larger over-arching objective of building & fostering a global scientific community sharing the common goal of creating intellectual value.

Two key benchmark questions were either articulated in the London meetings or were articulated in the discussions over the following months:

1. Do the proposed changes support the strategic objectives of ADHO?

2. Do they strengthen the range of ADHO and CO activities? The strategy review process emerged from a recognition that there are inevitable tensions between competing ideals – e.g. leanness vs inclusivity, or what should be done at ADHO or CO level. Where such issues arise, are there mechanisms that can be put in place to ensure any 'threat' is minimised and the 'opportunities' maximised?

Functions / Activities

In support of ADHO's strategic objectives, a number of essential functions may be articulated, the fundamental one being to provide a collaborative framework to support all ADHO activities. It may be useful to group these according to whether their main focus is the scholarly work of the associations, or its operational/organisational activities. At ADHO level, the emphasis needs to be on support and coordination of activities undertaken by COs, AOs, SIGs (or non-ADHO agencies). This is diagrammatically represented in Appendix 2.

Scholarly

1. Provide an annual conference

2. Provide publication venues and support a strategic approach to publication

3. Recognize achievements in the field

4. Foster and support the development of young scholars

Organisational

5. Initiate and support organisational Digital Humanities development world-wide

6. Support co-ordination of conferences & training events

7. Support a coherent framework for advocacy

8. Provide shared infrastructure for communication & administration

9. Communicate widely about ADHO-level initiatives and help coordinate communication among ADHO Associations

Underlying all of these functions is a commitment to diversity. And of course in some cases there is overlap between the scholarly and the organisational – e.g. supporting the global development of digital humanities.

Over the 10 years of its existence the main operational instruments used by ADHO to carry out these functions has been a (growing) number of standing committees, with officers to conduct business in more specialised areas, and with occasional recourse to task groups, or to out-sourcing of work - as indicated in the diagram in Appendix 2.

Three of the key questions considered in the strategy review were:

1. Which of the functions could be devolved entirely or partially to COs?
2. Which of the possible operational instruments is the most appropriate for ADHO-level functions?

2. Where a standing committee seems most appropriate, does it need to have representation from each of the COs?

An underlying consensus in the London 2014 meetings and in subsequent discussion has been the need to streamline current structures and procedures, moving towards a leaner and more efficient governance model, while at the same time giving adequate support to activities best carried out at ADHO level and looking for ways to provide support and opportunities as well as space for COs to make their own judgements about priorities and activities.

The relevant sections below offer draft proposals for a new governance model for ADHO, along with proposals for how the ADHO's functions might best be carried out.

Finances

Proposals for changes in the way ADHO manages its finances are the subject of a separate document to be presented by the ADHO Treasurer, Jarom McDonald.

To assist the discussions on governance, Jarom presented the London 2015 meeting with financial models for two different scenarios – one with membership arrangements broadly as they are at present, the other modelling the implementation of the agreed changes in membership structure. Since the membership changes have been formally approved by the SC, the difference in the scenarios from the point of view of the governance discussions is a question of timing rather than substance – i.e. when is there likely to be a membership system capable of supporting the agreed new structure.

Both scenarios were based on the principle that as far as possible ADHO-level activities would be supported by income derived from institutional and consortia subscriptions to the journal, with membership income, however derived, going to support CO activities. This principle had received broad support in the Sydney meetings, although was not at that stage in sufficiently concrete form to be considered formally.

Most important, both scenarios presented by Jarom strongly suggested that this approach – fundamentally a reversal of ADHO's current financial practice – would be viable both for ADHO overall and for the COs, and that it appears to be scalable, taking into account the anticipated continuing growth of ADHO through the admission of new family members (of the various types). All of this is important in the context of moving beyond geographically-based COs and anticipating potentially wide variation in the formation of new associations world-wide.

Types of ADHO Associations

There appeared to be consensus in the February 2014 meetings and the subsequent discussions that the ADHO family would involve the following types of associations:

- Constituent Organisations (COs) – the associations that together give ADHO its fundamental definition.

- Associate Organisations (AOs) – each AO becomes part of the ADHO family by virtue of a relationship with a CO.
- Affiliated Organisations (AFs) – associations with whom ADHO creates a formal relationship by means of a Memorandum of Understanding. AFs are not involved in ADHO governance or finances.
- Special Interest Groups (SIGs) – groups that form around specific interests, with formal approval from ADHO, and in-kind support in the form of infrastructure (e.g. web space) and allocated time and venues at conferences. The February 2014 meetings also encompassed the principle that SIGs might be attached to individual COs if that were more appropriate in particular cases than being attached at ADHO level.

More detailed definitions and characteristics of each is discussed in a separate paper, developed in parallel with the London 2015 meeting and first presented to the SC in May 2016 for discussion and voting.

Proposed Governance Structure

One starting point for the governance discussions was the Steering Committee, partly its size and scalability as the Alliance continues to grow, and partly the fact that it has to cover both strategic and policy matters on the one hand, and a wide range of operational matters on the other. The London 2015 meeting gravitated fairly quickly towards Scenario II in the Meister-Short discussion paper (in Wiki).

The proposal to emerge from the discussion is shown diagrammatic form in Appendix 3, below, which has both an outline and a more detailed exposition.

The key proposal is to separate the strategy/policy work from the operational (see Appendix 4 for examples of this distinction), creating two bodies:

- **Executive** to take responsibility for operational matters;
- **Constituent Organisation Board (COB)** to take responsibility for strategy and policy matters.

Executive (Exec)

- The Exec would consist of the Chair, Secretariat and Treasury, with the President as an ex-officio member. All members of the Exec would be appointed by the COB.
- The **Chair** would chair meetings of the Exec, and would have responsibility for the day-to-day operations of ADHO, to be carried out by the Standing Committees and Officers (as described below).
- The **Secretariat** would consist of one or more secretaries, with the responsibility of supporting the work of the Exec and the COB. Note: The current model of joint secretaries appears to work well, and there was no suggestion in the London 2015 meeting that this should be changed.
- The **Treasury** would consist of one or more treasurers, with the responsibility of overseeing and managing all ADHO's finances, including income from the journal or any other sources, expenditures incurred in carrying out ADHO-level business, and any flow of funds between ADHO central and the COs.

- The London 2015 meeting, on the advice of the current Treasurer, proposes the creation of a post of Deputy Treasurer to work alongside the Treasurer. If this proposal is accepted, the 'Treasury' would consist of a Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, but it is envisaged that this might need to change in the future, especially if ADHO becomes more directly involved in the finances of the annual conference.
- The responsibilities of the **Executive** would be:
- - to monitor, oversee and support the work of the Standing Committees and Officers through whom ADHO's policies are implemented and work is carried out.
- - to receive reports from Committees and Officers
- - to receive reports from the Editors of publications receiving financial support from ADHO
- - to put forward proposals to the COB for new policies or changes in existing policies

Constituent Organisation Board (COB)

The membership would be one or more representatives from each Constituent Organisation. The voting members would be the CO representatives.

Note: *In the current arrangements the number of SC members is broadly proportional to the income generation assessed to each CO. It was suggested in the London 2014 meeting that the time may have come to introduce a one-CO one-vote system. Whether to adopt this approach, or to retain the principle of proportionality, and if so on what basis, is a matter for further discussion.*

Note also that COB, unlike the SC would not include Committee Chairs or Executive Office members besides the President. It could also be more inclusive if it contained a representative from the AO's and the SIGs as discussed below.

It is also proposed that a role of SIG Representative should be created, with the SIG convenors tasked with electing one of their number to serve as a non-voting representative of the SIGs on the COB.

There was also discussion of whether a similar Associate Organisation role should be created – i.e. for the AOs to nominate one of their number to serve as a non-voting representative on the COB.

The COB responsibilities would include:

- set strategic goals

- decide all policy matters

- initiate new activities

- commission reports on matters of potential or current strategic interest

- approve the annual budget

- approve admission of new associations

- approve the creation of new SIGs

- approve MOAs to establish formal relationships between ADHO and another organisation

- monitor the performance of the Executive

- receive reports from the Executive on operational activities . Reports from standing committees and officers would be channelled to the COB via the Executive.

- receive reports from COs on their own activities, and on the activities of linked AOs

- receive reports from SIGs via the SIG Co-ordinator

President

It is proposed that the COB should be led by a new post of President, who would be elected by the COB (in much the same way as the SC currently appoints its Chair).

In addition to her/his normal chairing functions in the COB, the President would be an ex-officio member of the Exec, and would have the responsibility of monitoring and overseeing its work on the COB's behalf.

It is not intended that this oversight would be at the level of detailed day-to-day operation, but would be a rather more hands-off role.

The President's role vis-à-vis the Executive would be:

- to receive notification of decisions taken by the Exec with the right and obligation to refer up to the COB any decisions s/he believes are or may be in contravention of agreed ADHO policy

- to offer advice and support to the Chair and officers, in relation to any aspect of the Exec's responsibilities

- to act as a friendly intermediary between the policy work of the COB and the operational work of the Exec.

Committees and Officers

In reviewing the current structure of representative standing committees through which ADHO carries out its work, the London 2015 meeting tried to differentiate between those which have policy as well as operational responsibilities and those with a primary focus on the operational. For the latter, it is proposed that the committee should be replaced by an officer or a task group.

For the former, it is proposed that the standing committee should be retained. At the same time, in the interests of making the operation leaner (and reducing the nomination burden on the COs), it is proposed that – with one exception, as explained below – the committees need not be fully representative of the COs. Instead a rotational model is proposed, such that each CO would have a 'turn' to nominate a representative to serve on each committee, according to a pre-planned schedule to ensure fairness and transparency.

The London 2015 meeting gave extensive consideration to the question of which ADHO committees could be abolished, with their roles being devolved entirely to COs. In the end the meeting took the view – indeed this was the consensus view in the Sydney SC discussions – that the committees had served ADHO well, and that it would be more appropriate to think in terms of slimming down their roles by delegating as much work as possible to the COs, with the ADHO committees or officers taking clearer responsibility for acting as facilitator and co-ordinator in support of the COs.

In addition, the meeting took seriously the suggestion that ADHO should find ways to involve untapped talent among the CO memberships. As a result, in a number of cases recommendations are made that the COB should identify 'additional' committee members in order to add valuable expertise and/or for reasons of inclusivity and balance.

Conference Coordinating Committee

Composition: Not fully representative: rotational principle + individuals who have held particular positions.

Suggested possible *membership*: Chair (appointed by the COB); 3 Rotational CO reps; past/former PC Chair; past Local Organizer; future Local Organizer.

Roles: In addition to its established and important roles in relation to the annual DH conference, it is important for this committee to liaise with COs – and with AOs and Affiliated organisations – about their conferences.

Publications

Composition: We suggest an officer for this role, rather than a committee. To be appointed by the COB.

Roles: To liaise as appropriate with the editors of the publications financially supported by ADHO, and to ask for an annual report from each.

Awards

We recommend continuing with a committee, on the basis that this is an appropriate mechanism for making decisions on the various ADHO awards.

Composition: Chair appointed by COB. We recommend the committee should be fully representative on the grounds that when such a body is entrusted to decide (as opposed to advise on) a matter involving the distribution of money we need representation of COs.

Roles: As currently, to arrange and manage procedures for each ADHO award and to make decisions on the recipients. We add, however, the requirement that their decisions are first referred to (the new position of) President who will monitor for balance and inclusivity – i.e. the Awards Committee makes decisions but sends them to President for equity check.

MLMC

We recommend a slimmed-down committee.

Composition: Chair appointed by COB + 3 x rotational CO reps + 3 members from areas of activity not covered by COs (as determined by the COB).

Roles: as at present.

Infrastructure

We recommend a small non-representational committee.

Composition: Chair appointed by COB. Chair chooses up to 4 co-opted members, taking into account the range of expertise that is required and/or desirable.

Roles: as at present.

Communications

We recommend an officer rather than a committee

Composition: Officer appointed by RC. It may be desirable also to appoint a deputy and it seems appropriate to continue with the Communication Fellows.

Roles: as at present. Important to liaise with COs.

Admissions

We recommend the slimmed-down committee model.

Composition: Chair appointed by COB, plus 3 x rotational CO reps, plus a Past Chair, plus two people from areas not represented by COs (determined by COB).

Roles: as at present.

The above proposals would leave us with the following Committees, with only the Awards Committee being fully representative, and the others 'slimmed down' with respect to CO representation:

- Conference Coordinating Committee (slimmed down)

- Awards Committee (fully representative)

- MLMC (slimmed down)

- Admissions (slimmed down)

Two current committees would be replaced by Officers:

Publications

Communications

And one current committee would be replaced by what would effectively be a small working group:

- Infrastructure

The four committees designated for retention all serve crucial ADHO-level functions, involving both policy and operational matters. In addition we propose consideration should be given to establishing one more:

- A SIG Committee. Members would be the SIG conveners, and they would propose one of their number as the Chair. The Chair would be a non-voting member of the COB.

Finally, the meeting considered whether it would be appropriate to propose a Membership (Services) Committee, or whether an Officer to be responsible for co-ordinating membership across the COs would be more appropriate. This is a matter for further discussion.

Neil Fraistat, Chris Meister, Harold Short
May 2016

Appendix 1 : Constraining Factors

There are a number of constraints that need to be kept in mind.

Legal Constraints

ADHO's legal status as a non-profit body registered in the Netherlands is in its infancy, and any proposals to change the structure and operation of ADHO and its COs will need to take these into account. There may even be reasons to check proposed changes with legal experts in the Netherlands to ensure continuing compliance.

Human Resources

Experience shows that the current fully representational model for standing committees is neither sustainable, nor scalable. The continuing discussions in the SC and elsewhere since

the first London meetings have emphasized not only the necessity but the desirability of spreading the workload more widely, and drawing in a larger pool of individuals willing to make a contribution. The discussions need to keep this in mind.

Technical & administrative constraints

The SC made a decision in principle at the Hamburg meetings in 2012 that ADHO (and COs) should develop its own membership & finance admin system. In the past 2 years more effort has gone into finding practical ways for sourcing and implementing such systems. This development is key to some of the recommendations made at the original London meetings and in the above paper.

Financial Resources

As indicated above, this paper has assumed that the overall changes to the financial model for ADHO proposed at the original London meetings will be agreed. At this stage, however, there is no formal proposal or agreement on the details. As previously reported, the ADHO Treasurer presented models based on the proposed changes at the London 2015 meeting, and it seems likely this will provide the basis for formal proposals that will be adopted. The financial constraints of the new approach will be different from the current constraints, but there will be constraints which must inform the proposals and decisions on governance.
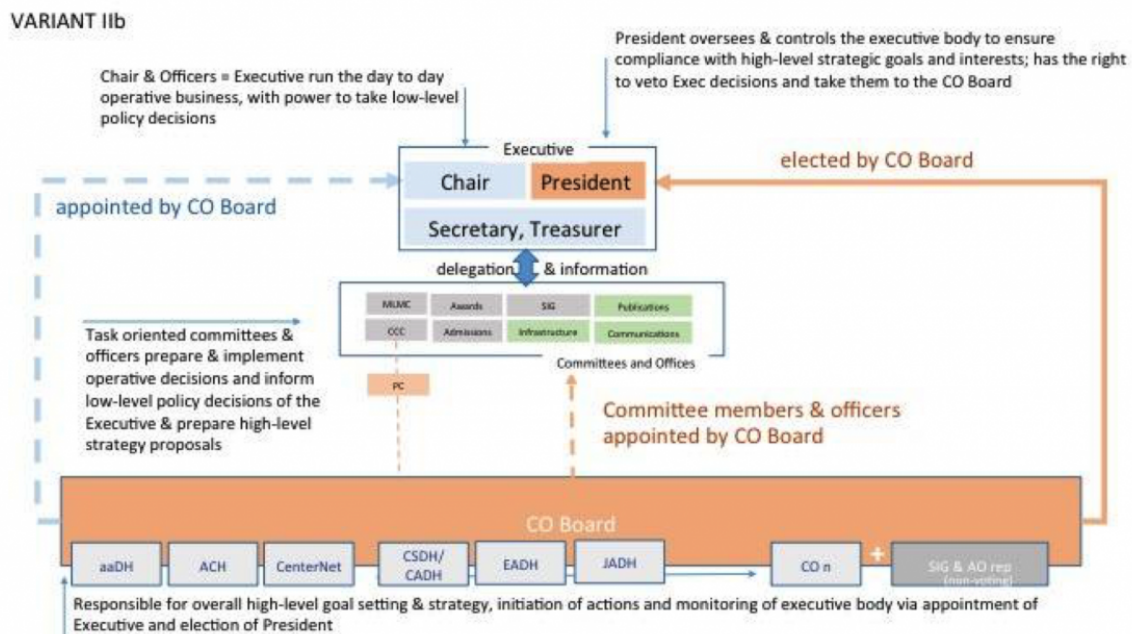
Appendix 2: ADHO Activities and Operational instruments
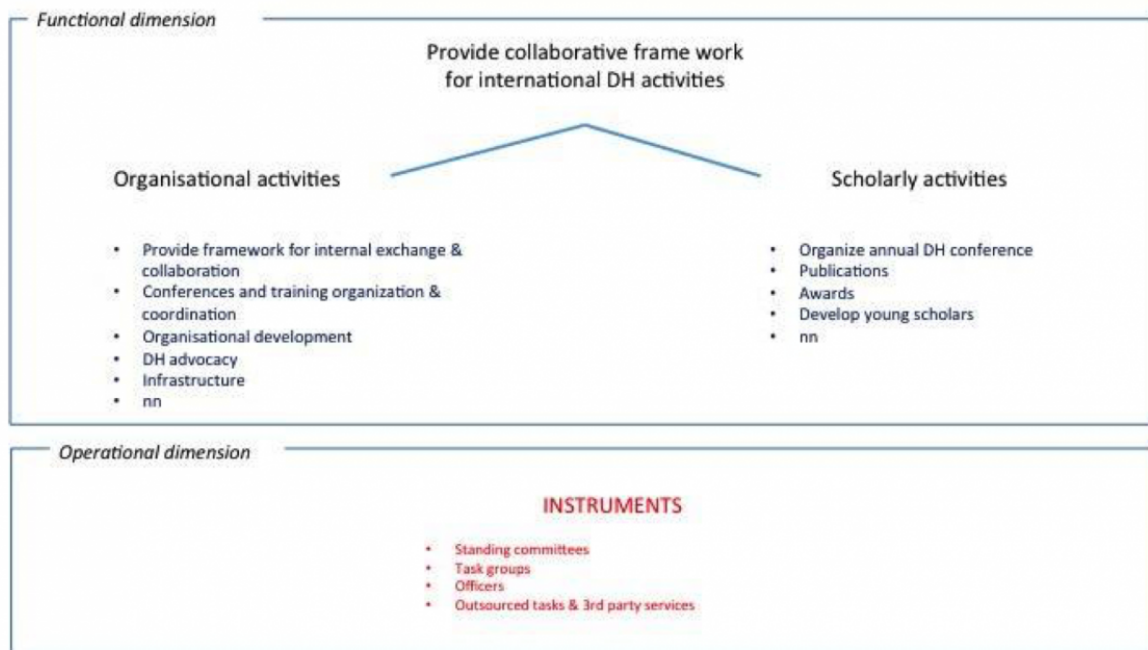
Appendix 3a: Proposed governance structure – Summary
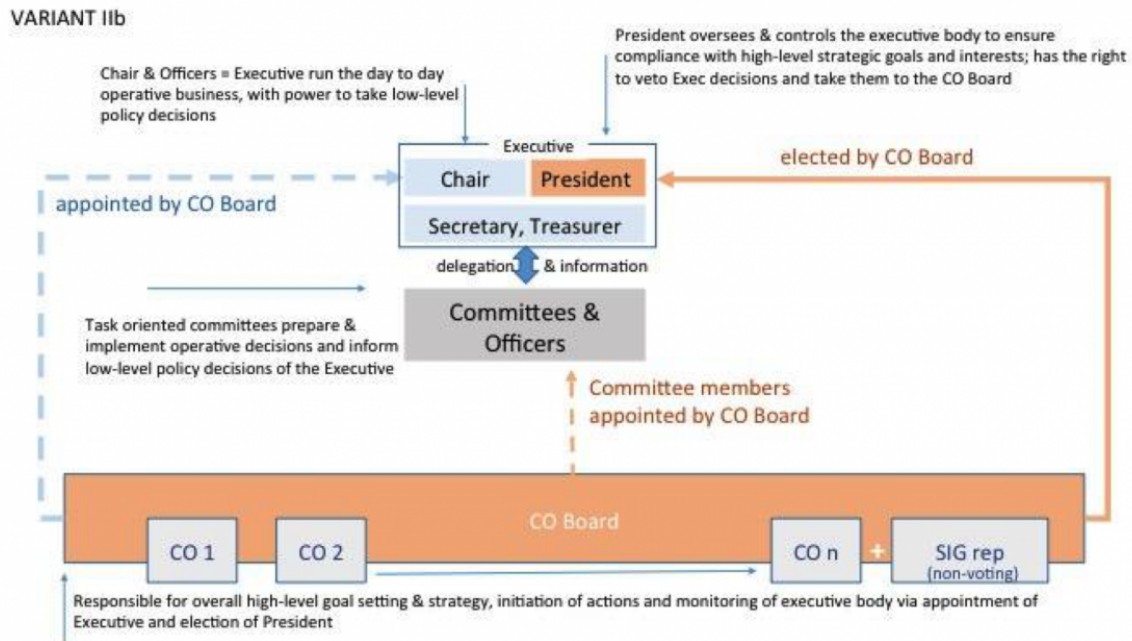
Appendix 3b: Proposed governance structure – Details

Appendix 4: Operational v. Strategic and Policy Activities

Here is an illustrative list compiled by John Nerbonne of distinctions between operational activities that would be handled by the Exec and strategic activities that would be handled by the CO-Board:

decisions that would be taken at the exec level

  -- changes in dates for Montreal DH, 2018 (diff. a few days in Aug.)

  -- added rules for ADHO recognition at conferences (banners, logo

   sizes on web site)

  -- webmaster appointment (ongoing search)

  -- secretary appointment (ongoing search)

  -- rules for sponsors at conf. (gold, silver, platinum)

  -- potential modifications / rules of use for Convalidator

  -- decision to call for proposals to host three years in

   advance rather than two

  -- decision to fund 5th issue DSH for conf. for one year (see below)

decisions where the CO-board would have to be involved

  -- choice of DH site (annually)

  -- decision to underwrite conferences (ongoing)

  -- decision to support 5th issue DSH annually

  -- decision to adopt a new membership management system (replacing

   OUP), but note that extensive executive preparation will be needed

Appendix 5: Participants at the Two London Reform Meetings

London 2014

Paul Arthur

Susan Brown

Neil Fraistat (chair)

Jarom McDonald

Chris Meister

Bethany Nowviskie

Harold Short

Ray Siemens

John Unsworth

Kay Walter

Glen Worthey

London 2015

Arianna Ciula

Neil Fraistat (chair)

Jarom McDonald

Chris Meister

John Nerbonne

Harold Short

Karina van Dalen-Oskam