SLAS 2015: Annual Conference Report
University of Aberdeen
17-18 April 2015

Organising SLAS2015 began in February of 2014. The local organising committee was made up of **Mervyn Bain**, **Maggie Bolton**, **Andrea Oelsner** and **Patience Schell**.

Initial decisions:
After discussions with NomadIT and the internal Aberdeen conference and event office, as well as received feedback from previous SLAS conference organisers, we decided to use the in-house service. Our concerns about NomadIT were that their service was costlier on a like for like basis, but also that, with the specificities and challenges of organising a conference at Aberdeen, we needed local knowledge. Thus, **Nikki Pearce** joined the committee from the CPD service and undertook the vast majority of the work, including the budgeting. The committee was highly appreciative of all that she did.

From summer 2014 until the SLAS conference itself (17-18 April 2015), the committee met fortnightly to discuss progress and deal with any problems.

The development website, designed in house, was available to review in July 2014 and the public website went live in September. The panel and abstract submission system, accessible through the website, was contracted to Oxford Abstracts. CPD had worked with them before and had good results. During July and August we liaised with CDP about how the panel/paper submission system would function, which went live with the website.

We also invited **Deborah Poole** to be the keynote speaker in the early summer. The committee took a decision that we wanted a female keynote speaker, having noted that SLAS had had various male keynote speakers recently.

Because of the distance involved in travelling to Aberdeen for almost all participants, we decided to hold a full two-day conference, over the Friday/Saturday. As the conference was held in April, student accommodation was not available. Moreover, there is extremely limited non-student accommodation available near the university. Thus, block bookings at city centre hotels were arranged and attendees were able to make their bookings through the conference website.

Initially, we hoped to have Latin America cultural events running alongside the conference, but we were unable to manage it. There was, however, a cabinet displaying Latin American artefacts from the Marischal Museum collection in the main conference venue.

We also set the prices for the book exhibition as £150-200 (depending on the size of the table) and £50 for flyers included in the delegate pack/advertisements in the conference book.

The below publishers were contacted about a bookstand or advertisement. This list comes from previous SLAS conferences.

AlterNative; Boydell & Brewer; Berghahn Books; Cambridge University Press; Cengage; Combined Academic; Eurospan Group; Gazelle Books; Iberoamericana de libros; Institute of Latin American Studies; Intellect Books; Liverpool UP; Lynne Rienner; Manchester University Press; Maney Publishing; Pathfinder Press; Peter Lang; Pluto Press; Reaktion Books; Routledge; Wiley Blackwell; Zed Books.

Publishers who attending SLAS or advertised in the programme were:

AlterNative (NZ)	Insert in delegate packs
Liverpool University Press	Insert and advert
Intellect Books	Insert
Combined Academic	Book insert and single table stand
Zed Books	Stand
CUP	Insert/advert
OUP	Book launch planned. Cancelled as author couldn't attend
Routledge	Stand, advert, insert
Reaktion Books	Insert
Lynn Rienner	Insert

We were disappointed that more publishers did not want to exhibit at SLAS2015, and expect that some misapprehensions about the distance and 'isolation' of Aberdeen were part of the reason.

Paper/Panel Submissions
We decided on a two stage call for papers, with a panel call going out in early summer 2014 (deadline 3rd October) and then a second round of papers submitted to open panels with a deadline 28 November. Notification of final acceptances for those papers was to be given 16 January. That timing ended up being far tighter than we would have liked, especially for colleagues arranging travel from a distance and coordination with SLAS conference grants. Overall 36 panels were accepted (37 submitted) and there were also 259 paper abstracts submitted. One of the challenges was that some of the open panels received four times the number of submissions than could be accommodated. One solution was to put together panels ourselves, with those strong papers which had been rejected from their first choice panel.

Publicity/Communications:
As well as communicating via the conference website, we emailed attendees with regular updates and information. Many queries came to CPD or to Patience (as convenor) directly, which were handled as quickly as possible. Often these queries were helpful to indicate an area that had not been clarified or note a problem that would affect more people.

Registration fees:

We sought to set the registration fees as reasonably as possible, and budgeted for the lowest reasonable surplus. The fees were:

MEMBERS

Delegate Full Rate	£210.00
Student Full Rate	£155.00
Delegate Day Rate	£115.00
Student Day Rate	£60.00

NON MEMBERS

Delegate Full Rate	£245.00
Student Full Rate	£190.00
Delegate Day Rate	£135.00
Student Day Rate	£75.00

OTHER

Conference Dinner	£30.00

Full rates included the welcome reception, attendance at the conference, refreshments, lunches & the conference dinner, and a delegate pack.

Day rates included attendance on the day selected, refreshments and lunch on that date and a delegate pack. The conference dinner was not included in these rates, but could be paid as an extra.

Registration numbers were:

	MEMBERS		NON MEMBERS	
	Delegate	Student	Delegate	Student
Day Rate	10	18	21	16
Full rate	38	54	33	13
Conference dinner only				12

TOTAL REGISTRATIONS 203

The registration desk was staffed all day by CDP staff during the conference (Friday and Saturday) - not only did they have computers available to them but they also had a portable printer to help attendees in need. A large pin board at registration showed the most up-to-date programme. There were more last minute changes to the programme that there should have been and for future conferences would be worthwhile bringing the 'final' registration deadline forward.

Social events:

Aberdeen City Council hosted the welcome drinks reception at the Town House in the city centre. This offer was one we could not pass up, but it required negotiation with BLAR/Wiley, which typically hosts that reception, to find an alternative with which we were all happy. The conference dinner/gran baile was held at the Beach Ballroom on Friday night. Although SLAS often has a salsa band, we thought that for conference participants a ceilidh would be more exciting. We also arranged for pipers and whisky souvenirs to emphasise the Scottish theme. *BLAR* contributed to the conference dinner by paying for the whisky and souvenir chocolates that were printed with the *BLAR* logo.

Funding: Our funding came from both internal and external sources.

INTERNAL

The School of Social Science	£500
The School of Language and Literature	£750
College of Arts and Social Science	£1200
The Office of the Principal	Welcome drink at the conference dinner.

EXTERNAL

FCo	£1200
BLAR	£1000
Cervantes Institute	£250

The **final budget** was:

INCOME

Credit Card Fee	£29,375.00
Individual Registrations	£625.00
Sponsors, Exhibitors / Pack Inserts	£5,262.29
TOTAL	£35,262.29

EXPENDITURE

Oxford Abstracts	£720.00
Delegate packs and gifts	£3,602.88
Deb Poole Expenses /Accomm /Travel	£1,661.35
Catering at University	£10,037.75
Conference Dinner and Ceilidh	£7,056.75
Misc	£141.23
CPD Services	£5,000.00
TOTAL	£28,219.96

FINAL TOTAL	**£7,042.33**

Programme Decisions:

- The plenary talk was the last session on Friday, which encouraged high turnout.
- Attendance at the conference dinner, following the plenary talk, was high with about 120 attendees.
- The SLAS Committee meeting was held during lunchtime on Friday. The SLAS AGM was held on Saturday morning, which may have had implications for attendance.
- A PILAS lunch was organised for Saturday.

Venues:

The main conference venue was the Elphinstone Hall, with the Linklater rooms, adjacent, being used as well. We booked 8 rooms for parallel sessions over the two days in nearby buildings (King's College and New King's).

The book exhibition/museum displays were both held in Elphinstone Hall.