

Changes in the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society

Peter Hutcheson

Texas State University

The philosophy faculty at University of Texas El Paso has played an important role in the development of the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society. For one thing, philosophers at UTEP became involved in the *New Mexico* Philosophical Society, and that is why the name changed to the New Mexico-*West Texas* Philosophical Society. The recent name change to the New Mexico-Texas Philosophical Society was not the first name change. It was the second.

Some current and former UTEP philosophers have been officers of the society. Bill Springer, for example, was President of the Society approximately 30 years ago. John Symons was the President more recently, and our current President, Luciana Garbayo, teaches at UTEP. We unsuccessfully tried to persuade Jules Simon, but he was too busy with his duties as department chairman at the time.

The New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society was a relatively small group of philosophers, and Hubert Alexander was its Secretary-Treasurer for decades. The gatherings worked because of Hubert's efforts year after year. We are all indebted to Hubert. That is why the society funds an award that bears his name.

But Hubert died in 1998, and that of course brought significant changes. Hubert's former student, Gary Cesarz, took over the job of Secretary-Treasurer and served the society for many years. The journal fell behind its publication schedule. After years of no publication of the journal, the editor finally resigned in 2005.

Joe Stamey and Houghton Dalrymple also died in 2002, four years after Hubert. Joe had in the 90s been a co-editor of the journal, and "Dal," as we sometimes referred to Dalrymple, could always be counted on to deliver aswell-reasoned paper, and to do so with his heavy Texan accent. Gary Cesarz let us know that would like to resign his post as Secretary-Treasurer. It appeared that the New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society might die along with Hubert, Dal, and Joe.

But it did not. Thomas Urban, who had been our President in 2002, worked with Lynne Fulmer in drafting some explicit rules, or bylaws, for the society. Later Tom

worked on submitted the forms to IRS so that the society became a 501 c (3) educational and charitable organization. Tom even paid the fee the federal government required for evaluating our application. Tom did such a good job on the application that the feds approved it quickly and the first time we submitted it. These two things are (I understand) rare. Once we had the status with the feds, we applied for and received exemption from sales tax in the state of Texas. Every time we hold a meeting in Texas our exemption saves the society approximately \$300 in tax. You can thank Tom for that achievement, which happened in 2006.

Other things changed in 2006, too. The journal had not been published in years, and Glenn Joy volunteered to become the journal editor. The journal is not entirely up to date, but it is closer than it was when Glenn accepted the job no one seemed to want. Glenn recognized the society's need and stepped up to the plate. We have all benefited from Glenn's attention to detail, his patience with authors who take a long time to respond, and his seeking out good deals with printing businesses.

New Mexico State was the host of the meeting in 2006, and Tim Cleveland and Danny Scoccia kindly and fortunately assumed the secretary's duties of preparing the program even though they were the local hosts. The meeting that year was very small, with only two dozen or so papers on the program. But Tim and Danny improved the program by having commentators for every paper. Heretofore the society did not have prepared comments for each paper, but we all know sessions are better when there are commentators. We considered it such a good idea that we have had commentators ever since. We can thank Tim and Danny for improving the quality of our conferences.

Knowing that Gary wanted to resign, my friend and colleague Glenn Joy asked me if I would be willing to serve as Secretary-Treasurer. I foolishly agreed, not suspecting just how much work it would be.

The society had handled submissions with paper and snail mail, and we needed to speed up communications. I needed to co-ordinate the use of e-mail for both submissions and distribution to the Vice President and other referees.

Despite Tom's, Tim's, and Danny's efforts, the 2006 meeting in Las Cruces was so small that I suspected that more advertising was necessary. That is why I created a large distribution list, with over 300 e-mail addresses typed in one-by-one. John Symons made the excellent suggestion that we advertise with the American Philosophical Association, and I did so while I held the office.

Digitizing and advertising were not enough. The society was in danger of going broke. We spent every penny we collected at the 2007 meeting in Austin. There was not any money left for the journal, and yet we were four issues behind schedule. We had less than enough money to cover two issues, let alone four. So I persuaded the members to raise the dues. You can blame me for that; I hope you are somewhat mollified by the fact that I called for a reduction of the dues when I left office in 2011.

Dan Flores has had two jobs at once. He's been Secretary, Managing Journal Editor, and President in recent years. Dan has worked to co-ordinate the refereeing process by soliciting volunteers at the business meeting. I predict that his efforts will make the job easier for the next Secretary. I guess Dan is looking forward to being only the journal editor. That job alone will be plenty. I cannot imagine being Secretary on top of that. We owe you, Dan. Thanks.

Robert Louis has not only done a great job as Treasurer. He did a much better job than I did of tracking down journal subscribers. Tom Urban deserves credit for asking Robert if he would be willing to be treasurer.

Many of the society's officers and members are from central and eastern Texas. Audrey McKinney, Glenn Joy, and I all teach (or, in Glenn's case, taught) at Texas State, which is in central Texas. Vince Luizzi, Lynne Fulmer, and Gilbert Fulmer are Past Presidents. Tom Urban, Dan Flores, Robert Louis, Andrew Pavelich, and Nathan Smith all teach or taught in Houston when they served as officers. A few years ago Dan Stiver was President (2008), and he teaches in Abilene. Although some people opposed the name change because the society had been called the New Mexico-West Texas Philosophical Society for decades, the fact is that many officers and active members have for decades not come from either New Mexico or West Texas. It was time for the society's name to include many of its officers and members.

The future? I hope that Dan Flores and Justin Bell will bring the journal up to date. If they manage to publish two volumes per year, the journal will be up to date in a few years. I hope that the new Secretary will update and add to the e-mail distribution list I created. I hope the new Secretary will advertise with the APA and manage the many duties of that post. I hope that once the journal is up to date, it will be feasible to lower the dues once more, or else consider inviting a famous philosopher.

The *New Mexico-Texas* Philosophical Society is a regional group of philosophers. It is not a national or international conference. But with the efforts of the many people I've mentioned, I think that it is an improved regional society. Here's the baton. Run with it.