

## President's Report 2019-2020

Bruce Dadey

It's my pleasure to present the president's report for the RhetCanada 2020 AGM. As this was my first year as president, my aims were modest: to transfer administrative control of the association to the new executive and to organize our 2020 conference. The first has been accomplished, but the second, alas, was thwarted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Much of the work for the conference had already been done by the time the conference had to be postponed. I'd like to thank the RhetCanada executive—Andrew McGillivray, Benoît Sans, Tania Smith, Sigrid Streit, and Tracy Whalen—for their assistance in crafting the 2020 CFP and for pitching in to help the advisory committee carry out the rewarding but challenging task of reviewing all the proposals we received. The Advisory committee, consisting of David Beard, Julie Dainville, Tess Laidlaw, and Devon Moriarty, were assisted by Kyle Gerber and Maša Torbica in the task of reviewing proposals, and I'd like to thank them all as well for their thorough and thoughtful work.

The decision to entirely postpone RhetCanada 2020 was a difficult one. I investigated the option of moving our conference online, but our members value the opportunity to interact informally with colleagues between sessions, and Congress's proposed online solution would have allowed only a very limited degree of interaction even within sessions. Postponement was the clear choice.

Our plan to allow people who were accepted this year to present their papers at next year's meeting means the efforts of both proposers and reviewers will still bear fruit, even if belatedly, and our 2021 conference in Edmonton promises to be a stimulating and exciting event. We will canvas accepted presenters in the fall with the hope that they are still interested in presenting their papers in Edmonton. If there are a number of openings then we will re-issue our CFP to draw in more participants. I'm sure that, like me, many of you are already looking forward to gathering once more in person in 2021.

From my perspective as a long-term member of RhetCanada/CSSR (my first presentation was in 2006) and as current president, it seems to me our association is in a time of transition. As I stated in a previous email to members, RhetCanada, under a variety of names, has been in existence since 1980. Long-term members such as Michael Purves-Smith, Shannon Purves-Smith, Pierre Zoberman, Tania Smith and many others—some no longer involved and some whom we are fortunate to still have as active members—fostered the association and set it on a solid footing in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

But to flourish, academic organizations need a constant renewal of energy, and it falls to those of us currently involved to ensure RhetCanada continues to provide a collegial forum for rhetorical study and scholarship in Canada. I hope in the next year to develop, in association with other members, new strategies for promoting the association, keeping our members connected, and attracting new members. I welcome any suggestions you might have for attaining these goals.

I'd like to close by once more thanking the RhetCanada executive for their work during a busy and unexpectedly challenging year, and by expressing my appreciation to all those who submitted conference proposals and who supported the association in many other ways. I wish you all continued safety and health, and I look forward to working with the executive and membership over the next year to nurture the association and prepare for our meeting in 2021 at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.