



BYLAWS OF THE COMICS STUDIES SOCIETY

Revised October 2023

The Comics Studies Society (hereafter the Society) is an interdisciplinary learned society offering scholars and teachers (including academics, non-academic or independent scholars, instructors at all levels, and students) the opportunity to promote the critical study of comics as an art and a communicative form, improve classroom teaching, and engage in open and ongoing conversations about the media, means, and cultures of comics. The Society defines comics broadly to include: comic strips; comic books, papers, and magazines; comics albums, graphic novels, and other graphic books; webcomics and other digital formats; single-panel cartoons, including editorial and gag cartoons; caricature; animation; and other related forms and traditions. All types of sequential art, graphic narrative, and cartooning are relevant to the Society's mission.

The Society is a nonprofit organization founded in Ohio in 2014 and organized and operated only for charitable, education and other purposes as defined in Section 501-(c)-3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now or hereafter amended. The Society is governed by *Bylaws* adopted in 2014 and amended in 2018, 2021, and 2023.

SECTION 1—NAME

- 1.1 The name of the organization shall be the Comics Studies Society. The name *Comics Studies Society* shall be considered the property and trademark of the organization. Individual members of the organization may not use the imprimatur of the Comics Studies Society, or CSS, to publicize individual work outside of the business of the organization. Should the organization be dissolved, the name *Comics Studies Society* shall be retired and not used for any subsequent business purpose.

SECTION 2—PURPOSE

- 2.1 The purpose of the Society shall be to foster and to promote study, criticism, and research in Comics Studies in all its varied aspects. The Society is an organization that works best with the support of its members, and we invite students, scholars, librarians, artists, and others interested in comics to join our community as individual or institutional members. In pursuit of its mission, the Society may enter into partnerships with other organizations that share a commitment to Comics Studies.

SECTION 3—FINANCES

- 3.1 The Society shall be a not-for-profit organization whose revenues shall support the aforementioned purposes within the meaning of Section 501-(c)-(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Such sections of the Internal Revenue Code as bear on 501-(c)-(3) corporations, including 501-(c)-(3) (1954), 501 (h), 509 (a), 4942, 4941 (d), 4943 (c), 4944, 4945 (d), or corresponding provisions of any subsequent Federal tax laws, shall be presumed to define the limits of activities by the Society.
- 3.2 The Society shall be primarily financed by annual membership dues which include a subscription to *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*. The amount of the dues is determined by The Ohio State University Press (hereafter the Press). This amount is approved by the Executive Board.
- 3.3 The finances of the organization shall be audited at least every three years, and the result of the audit shall be included in the annual financial report of the Executive Treasurer to the Society. The Executive Treasurer (in consultation with the Executive Officers) will select an auditor who has the expertise and knowledge to perform an independent audit for the Society. The Executive Treasurer will follow Ohio State Law audit requirements for charitable nonprofit, Statute and Description: Ohio Rev. Code § 1716.04*.

SECTION 4—MEMBERSHIP

- 4.1 Membership is open to all persons.
- 4.2 Active membership in the Society shall begin when the Executive Treasurer and the Press receive the first payment of annual dues. Any member whose dues are in arrears one month after the mailing of a second notice to the last recorded address shall be dropped from membership rolls. Members who have been thus dropped may be reinstated upon payment of one year's dues in advance. No retroactive dues, payments, or penalties shall be assessed. Only active members may vote or hold a position in the Society.
- 4.3 Scholarly institutions and organizations may have institutional memberships in the Society. Universities and similar organizations interested in promoting the study of Comics Studies may become institutional sponsors.
- 4.4 The Executive Board may designate one person each year as an Honorary Lifetime Member.

SECTION 5—EXECUTIVE BOARD

- 5.1 The Executive Board consists of fifteen positions; ten are elected and five are appointed. The ten elected positions are the President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Executive Secretary, President of the Graduate Student Caucus, and five Members at Large. The five positions appointed by the Executive Board are the Executive Treasurer, the Journal Editor, the Social Strategist, the Ombuds, and the Webmaster. The Immediate Past President may serve on the Executive Board in an advisory capacity. Any member in good standing is eligible for a position, provided that they have not held that same position in the previous six years; the exception being the positions of Executive Secretary, Executive Treasurer, and Members at Large. Executive Board members cannot hold two Board positions (elected or appointed) at once. Executive Board members may be called upon to submit reports on their duties periodically. The voting status of each member of the Executive Board is noted in the position descriptions below.
- 5.2 The President, the First Vice-President, the Second Vice-President, the Executive Treasurer, and the Executive Secretary serve as the Executive Officers who perform the day-to-day administration of the Society and suggest names for appointed positions to be approved by the Executive Board. Executive Officers submit annual reports to the Society and for the succession of Officers.
- 5.3 Accession to the presidency occurs via a process of rotation that takes three years, with an optional fourth year: from Second Vice-President, to First Vice-President, to President, followed by the optional final year of service as Immediate Past President, serving in a non-voting, advisory capacity to the Executive Board. Thus, being elected to serve as Second Vice-President is the path to the presidency and entails a three-year commitment. The Second Vice-President is elected directly by the membership, to typically serve on the Executive Board for a minimum of three years.
- 5.4 The Second Vice-President shall assist the First Vice-President as necessary, learning how to organize the Society's annual conference, and serving as the chair of the Awards Committee. After one year, as described in above, the Second Vice-President succeeds to the first vice-presidency, and then the year thereafter to the presidency. In the event that there is no sitting Second Vice-President, the President shall, in consultation with the Nominating Committee, initiate a call for a special election to elect a replacement to be ratified by a majority vote of the membership. The Second Vice-President is a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 5.5 The First Vice-President, as described above, comes into the position after a year as Second Vice-President and serves a one-year term before succeeding to the presidency. The First Vice-President, working with the Conference Organizing Committee, coordinates the Society's annual conference, assists the President as necessary, and assumes the duties of President in their absence. If the First Vice-President vacates the position prior to the expiration of the term, the Second Vice-President shall succeed to the position and serve out the unexpired term, followed by a full term as First Vice-President thereafter. However, in the event that there is no sitting Second Vice-President to succeed to the First Vice-

President's position, the President shall, in consultation with the Nominating Committee, initiate a call for a special election to elect a replacement to be ratified by a majority vote of the membership. The First Vice-President is a voting member of the Executive Board.

- 5.6 The President, as described above, comes into the position after a year as First Vice-President and serves a one-year term. The President presides at meetings, conducts necessary business throughout the year, convenes a meeting of the Executive Board at the annual meeting of the Society, oversee fundraising efforts, and oversees the functions of the Society. If the President vacates the position prior to the expiration of term, the First Vice-President shall succeed to the position, serve out the unexpired term and one full year's term as President thereafter. The President is a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 5.7 If the President exercises their option to serve as the Immediate Past President, that person continues to serve in a non-voting, advisory capacity to the Executive Board for one additional year after the completion of the presidential year.
- 5.8 The Executive Secretary coordinates activities and programs for the Society, appoints program chairs for annual and special meetings, serves as parliamentarian, handles general correspondence, chairs *Bylaws* committees runs the elections, and takes minutes of the Executive Board's meetings. The Executive Secretary is responsible for archiving the Executive Board's communications and correspondence on Slack (or future platforms), with such archives being attentive to all due confidentiality. The Executive Secretary serves a three-year term and may serve multiple and consecutive terms. If the Executive Secretary vacates the office prior to the expiration of the term, the President shall, in consultation with the Nominating Committee, initiate a call for a special election to elect a replacement to be ratified by a majority vote of the membership. The Executive Secretary is a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 5.9 The Executive Treasurer advises the Executive Board on all financial matters. The Executive Treasurer maintains the membership list in consultation with the Press, corresponds frequently with the Press about memberships and dues, serves on the Conference Organizing Committee and the Outreach Committee, presents regular membership and Treasurer's Reports to the Board, coordinates an audit, and files all necessary financial reports with external agencies. The Executive Treasurer is responsible for managing the Society's bank account, which includes but is not limited to: maintaining a record of bank statements; balancing the accounts; writing checks; ensuring deposits; and paying bills. The Executive Treasurer maintains a record of donations and fundraising campaigns and ensures their deposit into the Society bank account. The Executive Treasurer is the liaison to the Press as it relates to contractual and financial matters. The Executive Treasurer serves a three-year term and may serve multiple and consecutive terms. If the Executive Treasurer vacates the position prior to the expiration of the term, the remaining Executive Officers, in consultation with the Executive Board, will appoint a replacement. In cooperation with the Executive Officers, the outgoing Executive Treasurer must determine a method for secure transfer of information and access to accounts for the incoming Executive Treasurer. The Executive Treasurer is a voting member of the Executive Board.

- 5.10 Five Members at Large participate on an ongoing basis in carrying out the business of the Society, which include but is not limited to attending Executive Board meetings and serving on assigned committees (as described in the Comics Studies Society *Policies and Procedures*. Members at Large may also serve on the Editorial Board of the Society's journal. Members at Large serve staggered two-year terms. Members at Large may run for re-election after their initial term expires, and may serve a total of two consecutive terms. Members at Large may also run for another position at the expiration of their tenure as Members at Large. In the event of a special election for Second Vice President or Executive Secretary, a Member at Large's name may appear on the ballot. If a Member at Large vacates the position prior to the expiration of their term, the President shall nominate a successor to serve out the unexpired term, with the approval of the Executive Board. Members at Large are voting members of the Executive Board.
- 5.11 The Journal Editor coordinates, organizes, edits, and oversees the Society's peer-reviewed journal of scholarly work. The editor of the journal will be responsible for conducting those matters of the Society's journal with the approval of the Executive Board; however, appointments of members to the editorial board are at the discretion of the editor. The Editor also oversees the process by which papers are selected for the journal. The Journal Editor is appointed by the Executive Board, serves a three-year term and may serve multiple and consecutive terms. The Journal Editor is a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 5.12 The Social Strategist role is largely a digital one, responding to incoming inquiries to the Society and maintaining the Society's presence in the most salient social media spaces. In conjunction with the Executive Treasurer and relevant committees, the Social Strategist runs the online elections mechanism. The Social Strategist will usually serve on the Conference Organizing Committee to promote the annual conference in social media spaces and develop a public communications strategy. The Social Strategist will also liaise with the Outreach Committee. The Social Strategist is appointed by the Executive Board, serves a three-year term and may serve multiple consecutive terms. The Social Strategist is a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 5.13 The CSS Ombuds is a member who acts in an impartial capacity and is appointed to help mediate concerns and conflicts from other Society members. The Ombuds is appointed by the Executive Board and their appointment is ratified by the general membership, typically during the relevant annual election. The Ombuds is contactable throughout the year by email and will be onsite for the annual, in-person conference. The Ombuds will process all complaints according to the Society's Code of Conduct. The nominee should be a secure, senior member of the Society, ideally familiar with Ombuds work in academic settings. The Ombuds serves a three-year term and may serve multiple and consecutive terms. The Ombuds is a non-voting member of the Executive Board. (Additional details can be found at <https://comicsstudies.org/ombuds/>.)

- 5.14 The Webmaster is a member who is appointed by the Executive Board. The Webmaster's primary role is to maintain and update the website in response to the ongoing and immediate needs of the Executive Board and the Society. These maintenance responsibilities include but are not limited to managing the online apparatus for elections and the collection of essential information for the annual conference; these duties include liaising with the Social Strategist and Conference Organizing Committee. The Webmaster is responsible for overseeing hosting and maintaining e-mail addresses for the Society. The Webmaster is appointed by the Executive Board, serves a three-year term and may serve multiple consecutive terms. The Webmaster is a voting member of the Executive Board.

SECTION 6—STANDING COMMITTEES

- 6.1.1 Nominating Committee: A three-person Nominating Committee, chosen from among the Executive Board and appointed by the President, will be responsible for recruiting and confirming the eligibility of candidates for open posts to be filled on the Executive Board. The Nominating Committee drafts calls for open appointed positions to the Executive Board; those calls are approved by the Executive Board before applications are accepted and solicited. In the event of a special election for First Vice-President, Second Vice-President, or Executive Secretary, the Nominating Committee may also recruit candidates from Members-at-Large or the Society's general membership. Members of the Nominating Committee will serve two-year terms and may serve a total of two consecutive terms.
- 6.1.2 The Society recognizes that both it and Comics Studies in general benefit from a diverse makeup, including diversity in scholarly discipline, professional field, career position, cultural background, and identity. The Nominating Committee is enjoined to consider diversity in its nominations, and to welcome diverse nominees from among the Society's general membership. While representation on the Executive Board shall not be determined by a quota system, nor shall nominating and governing procedures be constrained by quota, the Society shall be guided by the principle that a diverse Executive Board and diverse Society are vitally important to the further development of Comics Studies.
- 6.2 Conference Organizing Committee: A Conference Organizing Committee will be responsible for organizing the annual conference: First Vice President (Chair), Second Vice President, Executive Treasurer, Social Strategist, two Members at Large, one member recommended by the Graduate Student Caucus, and the Webmaster, as well as a local host, if different from any of the above. Additional members of the Executive Board may be asked to join this committee on an as-needed basis. The Conference may be held in person, online, or in hybrid modes; the Conference Organizing Committee will coordinate with the Executive Board to establish an appropriate course of action. The First Vice President, as chair, is responsible for overseeing conference tasks enumerated in the Comics Studies Society *Policies and Procedures*, as well as delegating specific tasks to committee members as needed. The Conference Organizing Committee, in coordination with the Treasurer, proposes a detailed conference budget (including proposed registration fees and estimated expenses) for approval by the Executive Board. Expenses over and above the approved budget need approval by the Executive Board.

- 6.3.1 Awards Committees: The Awards Coordinator acts on behalf of the Executive Board to recognize outstanding contributions to the field with annual prizes. Awards are presented by the Society at its annual conference. The Awards Committee will maintain a document that outlines its guidelines and practices; this document, and its revisions, will be publicly available and approved by the Executive Board. Peer nominations and self-nominations are welcome.
- 6.3.2 The Awards Coordinator is a member of the Executive Board, appointed by the President, who solicits nominations and manages the judging process, including the recruitment and supervision of subcommittees. Nominees for each prize will be reviewed by a committee of not less than three members of the Society, as nominated by the Awards Coordinator for approval by the Executive Board. All nominees will be notified of the results by the Awards Coordinator, and the announcement of winners will be published on the Society's website, in *Inks: The Journal of the Comics Studies Society*, and announced at the annual awards ceremony. The Awards Coordinator will exercise all due diligence to avoid conflicts of interest. The Awards Coordinator serves a term of one year and may serve multiple and consecutive terms with the approval of the Executive Board.
- 6.4 The Outreach Committee is comprised of two Executive Board members, one member recommended by the Graduate Student Caucus, and two Society members. Membership on this committee is selected by the Executive Board and appointed by the President, who also designates the chair of this committee. The Social Strategist will also liaise with the Outreach Committee. The Outreach Committee develops events and programming related to expanding and supporting initiatives for the purpose of diversifying the membership of the Society. Members on this committee serve one-year terms and may serve consecutive terms with the approval of the Executive Board.
- 6.4.1 The Outreach Committee allows for the participation of two Society members not currently elected to the Executive Board. After the Outreach Committee has been struck by the Executive Board, this Committee then develops a short list of candidates from the general membership to join the Outreach Committee. This slate of candidates is presented to the Executive Board for approval and approved candidates may then be solicited by the Outreach Committee for their involvement.
- 6.5 The Future Conferences Committee is comprised of the Second Vice President and two additional members of the Executive Board. This committee is chaired by the Second Vice President and is tasked with collecting and vetting proposals for possible host institutions for future conferences in adherence with current site proposal guidelines as established by the Executive Board. These proposals may be solicited by the Future Conferences Committee and members of the Executive Board, or proposed by the Membership.

SECTION 7—THE GRADUATE STUDENT CAUCUS

- 7.1 The Society recognizes the Graduate Student Caucus as an affiliated organization of members comprised of and providing support to graduate students, newly admitted graduate students, graduate students between programs, and scholars engaged in postdoctoral research in the field. Given the precarious nature of those positions, the Graduate Student Caucus works to grow the field by supporting these colleagues and providing guidance to undergraduates who hope to enter the field.
- 7.2 The sitting President of the Graduate Student Caucus, elected in accordance with the Caucus's own bylaws, shall serve as both liaison between the Executive Board and the Caucus and as a voting member of the Executive Board.
- 7.3 The Graduate Student Caucus is responsible for establishing and maintaining processes for the selection of individuals who will occupy standing committee positions reserved for members of the Graduate Student Caucus.

SECTION 8—COHORTS

- 8.1 The Executive Board may establish Cohorts as interest groups that have their own structure and leadership, whose interests align with that of the Society.
- 8.2 An assemblage of no fewer than five Society members may propose a Cohort to the Executive Board. Cohorts may be organized around research and/or professional interests. Cohorts provide opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing, and liaising with the Executive Board. Upon the recommendation of the Executive Officers, Cohort proposals are approved by the Executive Board. Once Cohorts are approved by the Executive Board, their formation is announced to the general membership and membership of the Cohort is open to applicable Society members, as defined by the Cohort.
- 8.3 Cohorts may be consulted by Standing Committees for input into Society events, programming, and nominations.
- 8.4 Once a Cohort has been established, the Second Vice-President will serve as the official liaison between Cohorts and the Executive Board including but not limited to matters identified in 8.3.
- 8.5 After a Cohort has been established, it is subject to a review process every five years that will consider membership, activity, and participation. This review process will be initiated by the Second Vice-President who will report their findings to the Executive Board for consideration. Reviews may result in a renewal in Cohort approval for another five year period or suspension of that Cohort until such time that sufficient changes are made to the Cohort, as suggested by the Executive Board, and reapproved by the Executive Board.

SECTION 9—MEETINGS

- 9.1 An annual business meeting of the Society and its Executive Board will be held in conjunction with the annual conference.
- 9.2 The place and time of the annual business meeting shall be announced to the membership no later than three months prior to the meeting.
- 9.3 Robert's Rules of Order, current edition, governs the conduct of meetings.

SECTION 10—PUBLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Society shall sponsor the publication of a scholarly journal and maintain an official website. Both shall be considered publications of the Society, for the benefit of the general membership. A portion of each member's dues shall be assigned to those publications to pay their costs. Each member shall receive access to such publications as are issued during the period of the membership.
- 10.2 The Editors shall make annual reports to the Society. Their files and records shall be open to the Executive Board.

SECTION 11—ELECTIONS

- 11.1 The Nominating Committee shall put forth the names of candidates for positions in the Society to the Executive Board. In addition, any member of the Society may be nominated or self-nominated for the positions of Second Vice-President, Executive Secretary, or Member at Large via an electronic call for nominations. In the event of a special election, the Nominating Committee shall put forth the names of candidates via an electronic correspondence.
- 11.2 The Executive Secretary, in cooperation with the Webmaster, administers the election electronically. The majority vote winner in any contest wins the election.
- 11.3 Election results and the names of position-holders shall be announced on the Society's website and by electronic mail.

SECTION 12—APPOINTMENTS

- 12.1 The five positions appointed by the Executive Board are the Executive Treasurer, the Journal Editor, the Social Strategist, the Ombuds, and the Webmaster. It is the responsibility of the Executive Officers to bring names forward for appointed positions to be approved by the Executive Board. Executive Officers submit annual reports to the Society and for the succession of Officers.

- 12.2 Vacant appointed positions are filled by the Executive Board who approves an open call for the position. The Executive Board collects applications and may solicit applicants. Any member in good standing is eligible for a position.
- 12.3 Calls for appointed positions are drafted by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Executive Board before accepting applications or soliciting applicants.
- 12.4 The Executive Officers review applications and conduct interviews with eligible candidates. Upon completion of the interview process, the Executive Officers recommend the finalist(s) for the position and present the candidate(s) to the Executive Board to approve the appointment. This appointment is confirmed by a majority vote from the Executive Board. The appointment of the Ombuds is also ratified by the general membership.

SECTION 13—DISMISSALS AND EXCLUSIONS

- 13.1 In the event an elected or appointed member of the Executive Board is no longer able to perform their duties, that individual submits a notice of resignation to the President. Once the President receives that notice, the President initiates the appropriate replacement process for the position. If conditions allow, a notice that contains the time period of one Executive Board meeting is preferred.
- 13.2 In the event a chair or standing member of a committee is no longer able to perform their duties, that individual submits a request to be relieved of their duties. Committee chairs submit their request to the President who then takes this request to the Executive Board to select a new chair for the committee. Committee members submit their request to the committee chair who coordinates with the Executive Board to secure an appropriate replacement. If conditions allow, a notice that contains the time period of one Executive Board meeting is preferred.
- 13.3 The Executive Board may dismiss any appointed or elected Executive Board member or committee member. However, before matters rise to the level of dismissal of an Executive Board member or committee member, the parties involved should consult the Ombuds to mediate a resolution.
- 13.4 The Executive Board may dismiss any appointed or elected Executive Board member by a vote where a minimum of 10 voting Executive Board members vote in favor of dismissal.
 - 13.4.1 A vote of dismissal may be called due to a Member's lack of participation in the organization, which includes Executive Board activities and those responsibilities described in Section 5.
 - 13.4.2 A vote of dismissal may be called due to actions that breach the Code of Conduct.

- 13.4.3 Following a dismissal, the Executive Board works to fill that vacancy in accordance with the nominations and appointment or election process appropriate for the vacated position.
- 13.5 Dismissals from committees will be handled internally by the committee chair and its membership. In the event that a resolution is not possible within the committee, the Executive Officers take the matter under consideration.
- 13.6 Members of the Executive Board must recuse themselves from awards committees where they are applicants for monetary awards distributed by the Society. Such awards include but are not limited to travel grants and awards for scholarship.
- 13.6.1 The chair of the Awards Committee is ineligible for scholarship awards. The Ombuds is ineligible for all awards and prizes.
- 13.7 All members of the Executive Board are ineligible for honoraria for events organized by the Society, the Graduate Student Caucus, Cohorts, and any organizations that fall under the umbrella of the Comics Studies Society.

SECTION 14—AMENDMENTS

- 14.1 Amendments to the bylaws may be proposed to the membership by a majority vote of the Executive Board or by petition with signatures of at least twenty members. Such proposed amendments shall be submitted electronically to the general membership for a vote. A majority of persons returning ballots shall determine approval or denial of the proposed amendment.

SECTION 15—DISSOLUTION

- 15.1 The Society may be dissolved upon recommendation of the Executive Board and a two-thirds majority vote of the members.
- 15.2 In the event of dissolution of the Society, all assets left after the liabilities have been met shall be disposed of in a way amenable to Section 501-(c)-(3) and other pertinent sections of the Internal Revenue Code.