

# CARMEN

## Co-operative for the Advancement of Research through a Medieval European Network

Round-Table, Leeds, 12 July 2007  
(at end of International Medieval Congress)

**MINUTES**, with thanks to the note-taker, Bob Bjork.

The meeting opened at 14.15 in the Headingley Room, University of Leeds

### 1. **Present (referred to by initials below):**

*Previous participants:*

Simon Forde (CARMEN); Dick de Boer (Groningen); Bob Bjork (Arizona State University); Balázs Nagy (Central European University, Budapest); József Laszlovszky (CEU); Kurt Villads Jensen (Syddansk Universitet, Odense); Raluca Radulescu (Wales at Bangor); Richard Morris (Leeds); Wendy Scase (Birmingham); Adrian Tudor (Hull)

*Newcomers:*

Ian Johnson (St Andrews); James Cummings (Oxford Text Archive & [digitalmedievalist.org](http://digitalmedievalist.org)); António Castro Henriques (Portuguese Medieval History reflexion group; Fundação para science e tecnologia); Sue Niebrzydowski (Wales at Bangor); Liesbeth Oskamp (Consortium of University Research Libraries, Den Haag); Ana B. Sánchez (Complutense de Madrid); Marco Stoffella (Institut zur Interdisziplinären Erforschung des Mittelalters und seines Nachwirkens, Paderborn); Geertrui van Syngel (Institute of Netherlands History, Den Haag); Anna Adamska (Utrecht); Andres Laubinger ([Mediaevum.de](http://Mediaevum.de), Paderborn); Henrike Laehnemann (Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

### **Apologies for absence**

*Previous participants:*

Christian Krötzel (Tampere); Pam King (Bristol); Giles Gasper (Durham); Nils Holger Petersen (København); Anne Lawrence (Reading); Helen Fulton (Swansea); Neven Budak (Zagreb)

*Newcomers:*

Ann Buckley (Maynooth); Marco Mostert (Utrecht); Arnoud-Jan Bijsterveld (Tilburg); Mette Bruun (København).

### 2. **Oral report on previous meetings (since Leeds, 2006) – for written reports see the various minutes available on <http://carmen.eldoc.ub.rug.nl/root/activ/meet/>**

SF gave a brief introduction to CARMEN for the new participants, including the background of the idea, a recap of the first round-table discussion in Leeds last year when the idea of a ‘CARA in Europe’ was presented, the first CARMEN meeting in Budapest in March, which was attended by 68 individuals from 23 countries, and the increasing interest in CARMEN since the Budapest meeting, mainly from France. He also mentioned the next two scheduled meetings of CARMEN in Prato and then Palermo (the latter dovetailing with the FIDEM five-yearly conference there).

DdeB talked about the impetus for CARMEN coming from the current reality of the research funding situation: multi-disciplinary, multi-national initiatives have priority. He stressed that

CARMEN is not in competition with FIDEM but serves to augment it and that CARMEN is still under construction in all respects.

### **3. Discussions in preparation for the annual meeting at Prato, 28-30 September 2007:**

#### **a. Research projects**

##### **i. Report on those submitted (or to be submitted) for FP7 funding**

SF summarised the process and timetable for those projects submitted.

##### **ii. Embryonic projects**

SF explained the distinction between submitted proposals and embryonic projects and asked for the meeting's approval that the forthcoming meeting at Prato should provide a 'market-place' whereby such embryonic projects could solicit additional international partners. This was approved.

JL suggested that there should be a page on the CARMEN website for posting international research proposals, which would help generate ideas and research teams.

AA concurred that the exchange of information is one of the most important functions of CARMEN and further suggested that a database of national societies of medievalists would also be useful.

DdeB pointed out that the current website envisaged such a page for research proposals and also envisages a database for job openings in Europe.

##### **iii. The role of selected or approved 'service providers' in creating proposals:**

1. collaborative platforms
2. long-term archiving and migration of data
3. writing of submissions
4. information sciences and library partners
5. multilingual data-capture
6. dissemination partners (media, publishers etc.)

SF named those partners (many present) who can help with each of these tasks. He also outlined the scheme for the Prato meeting and explained how these 'service providers' would also be welcome to participate in the 'market-place' and the discussions in developing funding proposals.

##### **iv. Funding other than FP7**

DdeB reiterated that the focus on FP7 proposals was purely pragmatic, due to their current availability. But he emphasised that this focus was not to the detriment of seeking funds from anywhere else worldwide.

#### **b. Structural issues:**

##### **i. Minor changes to Aims and Objectives of CARMEN (proposal circulated alongside the agenda)**

The meeting agreed that decisions on the items listed can only definitively be made by the full meeting of CARMEN in Prato.

##### **ii. Balanced representation at annual meetings**

The issue of whether or not CARMEN should limit the number of representatives to its meetings occasioned a great deal of comment. Some felt that no limits should be set; a large number of participants reacted very forcefully against a general suggestion that representation should be selected nationally, and explained the various difficulties that this would produce in a range of countries. Others argued that a hierarchical structure of national representatives ran counter to CARMEN's purpose and would be detrimental to its initiatives. RM argued that the problem of an overcrowded meeting should be solved once that problem actually materialised; it very well might not. This position was unanimously agreed by those present.

##### **iii. Status of an Executive Director**

Funding for an Executive Director was discussed, and Dick pointed out FP7 funding was theoretically available and that requests for funding should also be included in research proposals,

as has already been done in Neven Budak's proposal. Another option for an Executive Director discussed was that of electing a retired academic.

For the interim, the meeting elected SF, by proclamation, to serve henceforward as Executive Director for CARMEN, on a voluntary basis, and to review this position if and when a more permanent and funded position could be created.

- iv. **Status of a Standing Committee, with specific roles for a Secretary (incl. Communications and website maintenance), a Scrutineer (of participants and votes), and a Conference Secretary, plus general members**

In the discussion about the webpage, AS said that Madrid would be willing to host it. JC commended the merits of social-networking models of website for an organisation such as CARMEN, and offered support in creating such a space.

There was also some discussion of the various difficulties faced in different countries in disseminating information about CARMEN.

It was agreed that SF should solicit people to form a Standing Committee, for approval at the meeting in Prato.

- v. **Funding for central administrative functions**

The question of CARMEN's legal status was raised, and it was decided that it is an informal organisation that does not in itself constitute a research body that would apply for funding. It may need to achieve formal legal status later on, but there seems to be no need for that now. It serves as a think-tank and offers mutual support to participating entities.

**c. Content issues:**

- i. **Role of teaching and learning within CARMEN's activities**
  - 1. higher education best practice – curriculum design, ITC etc.
  - 2. canons, and story-lines (in relation to text-book production)
- ii. **Role for defending and promoting the discipline locally and supranationally**
  - 1. best practice at local level
  - 2. supranational projects (e.g. Museum of Pre-modern World History)

These items were not discussed due to a lack of time.

**4. Future meetings:**

- a. Prato, 28-30 September 2007
- b. Kalamazoo, May 2008
- c. Palermo, 19-21 June 2008 (tbc)

Practical details on these meetings were shared.

**5. Any other business.**

The meeting concluded at 15.40 with thanks from all present to SF and DdeB for making this all possible.

Simon Forde, 13 August 2007