



## **BARS 2024 International Biennial Conference**

### **Call for Expressions of Interest**

**Deadline: 17 February 2023**

Send your Eoi to the BARS Secretary, Jennifer Orr ([Jennifer.Orr@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:Jennifer.Orr@newcastle.ac.uk)), and any questions to either the Secretary or to the BARS President, Anthony Mandal ([Mandal@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Mandal@cardiff.ac.uk)).

THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR ROMANTIC STUDIES is pleased to invite Expressions of Interest for the 2024 International Biennial Conference. Following the postponement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, our last conference – hosted jointly with the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism – at Edge Hill University in Summer 2022, was our largest and most varied yet. BARS/NASSR 2022 followed three successful conferences (Cardiff 2015, York 2017, Nottingham 2019), as well as an online-only 'Romantic Disconnections/Reconnections' international conference in summer 2021. These recent gatherings have seen our attendance grow and diversify over the past decade, and delegate feedback has been very positive.

Building on this momentum, we are very much looking forward to working with institutions in continuing to build on and to diversify the successful BARS model. Please consult the programmes for [Cardiff](#), [York](#) and [Nottingham](#) as guides for your proposal. (As a joint BARS/NASSR conference, the Edge Hill conference took a slightly different format than one typical of BARS.)

A decision will be made by the BARS Executive at its next meeting in Spring 2023 and the successful applicants will be invited to submit a report for the following Executive meeting, which will be held electronically in Summer 2023. The event will be promoted on social media and at in-person events in the lead-up to the summer 2024 conference itself. The event will also be promoted at BARS PGR/ECR 'Romantic Boundaries' conference in June 2023 and, if feasible, at NASSR's 'Romanticism and Justice' conference in March/April 2023.

Host institutions are expected to take account of the following in preparing their Expressions of Interest, addressing each of the headings specifically:

#### **Venue location, capacity and accessibility**

We expect numbers could range between 250 to 275 delegates: please bear this figure in mind when bidding. You will need a plenary lecture hall large enough to accommodate these numbers, plus a sufficient number of breakout rooms and catering facilities (BARS conferences can normally have around ten parallel sessions). For North American colleagues in particular, the distance from a major airport and transport links will be an important factor, so please bear this in mind.

We expect organizers to offer a range of accommodation from traditional student-type lodgings through to hotel-level facilities. Sufficient cheaper accommodation to allow postgraduate participation is essential: such accommodation should be within reasonable walking distance of the conference venue or the organizers should make suitable travel arrangements to take delegates to and from the venue. BARS prefers that organizers make affordable accommodation available directly from the conference registration/booking pages, although indicative recommendations for alternative venues should also be listed in an appropriate location on the conference website.

The venue is expected to meet the usual requirements for facilities in academic meetings, including Wi-Fi and PowerPoint/projection facilities in all rooms. It is desirable that the meeting rooms are in reasonably close proximity to each other and that there is a communal meeting area or foyer, preferably with refreshment facilities so that delegates can socialize and browse publisher stands.

In order to comply with BARS's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, conference organizers should ensure that the venue, accommodation and transportation are fully accessible.

Given the ongoing uncertainties about future outbreaks of SARS-type diseases, like COVID-19, and whether social distancing and other public safeguarding measures will be again required, organizers should also outline the sorts of planned provisions in place by their institution in the case of unexpected events.

### **Hybrid and/or digital aspects**

The COVID-19 pandemic instituted, necessarily, a swathe of changes to how academics gather and share their research. In particular, we were called upon to make use of digital technologies at a remarkable pace and scale. Some of these measures responded directly to the specific conditions in place at the time of events, while others were addressing longer-standing issues of inclusivity and accessibility. One of the major successes of the Edge Hill 2022 conference was its effective use of a hybrid approach to delivering the event, combining both digital and on-campus spaces to maximise access to global participants.

While we welcome the return to on-campus conferences, BARS asks proposers to bear the lessons of recent years in mind by employing hybrid elements in their proposed package of events. How this is done is up to the proposers – there could be separate digital and campus-based components, or these could be run concurrently – we appreciate that institutions will have differing levels of support in this area. The BARS Exec is very happy to work with organizers to plan such hybrid activities, and organisers might consider splitting the conference up between one or more digital days and campus events, possibly with a reasonable gap between the days to avoid unnecessary travel and accommodation costs.

The Executive will evaluate the proposals holistically, and the combination of digital/campus activities will be assessed in terms of how it promotes our mission to be as inclusive and accessible as possible to the largest possible community. We will, of course, be available to offer guidance based on our experience of Edge Hill 2022, to the successful hosts of BARS 2024.

### **Conference theme**

This should be of sufficient scope and significance to allow the Association's members to take part. Recent themes have been 'Romantic Imprints', 'Romantic Improvement', 'Romantic Facts and Fantasies' and 'New Romanticisms'. [The full list of previous conferences can be found on the BARS website.](#)

## Timetable

Typically, the BARS conference has run from Thursday to Sunday in the second half of July, with the conference commencing on the afternoon of the first day and finishing early afternoon of the last. However, the Executive **strongly recommends** that organizers deviate from this model, proposing an in-week event instead, in order to prioritize inclusivity and accessibility. We should note that BARS/NASSR 2022 'New Romanticisms' ran from Tuesday to Friday in early August, about which delegates responded very positively, especially with regard to care commitments and travel arrangements. If it is not feasible to offer an in-week event, please outline the reasons why so that we can take any mitigating factors into account when reaching a decision.

The BARS Executive normally meet on the evening before the conference begins: organizers will need to arrange a suitable venue for this meeting (of no more than two hours). The meeting typically concludes with a short tour of the conference venue for the Executive members in attendance. In fixing on a date, it is especially important organizers should check which conferences are already scheduled for what is often a busy time in the calendar and liaise with conference and society chairs in order to avoid clashes wherever possible and facilitate attendance at all events. Conferences which run during summers and are likely to be attended by BARS delegates include those hosted by the British Association for Victorian Studies, the International Conference on Romanticism, the International Gothic Association, the International Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies and the North American Society for the Study of Romanticism.

The CFP is usually circulated by October of the preceding year (2023) and the outcome of the refereeing process confirming speakers is usually made by the middle of January (2024), although recent events have demonstrated flexibility can be required when planning these deadlines.

## Vetting of papers

It has been past practice for co-opted members of the BARS Executive to serve on the panel which referees the proposals for panel papers, though the local organizers have the final right of veto. (It is desirable that papers are refereed not only for the integrity of the event, but also to help delegates secure financial support from funding bodies and institutions.)

## Programme

The programme usually takes the form of parallel sessions consisting of panels where delegates deliver 20-minute papers. BARS welcomes convened and themed panels that reflect cutting-edge projects and collaborative research, and other formats such as roundtables and workshops. Consideration should be given to the mix of formats and how hybrid approaches should be complement each other. For example, we found that digital panels in particular worked effectively using a roundtable format, with each speaker presenting shorter papers of up to 10 minutes each.

In addition, there are usually between three and five plenary lectures, one of which is designated the Stephen Copley Lecture and another the Marilyn Butler lecture in memory of BARS's founding members and much-loved scholars. Please bear in mind that the greater the number of plenary sessions, the less capacity there is for spreading parallel sessions, and recent experience recommends three plenary lectures. Plenaries are chosen by the local organizing committee, though BARS expects this to reflect a gender balance and a mixture of national and international scholars.

In the arrangements of the panel sessions and the timing of the plenary lectures the organizers are asked to consider seriously the responsibility of offering all speakers a reasonable size of audience (it is now standard practice to end the conference on the final day with a keynote). BARS expects panels to incorporate postgraduate and early career researcher opportunities alongside more

established academics. The programme should also include specific sessions targeted at professional development for ECRs.

### **Reception, ~~Book Prize~~, Banquet, PGR/ECR reception**

The BARS conference includes a reception (normally on the first night) and a banquet on the third night. (We normally would include a slot for the BARS First Book Prize awards but the impact of the pandemic means that the Book Prize and conference years are currently out of sync.) It has increasingly been the case that informal meals are offered on the second night, although this depends on local factors such as whether the conference venue is campus-based or near a well-provisioned civic centre. Payment for the banquet is optional and can be purchased during registration. There should also be an evening slot for a reception aimed specifically at postgraduate and early career researchers: this typically takes the form of informal drinks and/or dinner, and often runs on the second night but should not be scheduled against the Banquet, in case PGRs/ECRs wish to attend.

### **Refreshments and lunches**

BARS expects the conference registration fee to include refreshments (before the first sessions each day and regular 30-minute coffee breaks), buffet food for the reception, and lunches on Days 2 to 4 (one of these can be a brown bag lunch on the excursion day). Please build this into your costs.

### **Conference excursion**

It is usual to arrange an excursion or choice of excursions with laid-on transport within the schedule, to take place usually on the afternoon of Day 3, and to a 'Romantic' venue with general relevance to the conference e.g. a museum, estate, birthplace, gallery. We are keen to explore offering the excursion on another day (e.g. the final day of the conference, or before the main activity of the conference commences), for reasons of inclusivity. The excursion is always an optional extra in terms of costings and can be purchased during registration. While an excursion is desirable, please bear in mind the total cost of the conference when planning the event: the Executive will, in good faith, take into account a (considered) rationale for *excluding* an excursion.

### **Biennial General Meeting**

The conference organizers are required to find a central time (at least one hour, which can be the lunch hour) within the schedule to host the BARS BGM. Key aspects of the BGM are: presentation of reports from the Executive to Membership; election of the new BARS Executive for 2024–2026; presentations on the PGR/ECR conference in 2025 and BARS 2026.

### **Cost**

Organizers are asked to keep costs as low as possible without compromising the quality of the event. Please provide as much information as you can about the predicted registration fee, including a day rate and discounted rates for delegates with limited/no access to support, as well as whether you propose to include discounted 'early bird' rates. *In order to maximize inclusion, day rates must feature as part of the package offered to delegates.*

BARS is willing to provide an appropriate level of support to its international conference; any profits are expected to be shared 50/50 with BARS. BARS will underwrite any reasonable losses that the conference might incur, subject to careful discussion with the Executive when appropriate. If required to facilitate institutional arrangements, the BARS Executive will provide a letter of support to the organizers at the start of the process, clearly outlining (a) the underwriting of losses; (b) the

provision of an agreed level of advance support; (c) the understanding that any surpluses are to be shared 50/50 between the organizing institution and BARS.

BARS will also be willing to provide support for PGR, ECR and non-affiliated delegates on the basis of academic merit and financial need, in the form of directly funded bursaries. The Executive encourages the organizers to cost into their planning similar arrangements to make bursary awards to promote inclusion, if possible.

**The BARS Executive strongly encourages proposers to include indicative budgets with projected income and costings, in order to confirm the event's viability and affordability for delegates.**

## **Liaison**

Organizers will maintain contact with the BARS Executive throughout the planning process. This is usually managed by the co-option of a local organizer onto the BARS Executive for a period of two or more years. A delegation from BARS will also make a site visit in 2023 or early 2024 to check through logistics, run through the programme and offer general advice. The BARS Executive will also approve the final programme.