

Society for Military History  
Policies and Procedures  
Distinguished Book Awards Committee

**Purpose.** The Distinguished Book Awards Committee is charged with selecting the winners of each year's five book awards that are announced and presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Military History.

**Description.** The Distinguished Book Awards recognize the best book-length publications in English on military history, and includes the category of; U.S., Non-U.S., Biography, Reference, and Trade press. Winners receive a check for \$1000 and a plaque during the SMH Annual Meeting.

**Committee Composition.** The Distinguished Book Awards Committee is comprised of five members. Each shall serve a three-year term; with annual turnover of membership being staggered rather than in full. It is preferred that the Chair be a 2nd or 3rd-year member of the committee. The Chair of the Distinguished Book Awards Committee is responsible for writing the annual book awards announcement, contacting and corresponding with publishers, overseeing the selection process, forwarding names of winning titles to the Society for Military History for approval, and presenting the awards at the Annual Meeting. The Chair shall also maintain all records in the committee's box.com account.

**Committee Records.** Recent committee records (since 2013) are accessible via its box.com account. Each committee member has access to the account, with the Chair holding administrative privileges. No other repository exists at this time.

**Procedures.** Each year by the end of June the Chair must compose and submit a Book Awards Announcement and submit it to the Society for Military History's Executive Director for review. The webmaster than posts it online. The announcement should follow closely the previous year's announcement (available in box.com) with changes being made to dates and committee membership/contact information (if needed).

For the 2022 Awards a new online submission form was instituted. This collates all information relating to books submitted and requires publishers/authors to indicate which categories they are submitting a book for (up to a max of 2). The Chair will need to liaise with Executive Director to ensure that the form is updated and ready for use in the subsequent years Awards. This includes generating and circulating a download link which will allow committee members to access the form at any time during the submissions period.

In July the Chair should send a batch email to all publishers on the master list found in box.com. Any changes of editorial contact/emails should be made at this time to ensure the most up-to-date email list. Note, it is good practice to email the announcement once again in September, as a reminder. This insures maximum submissions.

The Chair should monitor the online admissions portal on a monthly basis until the end of the submission period (October 1). This is critical to insuring that all members of the committee get

copies of all submissions (committee members can be reminded to check themselves using their download link). It is the responsibility of the publishers to send copies of their submissions to every committee member.

It is the Chair's duty to make sure the submission meet the criteria outlined in the announcement. Proofs and e-books are not acceptable submissions.

After the submission deadline (October 1), the Chair should finalize the submission list and insure that all members have the books under consideration. The Chair should also indicate that the selection of winners will begin with the initial shortlisting in mid-December.

**Selecting Winners.** The Chair controls the process of selecting winners. In mid-December all members should submit their "short list" of titles for each category. A "short list" is defined as 3-5 titles ranked. Once everyone's lists are submitted the following formula should be followed as it insures the greatest transparency by quantifying the results.

The top ranked title in each member's list gets 5 points; 2nd ranked 4 points; 3rd ranked 3 points; 4th ranked 2 points; and 5<sup>th</sup> ranked 1 point. Alongside this, the Committee will consider their relative expertise in arriving at these shortlists, and will come to a consensus view. If necessary, an additional 1-2 works per category can be shortlisted at this stage.

The shortlisting process is not intended to identify the ultimate winner, but the same ranking system as will be used in the final decision process will be used in order to establish an agreed shortlist.

Criteria used to determine a short list include, but are not limited to the following:

- a. Overall scholarly merit: significance of argument and contribution to the field and range of sources used (archival and otherwise)
- b. Originality: does the work offer something new or novel concerning a well-trodden subject; is it a new study of neglected or overlooked topics and figures (biography), or a novel and effective compilation of sources/materials (for reference category)?
- c. Breadth of readership and appeal: does it appeal to readers beyond its narrowly defined sub-field; if a synthesis does it offer a new paradigm that challenges standard interpretations?

Once the Committee has agreed a shortlist, individual members will then have until 7 January to finalize their ranking for each category. Once these are submitted, the same scoring process outlined above will be used to determine the ultimate winners. This process for determining this is as follows:

Add all the points that each title wins and then make a cumulative ranking for each title based on points. The winner then is the title with the most points, unless other titles also have the same or near same number of points. In that case the contending titles must be submitted for an up and down vote (5 votes) by the committee. Any debate for or against a book should be allowed via email at this time. The winner of the vote wins the category.

Submit the five winners to the committee for approval.

Send along the winners to the Executive Director of the Society for Military history for approval by mid-January. Note: it is the Executive Director who then contacts the winners and posts them on the SMH website. The Committee must refrain from contacting winners in any way before they are officially posted.

The Chair should assign one title to each member and ask them to write short blurb for the awards Luncheon brochure. These blurbs should be forwarded to the Executive Director by the end of January.

Finally, the Chair must write a committee report and submit it to the Executive Director prior to the Annual Meeting. If attending the meeting the Chair is requested to attend the annual business meeting of the SMH.

**Records' Retention.** It is the responsibility of the Chair to upload and maintain all documents concerning the book awards in the box.com account and set up a file for the next year's competition. Each year's file folder should contain the following: Awards Announcement, Publisher's Email List, a Final Book Submission List, voting tallies associated with the awards process, a List of that year's winners, the Final Committee Report, and a copy of these Guidelines. If a Chair is leaving the committee it is their duty to contact the new Chair and provide assistance when needed and transfer control of the box.com account.

## **CHECKLIST**

1. Compose awards announcement and send to Executive Director (by July 1)
2. Send email with announcement to publishers. Update and maintain list. (by mid-July)
3. Re-send announcement to publishers (mid-September)
4. Send master list of submission to committee members (October 1)
5. Collate and agree shortlists (mid-December)
6. Chose winners for each category (by mid January)
7. Send winners to Executive Director (by mid-January)
8. Write final committee report and secure short blurbs for each winning title and send to the Executive Director (by early February)
9. Make sure all documents are uploaded into box.com and a new folder for the next year's competition created.
10. Transfer administrative rights to new Chair (if applicable) and ask them to delete you are a member of the committee (if applicable)