

This is a 3-part document written collectively by the volunteer ‘Visible Evidence continuity committee’ in consultation with the Visible Evidence community. The ‘Visible Evidence continuity committee’ was made up of the following members:

Ilona Hongisto
S Topiary Landberg
Alisa Lebow
Josh Malitsky
Peter Snowdon

Preamble

Part I: Visible Evidence Community Principles

Part II: Visible Evidence Governing Principles

IIa. How VE is Governed

IIb. The Make-up of the VE Governing Council

IIc. The Remit of the VE Governing Council

IId. Governing Council Decision-making Procedures

Part III: Visible Evidence Governing Council

IIIa. Governing Council Membership

IIIb. Governing Council’s Main Responsibilities

Preamble:

The Visible Evidence community is an international group of scholars and practitioners engaged in research and debates on documentary practice and nonfiction media culture. Visible Evidence began as a conference at Duke University (USA) in 1993 and since then has been hosted on five continents, reflecting the community's global participants. These meetings have provided a space for people to test ideas, share research, watch new documentary films/videos/new media, immerse in regional documentary work, and to form new and re-enforce longstanding professional communities and connections. In 1997, an associated book series was established at the University of Minnesota Press that offered an in-depth consideration of the representation of the real, engaging with questions of cultural and historical representation, and challenging prevailing notions of the documentary tradition and nonfiction cultural production more generally. The series is now published by Columbia University Press.

From the outset, Visible Evidence has embodied two working principles. The first emphasizes that historical, critical, and theoretical scholarship on documentary benefits greatly from a range of interactions across many fields, disciplines, and practices. The second asserts that scholarship on documentary often has an activist component, where it elaborates and specifies relationships between documentary and politics. This document aims to reflect and respect these foundational principles.

Part I: Visible Evidence Community Principles

Visible Evidence (VE) is an informal scholarly network of documentary film and media scholars and practitioners.

As a community, we are committed to the principles of:

- Respect
- Inclusivity
- Sharing of knowledge
- Free circulation of ideas

Participation in the VE community implies agreement to:

Respect all participants, regardless of status, rank, or achievements. Disagreements, no matter how heated, can and will be tolerated; however, hate speech, intimidation, aggressive and/or violent behavior will not.

Nurture an environment conducive to the generation, circulation and debate of original and challenging ideas.

Encourage the active participation of all members in the organisational matters of this community by the methods of voting, consensus building, and other mechanisms of shared authority.

Attend to issues related to gender, race, geography, inequity as they relate to documentary, broadly defined.

Seek concrete ways to address those consequences of historic and ongoing structural and systemic injustice that may manifest within its own activities.

All VE events are for the sharing of knowledge and not for promotional purposes such that they appear to be buying publicity or esteem from the community. The nature and content of all VE events is at the sole discretion of the VE Governing Council, members participating in working groups coordinated by the Council, and/or the present year's conference organisers.

Part II: Visible Evidence Governing Principles and Procedures

IIa. How VE is Governed

The VE community is governed by a rotating group of five elected members and the two most recent conference organisers who together form the VE Governing Council and serve in a voluntary capacity for a limited term.

Each elected member is expected to serve a three year term.

IIb. The Make-up of the VE Governing Council:

The elected members of the Governing Council will consist of two senior scholars, two early-mid career scholars, and one doctoral student. Independent scholars and practitioners are free to apply in whatever category they qualify (see Part IIIa for further detail).

VE considers anyone who has ever participated in a Visible Evidence conference and/or joined the VE listserv to be a member of the VE community and as such, eligible to serve on the Governing Council.

Two members of the VE Governing Council will be the most recent organisers of previous VE conferences. They are not elected members, but will serve on the Council as part of their

commitment to host the conference. Should a conference organiser be unable to serve on the Council, the VE Governing Council will ask a previous conference organiser to join the council in their place.

Iic. The Remit of the VE Governing Council:

The VE Governing Council will emphasize transparency in its activities and maintain consistent communications with the community, whether through the listserv, the website, or another agreed upon channel.

The VE Governing Council will provide leadership on research initiatives and solicit innovative ideas from the community for regular events, with an emphasis on interdisciplinarity.

The VE Governing Council will host the annual conference business meeting and one (or more) virtual community meeting(s). All members of the Visible Evidence community are invited to each. The conference business meeting will focus on sharing information pertinent to the community and fielding proposals for the upcoming conferences. The VE Governing Council will put out a call for written proposals well before the conference, specifying what information potential hosts must include. They will then share the proposals with the VE community prior to the conference. Hosts will then present their cases both to the live and virtual audiences, fielding questions from people in the process. At the end of the meeting, the live and virtual audience will have an opportunity to vote on future venues. The vote is non-binding and will be advisory for the VE Governing Council but if the GC chooses a different host than the one(s) elected by the community, it will send out an explanation of its decision.

The VE Governing Council will work to support the conference hosts to obtain funds that will go to funding community members who will present at the conference but are struggling to pay for travel and accommodation. Should funds be raised for this purpose, the conference organiser will put in place an application system to review requests.

The VE Governing Council will make considerable efforts to grow the community in a global direction, aiming for an increasingly diverse community, and ensuring that those new community members' interests are considered and their voices heard.

VE governance—its forms and procedures—will aim to be flexible and responsive to changing conditions in the field of documentary, in academia itself, and in response to the specific needs and desires of the community. The Council will also be attentive to when new tasks for the Council itself emerge.

All community members, regardless of whether they have a formal role in the organisation, are invited to vote on issues proposed by the VE Governing Council.

The VE community operates on a principle of inclusivity and as such invites the active participation of junior scholars, PhD students, filmmakers, and participants from every part of the world. The VE Governing Council will work to ensure this practice is maintained.

IId. Governing Council Decision-making Procedures:

The VE Governing Council is authorised to make decisions regarding the hosts and venues of the conferences, the direction of the organisation, the research agenda for the coming term, the sponsorship of or linkage with other events, the managing and building of the website, the uses of the listserv, the potential to generate funding, and any other business evolving into the remit of the organisation.

Within the Council, it is preferable that collective consensus be reached on decisions. In the absence of consensus, decisions will be put to a vote. For any decision to be valid, it must be endorsed by a simple majority of the GC members. For the meeting to be quorate, at least four members must attend.

The VE Governing Council may reach out to the community for feedback on any topic of consideration and is encouraged to do so for any decision that may constitute a major shift in the direction of the organization.

The VE Governing Council can decide to put a question or set of questions to a vote by members of the community.

Part III: Visible Evidence Governing Council

IIIa. Governing Council Membership

The VE Governing Council consists of:

- 2 senior scholars/practitioners (elected)
- 2 early-mid career scholars/practitioners (elected)
- 1 doctoral student (elected)
- 2 ex-officio previous conference organizers (appointed)

The five elected council members serve a three year term. Two members of the first elected GC – one from each of the first two scholar/practitioner categories – will serve an additional year in order to ensure a seamless transition. The first elected GC will decide amongst themselves who these two members are. From thereon, elected members cycle on and off at different times.

The two ex-officio conference advisors (former conference organizers) will serve until the longer serving conference advisor is replaced by a more recent conference organizer.

All seven members, including the two ex-officio conference advisors, have full voting rights.

No community member shall hold more than one office at any given time and may not serve two consecutive terms in any capacity.

IIIb. Governing Council's Main Responsibilities

There are 3 essential tasks that the Governing Council is responsible for, in addition to the main job of ensuring that the conference continues to be held regularly and supporting conference organizers in their efforts. It is up to the Council members at any given time to decide how to equitably distribute the work:

- **Communications with the VE community:**

The Governing Council manages and maintains the VE Listserv as well as communications to the community and publicizes events that are happening in the broader documentary world that is of interest to the VE community.

- **Maintaining and Building the Website:**

The VE website is already an important hub, but it will need regular updating and can always be made to be more dynamic and to serve this community even better. This work may engage collaborators from the VE community who are not currently serving on the Governing Council, but responsibility lies with the Governing Council to oversee the work.

- **Research & Innovation:**

The Governing Council should determine research priorities for their term, curate events outside of the conference (events should include a virtual component if not be entirely virtual). It is responsible for recruiting new voices and new forms of engagement and in doing so, will want to bring in multidisciplinary approaches and attend to questions of inclusivity, inviting a diversity of perspectives, approaches and geographical positionalities.

As with all of the work, the Governing Council can enlist the contribution of non-Council VE Community members, but are expected to oversee that work and are ultimately responsible for maintaining the standard at the highest level of scholarship and respectful and professional engagement.