

PROPOSAL

Renewal of Three-Year Term as Series Editor of the *ASOR Annual*, 2012–2014 Joseph A. Greene

Preamble

I propose that I continue as series editor of the *Annual* of ASOR for another term, 2012–2014. A statement of goals and direction during my first term, 2009–2011, and a vision for my prospective second term, are set forth below, along with suggested changes in processes and an appeal for additional resources.

1) Statement of Goals or Direction for *AASOR* over Past Two-Plus Years (First Term as Editor)

In January 2009 I became editor of *AASOR* after serving two terms (2003–2008) as series editor of *ARS*. Upon reflection, I think I may have gotten things backwards since I have come to realize that editing one manuscript at a time as *AASOR* editor would have been good preparation for editing several simultaneously as *ARS* editor. In my view the role of any series editor is to assist authors in presenting technically faultless manuscripts in a timely manner so that the volumes can be produced in the most cost-effective way, all the while adhering to ASOR's long-established high standards for archaeological scholarship.

I have therefore approached the editing of *AASOR* in much the same way as I approached *ARS*. The editorial process includes at least two anonymous peer reviews for all *AASOR* proposals and for the resulting manuscripts. These peer reviews, along with the series editor's own comments, are transmitted to authors for incorporation into the revised manuscript. Insofar as possible, all review transactions are conducted electronically, which saves time, photocopying, and postage. Peer reviewers are unpaid, although each receives a gratis copy of the finished publication. Author contracts are managed entirely by the ASOR Executive Director through the ASOR Office. Fulfillment for institutional subscribers and the distribution of gratis copies to peer reviewers is handled by ASOR Publications Office.

As I found with *ARS*, it has not been necessary actively to solicit manuscripts. On the contrary, authors and editors continue to seek out *AASOR*. Also, as with *ARS*, when I became *AASOR* editor, the previous series editor (in the case of *AASOR*, Nancy Serwint), handed on to me a portfolio of some 4 to 6 manuscripts, either in production or out for review or pending as proposals. Since becoming *AASOR* editor, in considering new proposals I have focused on archaeological field reports which for various reasons were not appropriate for *ARS*, or constituted submissions too long (over 100 manuscript pages) for *BASOR*. (The rationale for this is given more fully in no. 2 below.)

2) Trajectory of *AASOR* over Next Three-Plus Years (Next Term as Editor)

In thinking about the future of *AASOR*, it is important, I believe, to consider its past. Parts of that past, summarized in the attached "*AASOR* Published Volumes, 1919–2009," provide a pattern for the *Annual*'s future. *AASOR* seems to have begun for the purpose of publishing scholarly articles on a range of topics, the sort of things that would now appear in *BASOR* or *JCS*. At the time the *Bulletin* was no more than a newsletter

and *JCS* did not exist. In its first decade (1920s), the page length of the *Annual* hovered around 100; in the 1930s, it grew to 200–300 pages in order to present extended preliminary and final reports of archaeological excavations and surveys (e.g., *AASOR* 17 [1936–1937] and 21–22 [1941–1943], *Tell Beit Mirsim, II and III*; *AASOR* 15 [1934–1935] and 18–19 [1937–1939], *Explorations in Eastern Palestine, II and III*). The practice also began then of combining annuals for consecutive years into a single volume. In the 1940s, the length of the *Annual* oscillated between under 100 pages to over 700, specifically *AASOR* 25–28 (1945–49), *Explorations in Eastern Palestine, IV*, which appeared as two separately bound volumes. (Since *AASOR* 25–28 was in effect four year’s worth of annuals published together, the yearly page count was 175.) In the 1950s–60s, for reasons that can only be guessed, the *Annual* came out not annually but at irregular intervals. In the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, under the successive editorships of Freedman, Callaway, Dever, and Lapp, the *Annual* began once again to appear annually, while recovering some of its earlier form as a medium for preliminary and final excavation reports. Recently the *Annual* has published homage volumes (e.g., *Festschrift Dever, AASOR* 58 [2003], 184 pages; and *Festschrift Meyers, AASOR* 60–61 [2007], a gargantuan 416 pages—although this was a double issue equivalent to 208 pages/year), and collected papers from ASOR Annual Meeting sessions (e.g. *AASOR* 57 [2000, appeared in 2002] *Recent Archaeology in Turkey*, 209 pp.; *AASOR* 63 (2008) *Views from Phlamoudhi, Cyprus*, 145 pp.; and *AASOR* 64 (2009) *Reflections of Empire: Archaeological and Ethnographic Studies on the Pottery of the Ottoman Levant*, 163 pp.).

I have come to think that these latter two types of manuscripts are not appropriate for *AASOR* and should be handled in other ways. Collections of conference papers tend to be uneven in quality, sometime repeating what individual contributors have already published elsewhere; and, if the papers offer surveys of the current state of this or that question, can, as the discipline advances, grow stale by the time the annual volume containing them is published. Homage volumes also tend to be uneven in the quality of individual papers and to balloon in size, making them unmanageably large (so *Festschrift Meyers*). COP, together with CAMP and CAP (I use the old nomenclature here), might explore ways of jointly promoting the electronic publication, hosted on ASOR’s website, of collections of conference papers that originate as sessions in the ASOR Annual Meeting. If COP wishes to continue to publish *festschriften*, it might consider creating a separate series for homage volumes or publish them as part of ASOR Books. Either way such volumes should be externally—and fully—subsidized. I will also add that I do not think in general that *AASOR* is an appropriate venue for manuscripts that began as doctoral dissertations, even rigorously archaeological ones. Exceptions to this exclusion should be handled on a case-by-case basis.

I think the *Annual* should be devoted to the presentation of primary archaeological data from current or legacy projects. (*AASOR* 50 [1992], *Mellart’s 1953 Jordan Valley Sounding* by Al Leonard is an example of a legacy project.) *AASOR*’s content should be archaeological reports, broadly construed, that are too short for *ARS* and too long for *BASOR*. To create annual volumes of viable length, several submissions could be combined into a single bound book of 150 to 250 printed pages. This has already been done with several past *Annuals* (e.g., nos. 51, 52, 53 [1994, 1995, 1996]). These volumes, however, consisted on preliminary excavation reports, which I think are

becoming passé, with the dissemination of preliminary field reports now accomplished increasingly through websites maintained by individual projects or by aggregators of archaeological data, such as the Alexandria Archive Institute <<http://www.alexandriaarchive.org>>. This means that *AASOR* would contain shorter final reports of archaeological field work.

One caveat I will note is the possibility that *AASOR* may attract archaeological reports that properly belong in *ARS*. Because *AASOR* does not require a subvention, whereas *ARS* does (\$5,000/volume), *AASOR* may appeal to potential authors as the logical economic choice. Indeed, *AASOR* has in the recent past published final archaeological reports that in my opinion properly belonged in *ARS* (e.g., *AASOR* 62 [2007] *Gesher MBIIA Cemetery Final Report*, 149 pages). (Some possible solutions to this problem are suggested in no. 3 below.) This is not to state that *AASOR* volumes may not receive author subventions for certain production enhancements, such as the addition of color or for the inclusion of digital media; but the costs of basic production for the *Annual* are born entirely by ASOR from the Opportunity Fund, which receives income from institutional standing orders (approximately 200 in 2011).

3) Need for Changes in Process and/or Additional Resources

A. Process Changes (No Additional Resources Needed)

Manuscript Queue and the “Journalizing” of AASOR

COP VP Jeff Blakely has already raised with me the possibility of “journalizing” *AASOR*, i.e., for purposes of JSTOR, declaring it a periodical with a fixed annual date of publication each year. This could be any date in the calendar year. If this step is taken, however, timeliness of author submissions to meet an announced publication date will become crucial. It will therefore become necessary to maintain a short queue of manuscripts so that submission delays do not hold up publication of the *Annual*.

As I write, the *Annual* is already a year behind because of delayed submission of MS for *AASOR* 65 (at a crucial juncture one of the authors had a serious health problem, now thankfully resolved). If *AASOR* is to become journalized and appear on a fixed date each year, this situation cannot be allowed to recur.

Instructions for Contributors

AASOR's Instructions for Contributors needs to revamping to address the handling of electronic appendices. The instructions must also include simple and explicit instruction for the preparation of digital illustrations. Poor presentation of digital illustrations by authors was my particular *bête noir* as *ARS* editor and continues to be a *noir-ish* problem with *AASOR*. The Instructions for Contributors should be made uniform across ASOR publications, with appropriate variations for periodicals vs. book series, i.e., for *BASOR*, *JCS* and *NEA* vs. *AASOR* and *ARS*.

Production Costs and Sales Information

More real-time cost and sales information would be helpful for publication planning and for assessing the need for subventions. The *AASOR*, *ARS*, and ASOR Books data compiled and circulated by COP VP Jeff Blakely in 2010 (recently updated in April 2011) was a revelation. I note in these data that *AASOR* volumes as far back to No.

56 (2005, as far back as data go) all eventually returned a profit to ASOR despite receiving no subventions. The same is true for *ARS* volumes going back a decade (to *ARS* 5 in 2001), even for volumes that received no initial subvention. In the cases where *ARS* volumes did receive subventions, this infusion of cash meant the difference between ASOR's making and losing money on those volumes. This crude calculation, however, does not take into account other costs, such as storage charges and administrative overhead.

Editor's Compensation, Expenses, and Contract/Letter of Appointment

As *AASOR* editor I have receive no compensation, even as a token (unless one counts gratis copies of the volumes I have edited), nor am I reimbursed for any expenses related to my duties as editor. I regard my editorship as service to ASOR and to the discipline. My time is volunteered and my institution, the Semitic Museum of Harvard University, bears the (minimal) expenses associated with this service.

There is no written agreement covering my service as *AASOR* editor nor even a formal letter of appointment from COP or from the ASOR Board. Strictly speaking, neither is necessary. I mention this only as a matter of record. (There were no contracts or letters of appointment during my two terms as *ARS* editor, either.)

B. Additional Resources Needed

Subventions

AASOR does not require a subvention from authors, but as noted, this potentially creates a perverse incentive for authors to favor *AASOR* over *ARS*. If ASOR could eliminate the need for subventions from all its publications, manuscripts would more likely be allocated to the appropriate series on the basis of quality and "best fit," rather on the authors' abilities to raise subvention money.

Color Printing

It would highly desirable to print *AASOR* in color regularly without relying on authors to pay the additional cost. At present the addition of color is handled on a case-by-case basis with authors paying a subvention (now about \$5,000) to cover the added cost, which means that use of color in *AASOR* depends on the authors' abilities to raise subvention money.

Digital Supplements

AASOR (in fact all ASOR publications) should move away from individual media inserted into bound volumes to web-based digital supplements. The questions are how will these web-based supplements be hosted and how will digital access be tied to purchase of a physical book or the subscription to a digital version. In connection with the latter, there is also the further question of how to manage access for institutional subscribers vs. individual purchasers. Once COP's policy on digital supplements is decided, it should, however, be relatively easy to find technical solutions these questions.