

## **Report of the Committee on Publications**

### **To The Executive Committee of ASOR**

**Submitted by Jeffrey A. Blakely, Vice-President**

**16 September 2011**

#### Current Status

In a separate file you will find the current status of ASOR's books and journals described by the editor of each. In general the situation is good. Three additional updates are in order. Jim Weinstein should have received BASOR's proofs on Friday and he is checking them. The book manuscript entitled "The Roman Marble Sculptures from the Sanctuary of Pan at Caesarea Philippi/Paneas (Israel)," has now been accepted for the ARS pending revision. Finally, the delay in the production of NEA that was described by Ann in her report will probably mean that the current issue will not appear until mid-October. This delay should not impact the production of the December issue, which is still scheduled to appear on time. The delay is a one-time production delay, not an editorial delay.

#### BASOR

Jim Weinstein has signed his contract for another three-year term. During the contract negotiations we had an important and lengthy discussion about color that followed up on discussions of last November. Over the past few years virtually every significant journal in our field has moved to color production, the most recent being IEJ. Most authors of archaeological materials now expect color and BASOR was beginning to lose important articles since we were not printing in color. Andy solicited a few bids to determine what the additional cost of color production would be and after discussion with Jim, Andy, Tim, and Sheldon we concluded that we simply had to move to color and that we could pay for it. So, as of February 2012 BASOR will be produced in color. At the November meeting of the BASOR Editorial Board Jim will lead discussions on altering BASOR's format in order to maximize the impact of color in the journal.

In Jim's attached report he has renewed his request to change BASOR from quarterly production to semi-annual production. He articulated a variety of valid points in support of his request. He also notes that virtually all other journals in our field have made this move over the past few years. We cannot know the precise reasons, but he assumes they are similar to those he has articulated regarding BASOR. An additional point in support of his request is that semi-annual production would reduce printing costs (even when keeping the total annual page count constant),

distribution costs, and probably claims costs. Points I have heard against this suggestion are that the appearance of some important scholarship would be delayed by three months as some articles waited for the publication date to come, and that quarterly appearance of BASOR reinforces ASOR's presence more than semi-annual appearance. To my mind we need to hear from ASOR members and subscribers (institutional libraries in particular) on this question.

My own view is that BASOR needs to move toward the production model used by the Journal of Archaeological Science and other leading journals where articles are posted on-line when they are ready, even if that is months before a printed version would appear. The articles might lack page numbers, but they would be accessible to the scholarly community immediately. Costs and manpower needed to accomplish such a production model are unknown and such a model may not be practical for ASOR at this point. Nonetheless, it should be investigated because I believe that is the direction scholarly dissemination of articles is going. In such a model it is largely irrelevant whether the printed version is a quarterly, semi-annual, or annual.

## NEA

After the Spring ASOR Board meeting Andy, Chuck, and I discussed the production of an ad for the Editor of NEA. The ad was modeled on the ad used last time the position was open. Andy and I worked on the final wording and the ad was distributed in our Newsletter, on-line, and in emails to the membership. In the ad it stated that evaluation of applications for the position would start to be evaluated on 6 September. At this point, four complete applications have been received. I asked Chuck to head the search committee and earlier this week, when the fourth application was completed, I forwarded the applications to him so that he could start the review process. I asked Susan Ackerman and Lynn Swartz-Dodd to round out the committee. It is my hope that a candidate is selected, discussed by COP, and appointed by the Board by the Annual Meeting at the latest. This could mean e-votes by both COP and the Board of the EC.

Ann's term as Editor of NEA ends on 31 December 2011 with the publication of the December 2011 issue of NEA. Normally the editor would now be working to solicit, review, and accept articles for issues in 2012, or a newly appointed editor would be starting that same process as the retiring editor finished her/his work. Given the vote at the Spring Board meeting and the ongoing search for a new editor, this is not happening. I am worried that if the solicitation of articles for the March issue of NEA does not begin now that we will not be able to prepare a good quality March issue in anything approaching a timely fashion.

One of my mandates is to ensure the timely production of our journals and books. This has been a continuous problem in recent years, and now that NEA is finally on time I would hate to see it fall significantly behind again. The costs of being behind are significant, as we well know. We do not want to go there again.

It is with a certain amount of trepidation that I make the following suggestion. In the current absence of an editor for the March 2012 issue, appoint me Guest Editor, charged with soliciting articles and for sending them out for review. With some luck and arm-twisting I might be able to present the new editor with a sufficient quantity of reviewed manuscripts to constitute the March issue. At that point, late November, the new editor could take over or request that I continue as guest editor and help in the preparation of this one issue as the new editor settles in to the job. This would allow the new editor to spend additional time on future issues and secure manuscripts for them. At this point I am not at all sure I could procure sufficient articles on this timeline, but I would try.

I raised this possibility with COP and an e-vote was held. In a unanimous vote, but with not all members voting,

Motion: COP moves that Jeffrey A. Blakely be appointed Guest Editor of NEA issue 75 (1), the March 2012 issue, to serve and function until the appointment of a new editor for NEA and then at the discretion of such a new editor once appointed.

The work involved as Guest Editor is more than my available time if I were to continue on as VP for Publications for the final three months of my term. Fortunately my successor, Chuck Jones, has been chosen and he is up to speed on all aspects of COP's work. He is far more knowledgeable on publications issues than I. Assuming that the EC has confirmed COP's motion, I request the acceptance of my resignation as VP for Publications effective 1 October 2011.

Motion: I move that the term of incoming Chair of COP, Charles E. Jones, be extended back to 1 October 2011 and that he fill the remaining three months of Vice-President Blakely's term before starting his own duly elected three-year term.

Status of COP and ASOR

No matter what, my term ends at the latest 31 December 2011. Depending how one counts, I have been at this for about four years. It has been a time of rapid change in the world of publication and even now it is unclear where we are going and what the consequences of the

changed world of publications will be for ASOR. I have spent a lot of time reading and trying to learn and understand what is ahead. I wish to share one concern before I leave.

ASOR began as an organization that sponsored research in the Holy Land through its research institute in Jerusalem starting in 1900. Twenty or so years later it entered the world of publication for research from the Holy Land by starting both BASOR and The Annual, a journal and a book series. These grew and were augmented and until the early 1970s that was ASOR. By the early 1970s ASOR also became the sponsor or co-sponsor of Annual Meetings that began to take off, but at the same time the research institutions were spun out as their own entities. ASOR became an organization dominated by publications and the annual meeting. As part of that development it became, in large part, a scholarly membership organization. ASOR's journals were, and remain, a key benefit of membership.

Today the world of publication is changing and now BASOR and NEA, in particular, are available both on-line and in print. It has been suggested to me that the on-line version of BASOR will soon be the version desired by most scholars and institutions. This is probably not the case for NEA in the near future (unless its role changes to make this so). As a scholarly, academic journal BASOR will be available at interested university, college, and seminary libraries and there will be no reason for many individual scholars to subscribe themselves since they will have access through their home institutional library. Even if their institutional library does not subscribe to BASOR, the individual scholar can probably obtain on-line access to BASOR through their former undergraduate or graduate institution by paying a nominal alumni usage fee at that library for entire journal packages. Thus, with institutions providing scholarly access to BASOR, I see it becoming less of a benefit of personal membership, as opposed to institutional membership. Scholars might get it, but not really want it since they already have access.

My concerns, therefore, go to marketing. We market BASOR to institutional members and institutions. Okay, that is simple enough. We are now doing that and JSTOR Current Scholarship Program should be a key tool. But what about the individual scholar? What are we giving the individual member? With BASOR available by other means, the answer is a scholarly organization, an annual meeting, and NEA; and many members do not attend the annual meeting. In my opinion ASOR needs to reconsider and clarify the benefits of membership and what membership means, and then market those things that are true benefits. For the past 40 years a paper BASOR has been a key benefit of individual membership or subscription, but now in an electronic world I think it soon ceases to be and that ASOR needs to consider the impact of this technological development. I frequently rail against politicians who describe problems but offer

no real solutions. Here, unfortunately, I seem to have joined them. I see a problem and can suggest no solution. I think we need “to boldly go” ... somewhere....

### Terse Reflections

Being Vice-President (or Chair) of Publications is akin to trying to push something with a string. Things get done but only when the string has been moistened with something (!) and then frozen, but act quickly before it melts. The true strength of the position is that you have a voice. I have been sustained by the belief that all want more or less the same thing for the organization and its publications, but that disagreement revolves around how, and in what order, we accomplish this. I have also been surprised at the inability, and at times unwillingness, of some people to understand, or even try to understand, a point of view other than their own.

Four years ago NEA was behind, production costs were high, claims were high, and subscriptions were declining. While I might rightly wish subscriptions were higher, these issues have been dealt with largely through the hard work of Editor Ann Killebrew (and here editorial staff) at one end and Executive Director Andy Vaughn (and the publications staff in Boston) at the other. There were tough times. Sage advice was provided by COP members Mitch Allen and Chuck Jones as this problem was solved.

Four years ago COP seemed to avoid, actively I might add, discussing what Publications was to do in a digital world. We were saddled with what had turned out to be poor contracts for electronic distribution. Those contracts are now gone thanks to Andy. We have a course of action plotted with JSTOR Current Scholarship Program. At this point it seems the correct one, but this playing field is still under construction. Librarians and publishers from around the country provided me with advice. I thank them. Again, COP members Mitch and Chuck were insightful while Andy questioned and negotiated to get us where we are. This was a most important step for ASOR to take.

Jim Weinstein has been a tireless advocate as he has shepherded BASOR to become, in my opinion, the leading journal in the field. BASOR's continued development and success over the past two decades is due to Jim's tireless dedication to BASOR. BASOR enhances ASOR at so many levels. Nonetheless, there were some rocky times and exasperation, but now we have taken, and are poised to take, important steps. As I noted earlier, technology has made this significant step possible. My worries of unintended consequences may be a mirage, but I am sure there are potholes yet unimagined.

One hope of mine was by resolving some of Publications existing problems that trust would be enhanced and that a commonly held mission for publication within ASOR's larger enterprise might be found. This was a total failure; I could not even get a discussion going within COP toward this end. In today's world the potential for dissemination of information of all types in various electronic formats is so great that we are foolish to remain transfixed by print. Maybe COP is the wrong committee for this. I do not know. Here I think that development of The Annual and the Archaeological Report Series was arrested, unfortunately. Kevin and Joe, the editors of these series, have been working and thinking creatively. They need to continue doing so.

Finally I thank Tim and P.E. for allowing me the opportunity to serve, although I do seem to remember some arm-twisting and times of great frustration. Tim has been a good and supportive friend in all of this. At the start of my work I had many useful exchanges of ideas with P.E. before I settled in to my work. These were quite meaningful to me. I greatly appreciate the philosophy and experience behind the many times held bemused look on businessman P.E.'s face as the academics rant and rail on what can seem obscure issues.

Jeffrey A. Blakely