

Outreach Education Committee

Committee Report for ASOR

November, 2012

Our Goal: It is the goal of this committee to enrich the educational experience of young and old alike by introducing contextual links to the archaeological past of the ancient Near East. We do this through the creation of outreach activities such as workshops, public lectures, the publication of applicable lesson plans, and summer institutes.

Outreach Education Committee members

Stefanie Elkins – *chair*

Neil Bierling – *co-chair (replacing chair as of Nov. 2012)*

Ellen Bedell

Jeanne DelColle

Pamela Gabor

Kristine Huffman

Gloria London

Caroline Rivers

2011-2012 Activities

1. Collaboration with teachers to create a collection of unified lesson plans on archaeology and art history geared for not only K-12, but for college and adult education as well. Many lessons have been formatted into a unified plan. It is the goal to have these lessons eventually published on the ASOR website.
2. The ASOR website developed an online section of Near Eastern Archaeology called Dig-it-al NEA. Stefanie Elkins (chair of the committee) was featured last fall with an article on integrating technology into the classroom with a link to her iMovie of the Lion Hunt of Ashurbanipal. We would like to see more education features like this in the future for NEA.
3. ASOR has at the suggestion of the committee, created a Facebook page and has worked on creating a more user friendly website including an active blog.
4. Development of a teacher educational workshop to be held in conjunction with the ASOR annual meetings this November. The workshop will be the Oriental Institute on Nov. 17. This all day workshop will feature many of our committee members along with OI staff.

Our committee workshops have had varied success depending on the state and local department of Education in the city that the ASOR meetings are being held in. Some states no longer sponsor continuing education for teachers and thus the costs of the workshops prevent

teachers from attending. With cutbacks in education, curriculum such as archaeology is not always supported by state curriculum requirements. We have found that by targeting private schools, we get better results.

We are evaluating the future of these workshops as a viable option for the committee to continue pursuing. They require a lot of work and it is difficult to do if none of the committee members live in the proposed city of the workshop.

Future Ideas / Goals

1. One of our goals has been to create new NEH proposals for future Summer Institutes that are sponsored not only by the NEH, but also by ASOR and the Education Outreach Committee. These summer workshops/institutes, would take place overseas (when possible) and utilize ASOR members as presenters and organizers. Many on our committee have already participated and presented at these NEH summer institutes (organized by Gloria London) and have become active participators in ASOR and archaeology as a result.

We would also like to involve local teachers (such as those from Jordan or Israel) as well as American teachers who upon acceptance into the NEH program, would receive funding that would allow them to travel to the Summer Institute. Proposals such as the NEH seem the best suited in order to provide the funding that teachers need to engage in an experience that they otherwise would not be able to afford.

2. To host public events like lecture series and/or dinners with special guests. These public events could coincide with ASOR annual meetings and could be held in appropriate venues (local museums). The idea is that these dinner lectures would target lay members of ASOR and serve to encourage lay participation by offering activities at special discounts in affiliation with local museums.

Committee Challenges

While teaching teachers has been our focus, we recognize that the strategic plan and ITF report conceive of the committee as broader with the intention of “outreach” to the public in general. It has been suggested we be called, “Outreach Committee” - dropping “Education” from the name. However, we do not want to deemphasize the educational aspect of our committee. The education of young people and teachers has been our primary goal. However, the goals of ASOR concerning outreach means that we as a committee need to think of broader ways to accomplish outreach.

We currently have been offering educational workshops to middle and high school teachers that coincide with the annual ASOR meetings. These workshops have met with mixed success over the years. While partnering with museums has worked at times, the work involved is time consuming. The challenges with the educational workshops are as follows:

- The ASOR meetings are the only time committee members and workshop presenters meet.
- Much depends on the location of the ASOR meetings; different cities have different resources available.
 - A museum with a Near East collection and education coordinator is vital to the implementation of a workshop.
 - Distance and lack of personal connections with museums make it difficult and time consuming for committee members to arrange a workshop in an unfamiliar town.
- Reduced funding for continuing education makes it difficult for teachers to afford workshops.
- Thus far these workshops have not resulted in teachers becoming members of ASOR. While we believe the workshops are valuable, these workshops do not meet the related outreach goals of ASOR as set out in the strategic plan.

Until now, this committee has been informal, we have no official mechanism for appointing new members or having a rotation of service for members. Some of us have been serving for years and at least half of our members are elementary or highschool teachers and thus, student education is our specialty and main interest. The committee needs to adopt some guidelines regarding term length, and how many consecutive terms one may serve.