

President's Report
ASOR Board of Trustees
May 3, 2014

It has been almost four months to the day since, on January 1, 2014, I assumed the post of ASOR president. Those four months have been, in many respects, a whirlwind, as I have worked hard to learn as well as I can all the details of “all things ASOR”: the various deliberations currently ongoing within our various committees and task forces, the various projects being undertaken by our Boston office staff, the prospects for new initiatives that are just coming into being, and the many players involved in these and other programs. My deepest thanks go to those colleagues who have mentored me through this learning process, and who have shown incredible patience in doing so: Chairman of the Board B.W. Ruffner, Past President Tim Harrison, Vice-President Sharon Hebert, Secretary Lynn Swartz Dodd, Treasurer Richard Coffman, and the chairs of ASOR’s various standing committees and task forces. I owe a special thanks to our Executive Director, Andy Vaughn, who has spent endless hours with me on the phone, on e-mail, and in Boston, trying to bring me up to speed. I am most grateful.

Among the tasks I set myself when I became ASOR president was to make sure that the endeavors that I would take to be core to our organization – our annual meeting, our publications program, and our fellowship program – continued to thrive in the same ways they have flourished during the past several years. I am thus extremely pleased to report that, by many different measures, this is the case. For example, the Program Committee has scheduled 35 member-organized sessions for the 2014 annual meeting in San Diego (up from 30 in 2013), in addition to our 32 ASOR-sponsored sessions, and we received an astonishing and a record-setting number of paper proposals (512) in response to the 2014 “Call for Papers.” Within our publications program, we look forward to welcoming, on July 1, 2014, Eric H. Cline and Christopher Rollston as the new co-editors of *BASOR*; we have also been very pleased to be able to establish an electronic editorial manager system for both *BASOR* and *NEA*, to ease the behind-the-scenes organizational tasks of those journals’ editors. We are working, moreover, to enhance readers’ appreciation of *NEA* by making it possible to move from a standard issue size of seventy-four pages to a standard issue size of ninety-six pages.

When it comes to fellowships, the news is especially exciting. In January, as we previously announced, we secured a \$25,000 challenge gift, which (if the challenge can be met) will establish a “Strange and Midkiff Families Endowed Scholarship Fund” to provide scholarships for students to participate in excavation projects. Now, I am enormously pleased to announce that an additional \$50,000 in challenge funding has been secured to establish a “Carol and Eric Meyers Endowed Scholarship Fund.” This makes a total of three endowed scholarship funds that honor some of the most dedicated and long-serving members of ASOR and of our Board that we will establish in a twelve month period – the third is the “P. E. MacAllister Endowed Scholarship Fund,” which was established last April. Moreover, we have also been able, this year, to establish the Sean Dever Scholarship, which is currently supported through current-use gifts but which we anticipate moving toward a status of fully endowed. When we began our “Foundation for

ASOR Campaign” almost three years ago, on July 1, 2011, we set ourselves the goal of raising \$200,000 for research and training support. Once we secure full funding for the Strange-Midkiff, Meyers, and Dever Endowed Scholarships, we will have significantly exceeded that goal. That’s an accomplishment of which we should all be very proud.

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In conjunction to setting myself the task, as president, of ensuring the continued well-being of our annual meeting, our publications program, and our fellowship program, I have also set myself the task of helping foster some of our newer initiatives. In that regard, it was exceptionally gratifying to celebrate, in January, the one-year anniversary of our online e-newsletter, *News@ASOR*, and, in April, the one-year anniversary of our online e-zine, *The ANE Today*. We celebrated the latter with a special themed issue on “Passover as Jesus Knew It,” with contributions from five noted scholars of the early Christian period (including ASOR Board members Eric Meyers and Jim Strange). In April, we also celebrated the phenomenal growth of the “Friends of ASOR” program of which *The ANE Today* is a part: a total of 7964 “friends” (up from 5330 in January of this year). *News@ASOR* and *The ANE Today* are both funded by generous gifts from Trustees Stevan Dana and W. Mark Lanier and Honorary Trustee Norma Kershaw. ASOR is deeply indebted to them for their financial support.

Speaking of financial support, the Board will have received a separate report for our May 3, 2014, meeting, regarding our “Building a Foundation for ASOR Campaign” and its many successes, so I will only highlight one aspect of our fundraising efforts that has been particularly meaningful to me: the fact that, as of April 24, 2014, ASOR has received donations from 395 different donors during this fiscal year. Over 200 of those 395 donors, moreover, have given since January 1, 2014. Not only does this reflect astonishing growth in our donor pool during the last four months (which is a four-month period that is not necessarily a peak time for the making of charitable donations); our current total also means that we will easily meet our goal of 400 discrete donors for FY14. We might furthermore note that this FY14 total marks a significant increase from FY13, when we had 352 discrete donors, a fact made even more remarkable when we recall that we had several special one-time donors who gave in FY13 in honor of our venerable out-going chair P. E. MacAllister and the “P. E. MacAllister Endowed Scholarship Fund.”

Indeed, if there is one overwhelming impression that I have developed during my four months “on the job” as ASOR president, it concerns how deeply dedicated ASOR’s members are to our organization and how this dedication drives them to give to ASOR generously – both through financial donations, as I have just noted, but also through the gift of their time. As most of you know, the ASOR president is a member, *ex officio*, of every one of our standing committees, and this means I see the tremendous volume of e-mail that each of these committees generates in doing work in service of ASOR. I have said repeatedly, but I cannot say often enough, that ASOR’s greatest strength is its members and the profound investments they make in ensuring ASOR’s well-being.

Having a community like that to draw on is, for all of us on the Board, an asset of inestimable value.

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Still, you might ask, in the midst of all this good news: are there no worries that keep the president awake at night? Well, of course, there are some. I worry, for example, about the ongoing work in development that we will need to do after June 30, 2014, when our “Building a Foundation for ASOR Campaign” comes to an end. The campaign, as you have heard, has been enormously successful, but I think we are also seeing some indications of donor fatigue: although we hoped to raise \$5000 for fellowship support during our annual “March Fellowship Madness,” for example, we only raised \$3555. Yet as we move into FY15, we will need to raise at least \$100,000, which is the amount we budget each year as our “Annual Fund” income. To help with this, our Board Chair B. W. Ruffner has appointed a new chair of the Development Committee, J. Edward Wright, and I very much look forward to working with Ed as we continue our fund-raising work in a new context once the Foundational Campaign comes to an end.

I also am very aware that the timeline we set for the Strategic Plan we adopted in April 2010 is soon to come to an end, in 2015. In response, I have scheduled some time at the May 3, 2014, meeting for the Board to discuss ASOR’s strategic initiatives, both in terms of what we have accomplished during the timeframe of the current Strategic Plan (2011-2015) and what we might hope to accomplish going forward. My intent is that these discussions will help guide a yet-to-be-formed Strategic Planning Task Force that will develop a Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 for the Board to consider.

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Overall, as we as a Board gather for our Spring 2014 meeting, I believe that we should do so with much joy, in celebration of all ASOR has accomplished in the past several years and is accomplishing now. Moreover, while we have more still we need and will want to accomplish, in terms of fund-raising and strategic goals, I hope we approach these upcoming challenges with full confidence, knowing that the successes we have achieved thus far are harbingers of many more successes to come.