

Report from Committee on Archaeological Policy and Research (CAP)

Submitted 19 November 2014 by Oystein S. LaBianca, CAP Chair

This will be my last report to the Board of Trustees of ASOR after six years in the saddle as CAP chair. I want to use this opportunity to highlight some of the major accomplishments of CAP during my tenure as chair and to share some reflections on what I see as future opportunities for ASOR and CAP. First, here are some highlights of what we have accomplished on CAP over the past six years:

1. *Crystallization of a new mission for CAP emphasizing its role as a partner in promotion of best practices.* Whereas in the past the primary emphasis of CAP was on evaluating projects to see that they met CAP standards, the emphasis under my tenure has been to make CAP a resource and a partner in helping projects do the best job possible—whether in the field or in publishing results. Thus CAP's mission has evolved from being predominantly concerned with enforcing standards to a new role as a resourceful partner in facilitating conversation and education about best practices; in helping to implement best practices; in helping to foster collaborative research and in getting the word out to the public and other archaeologists about the sorts of research being done by CAP affiliated projects.
2. *Reduced the time and effort needed to apply for CAP affiliation.* Whereas in the past project directors were required to submit on an annual basis requests for renewal of CAP application, we have now implement a policy where projects are approved for a period of three years. We have also simplified the paper work required by creating a uniform application form that is the same for all projects, whether field or publication. This has greatly eased the time and effort required to apply for CAP affiliation.
3. *New guidelines explaining responsibilities and duties of CAP committee members.* The document orients prospective nominees and incoming members to the duties and responsibilities involved in serving on CAP. It also spells out the duties of the chair.
4. *Snapshot pages and interactive map showcasing of CAP affiliated projects on the ASOR website.* Whereas in the past we simply listed the names of the projects approved for CAP affiliation under the Research tap on the ASOR web site, today the ASOR research page serves as a gateway to all CAP affiliated projects by providing a brief paragraph description of each project and links to the relevant websites. These snapshot pages also includes pictures of the principal investigators and an image depicting their project. Furthermore, an interactive map allows visitors to get an overview of the geographic locations where CAP affiliated projects are located.
5. *Partner in development of the Digital Archaeological Atlas of the Holy Land or DAAHL.* CAP has been a key partner in helping to develop this new on-line atlas for use by

researchers, educators, students and the public interested in learning more about archaeological projects based in the Eastern Mediterranean. All CAP affiliated projects are included in the DAAHL, as are many other projects as well. The lead institutional partners in the development of the DAAHL are the UCSD/CALIT2 (Tom Levy) and the Arizona State University (Steve Savage).

6. *CAP Standards and Ethics.* We have collaborated with other ASOR entities on developing new ethics guidelines for ASOR and ASOR affiliated research projects.
7. *Aid to ailing publication projects.* During my tenure CAP has played a key role in locating younger scholars to assist with publishing projects that have languished due to the age and health of its original project directors. I am aware of at least half a dozen such projects.
8. *Archiving of all CAP records.* Each year we have provided ASOR headquarters with electronic records of all correspondence and actions of the CAP committee. We have also assisted with updating CAP related records from earlier years.
9. *Other initiatives underway but not completed.* Several initiatives were started under my tenure, but have not been fully implemented. These include development of an on-line application process to replace the current application procedure; development of a dig opportunities bulletin board for recruiting volunteers to CAP affiliated projects; development of a CAP Clearing House or Directory for Sharing Specialists; development of an Electronic Tools Inventory for sharing on-line data management tools among CAP affiliated project; and development of a CAP Global Challenges Initiative as a means to foster collaborative research on global challenges among ASOR affiliated projects. I am hopeful that my successor, Tom Levy, will pick up where I left off on bringing these initiatives to completion.

It remains to also offer certain reflections on the work of CAP and on the way forward for this important standing committee of ASOR.

1. *CAP is a unique asset of ASOR.* In my conversations with colleagues belonging to other professional associations I have discovered that CAP is a rather unique entity. Whether by design or accident, CAP has fostered an on-going conversation within ASOR about standards and, more recently, best practices in doing archaeological fieldwork and publication. I have no doubt that over the two decades since CAP was created, it has played a key role in lifting standards among ASOR research projects. I also believe that the existence of CAP is a strategic advantage for ASOR when it comes to incubating collaborative research and interventions on a large scale.
2. *An aid to career development and completion.* Through its assistance with screening travel grants for young people, CAP is helping to recruit young people to academic programs leading to careers in archaeology and related fields. For junior scholars, CAP is

a key resource in helping with incubating and mounting new field projects. For established scholars, CAP provides a venue for conversation about best practices and for support with implementation of research plans; and for senior scholars falling behind on publishing responsibilities, CAP is a place to turn for help with locating younger scholars to help with the work.

3. *Responding to the mounting challenge of archiving project data bases and publications.* A looming challenge for ASOR and CAP is how to deal with the challenge of archiving project data and publications. At the very least, the CAP snapshot pages should be enhanced to serve as gate-ways to project data bases and publications for all CAP affiliated projects. At a more advanced level, CAP might want to organize collaboration on archiving data bases involving ASOR institutional sponsors and the overseas research centers. In my estimate, finding a way forward on this issue will be one of CAP's most important challenges over the next few years.
4. *Pre-emptive action to protect key archaeological sites through development of narrative tours.* Given the rapid rate at which archaeological sites are being destroyed by looting, construction, and wars, a possible future role for CAP might be to facilitate and encourage development of themed narrative tours that would feature various historical eras or themes such as the landscape history or the history of water harvesting. By identifying the contribution of various archaeological sites to such tours, a stronger case can be made to policy makers and developers for their protection.
5. *Foster cooperative research cooperation on global challenges facing humanity and the history of human impact on eco-system services.* A way forward for collaborative research in ASOR is to link up projects already addressing issues related to sustainable development and the deep-time impact of humans on the environment. For example, as is showcased in the ASOR session on Archaeologists Engaging Global Challenges, a way forward is to organize collaborative research on the human impact on the Earth's eco-system services. According to the UN Millennium Assessment Initiative, such services include the basic support for life on Earth, the provisions people require, regulation of environmental conditions and mitigation of hazards, and the availability of non-material experiences or values. A fledgling first step toward such collaborative work is the wiki ASOR100.
6. *Opening up CAP affiliation to non-North Americans.* Given that over one fourth of ASOR individual membership is made up of non-North Americans, CAP needs to come up with a solution to how to equalize opportunities for CAP affiliation for these members. Key voices in the search for a solution to this problem are those of the overseas research centers.
7. *Budget line for Graduate Assistant(s) to work with CAP Chair.* The amount of time and effort required to carry out the minimal duties of CAP chair is considerable, and if the

chair is to move forward with initiatives beyond the minimum, even more time and effort will be needed. For this reason I strongly recommend that a line-item be included in all future budgets of at least \$10,000 to cover the wages of one or more graduate assistant.

8. *Finally, my work as CAP chair over the past six years was a team effort.* I owe a heartfelt word of thanks to each of the individual members of the committee for their partnership with me in moving forward with new initiatives and in doing the routine work of CAP. I especially want to thank my graduate assistant, Jeff Hudon of Andrews University, for his outstanding service as my assistant over these past six years. His services were possible thanks to financial support from ASOR and Andrews University's Office of Scholarly Research.