

**President's Report**  
**ASOR Board of Trustees**  
**April 18, 2015**

As the ASOR Board of Trustees gathers for its Spring 2015 meeting, I would like to highlight four issues – (1) the budget and the ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiative; (2) the proposed ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct; (3) fellowships; and (4) publications – that I think are especially worthy of the Board's attention. Before doing so, however, I would like to express my thanks, on behalf of the Board, to ASOR Trustee Mark Lanier for hosting our Spring 2015 meetings at the Lanier Theological Library. During his tenure as a trustee, Mark has been a good and generous friend to ASOR in many, many ways, and his latest gift of hospitality (including the dinner to which he and Becky Lanier have invited us on Saturday night) is yet another indication of his stalwart commitment to our organization. ASOR is very grateful for his support.

**The Budget and the ASOR Syrian Heritage Initiative**

One of the most important tasks the Board of Trustees assumes at its Spring meetings is the approval of the budget for the upcoming fiscal year (in this case, FY 16). Many trustees will immediately notice a dramatic increase in the budget proposed for FY 16, as opposed to the budgets presented at previous Spring Board meetings: an increase, for example, from the \$1.3 million FY 15 budget presented to the Board in Spring 2014 to the \$2 million FY 16 budget presented to the Board for its consideration this year. Board members should note, moreover, that the \$1.3 million FY 15 budget presented to the Board in Spring 2014 actually ended up being a budget of \$1.9 million (as approved by the Executive Committee at its September 2014 meeting).

The reason for these dramatic increases is the funding for ASOR's Syrian Heritage Initiative (SHI) that comes via a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of State. The funding the State Department has extended to ASOR, moreover, had continued to grow. Initially, in August 2014, we received \$600,000, to be spent over a twelve-month period (which in reality stretched to slightly longer) to work on three key issues concerning Syrian cultural heritage: (1) to document the damage being done to cultural heritage in Syria (using satellite imagery, in-country informants, and information gathered from news and social media); (2) to promote global awareness of the extent of the damage (especially by producing regular reports regarding our findings and by disseminating information at conferences, through the press, and to other organizations working to safeguard Syrian cultural heritage); and (3) to plan emergency and post-war responses for mitigation and preservation.

Very soon thereafter, in September 2014, we were asked – and awarded \$156,000 in additional funding – to extend our work into the areas of northern Iraq not under the control of the Baghdad government, in order to consider, especially, the destruction of cultural heritage at the hands of ISIS. Again, this funding was to be spent within the same twelve-month period as specified for the initial funding of \$600,000. In just the last few weeks, however, we have been asked by the State Department to submit a proposal for continuing our work on Syria and Iraqi cultural heritage for two more years, through our FY 16 and FY 17. While this funding is not yet secure, we are extremely optimistic that it will be forthcoming. The State Department has indicated that

they are very, very pleased with our work so far, and the ASOR Executive Director, Andy Vaughn, and I spent three very intense days in Washington, D.C., in mid-March meeting with State Department officials about taking the project forward. The FY 16 budget thus anticipates receipt of \$772,500 from the Department of State: i.e., the amount of our State Department funding for this year, plus a modest (3%) increase.

The Board will, of course, have a chance to discuss both this budget and ASOR's continued commitment to the Department of State cooperative agreement at its April 18, 2015, meeting. In anticipation, I would highlight only two matters:

(1) In taking the decision for ASOR to enter into discussions with the State Department about extending our SHI project for another two years, I tried to take into account the Board's discussions about the SHI at its November 2014 meeting, and while it is fair to acknowledge that some concerns about the SHI were raised at that time, I understood the Board in general to have expressed its support for the SHI and even to adumbrate an interest in the project going forward beyond its original time frame if that were possible. Indeed, to go forward may address concerns raised by two of the Board's break-out groups in November: what did ASOR anticipate happening to both the work of the SHI and to the people working on the project after the initial Department of State funding ran out? Obviously, if the Board approves going forward with continuing our cooperative agreement, that question will be answered for at least the next two fiscal years. I'm also very pleased that we have had some success in raising funds from entities other than the Department of State: most notably, a \$57,000 grant received in January 2015 from the J. M. Kaplan Fund to expand the scope and impact of the Syrian Heritage Initiative in the areas of preservation planning and training.

(2) That said, there is no doubt that managing the SHI has imposed new burdens on our ASOR staff, especially our Assistant Director, Selma Omerefendic, who has had to manage the new financial complexities that have come with the State Department funding, and our Executive Director, Andy Vaughn, who is one of the five principal investigators for the SHI project, with responsibilities for directing and administering the SHI's work. In the past eight months, since the project's inauguration, Andy estimates that these responsibilities have taken up between 40-50% of his time. This has implications for certain lines in the ASOR budget. Most notably, income in areas where Andy's direct involvement makes a difference is less than we had originally budgeted (annual fund, subscriptions and memberships). These losses are, however, made up through the indirect costs that we take as income from the Department of State funding. Moreover, we are looking at ways of restructuring the management of the SHI going forward, in the hope that the time Andy needs to commit to the oversight of the project can drop back to about 33% of his overall work schedule.

### **The Proposed ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct**

The process of developing a comprehensive professional conduct policy for ASOR was begun in 2010, when then-President Tim Harrison convened an *ad hoc* Ethics Working Group, with members Lynn Swartz Dodd (chair), Thomas Davis, Jane Evans, and Marian Feldman. The Working Group then engaged in a multi-faceted process in order to develop a proposal for an ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct. For example, they researched the policies of peer

organizations, as well as consulting broadly with ASOR leaders past and present (trustees, officers, committee chairs, and other committee members). The Working Group also reached out to individual ASOR members: in private conversations, through our *News@ASOR* e-newsletter, and at various sessions organized at the ASOR Annual Meeting (e.g., the “speed ethics” session hosted by the Working Group at the 2013 meeting and the discussion forum held during the Friday lunch hour of the 2014 meeting).

The Board has also regularly reviewed the work of the Ethics Working Group as it has gone forward, at each Board meeting since November 2012. In addition, the proposed ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct has been discussed several times by the Executive Committee and by the Chairs Coordinating Council, as well as by various of ASOR’s standing committees (especially CAP, COP, and the Program Committee). During the past year, moreover (during Fall 2014 and again during Winter 2015), a draft of the proposed policy was posted on ASOR’s website in order to solicit comments from the entire membership.

The Ethics Working Group has, in short, been exceptionally diligent in soliciting feedback as it has worked its way through multiple iterations of the proposed ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct; furthermore, the Working Group has been extremely conscientious about incorporating that feedback as it has endeavored to develop a policy that takes all of ASOR’s multiple constituencies, and the multiplicity of views that can be found among those multiple constituencies, into account. Thus, and by necessity, the resulting policy reflects compromise. But it is not, in my view, compromised. Rather, what the Ethics Working Group has given us, again in my view, is a document that puts forward consensus positions on which we can all broadly agree. In particular, regarding what I would identify as the most contentious issues the policy addresses – the presentation and publication of artifacts lacking an archaeological findspot and the presentation and publication of materials that come from occupied territories – the policy strives to put forth provisions that honor principles held by many ASOR members yet that allow for some flexibility based on, especially, the current political turmoil in the Near East.

So now it is time to vote, and this is the Board’s responsibility: to make the decision whether to adopt this policy on behalf of ASOR. I urge you all to read the policy carefully before the Board meeting, and at our meeting, we will welcome statements from Board members regarding their willingness to support or not support the document. That said, I would urge that Board members *not* propose alterations or emendations to the policy during our Board discussion. To be sure, if we adopt the policy, we may decide to emend or alter it in the future, once we have lived with it for a while and have a sense of how it works on a day-to-day basis. But to attempt to propose alterations or emendations now, and at the last minute, so to speak, seems to me to undercut the long and careful process the Ethics Working Group has employed to develop the proposed ASOR Policy on Professional Conduct that they are presenting to us. Consequently, I suggest we debate only the merits and limitations of the proposed policy as it stands and then to vote it up or down. The decision is an important one, and I look forward to the conversation.

## **Fellowships**

Many Board members will have received an e-mail in the past few days announcing that ASOR was able to raised an additional \$12,000 of fellowship funding for 2015 during our annual March

Fellowship Madness fund-raising campaign. When combined with the fellowship funding we have available through endowed funds, such as the P. E. MacAllister Fellowships, and through annual donors to the Harris Fellowship Fund, fellowship funds are thus available to send 45 students to participate in fieldwork projects this coming summer. I am also very pleased – speaking of the P. E. MacAllister Fellowships – that this fund, established at the gala celebration in P. E.’s honor in Indianapolis in Spring 2013, has two new Fellowship Fund “friends” that have been established in the last year – the Carol and Eric Meyers Fellowships and the Strange/Midkiff Families Fellowships. Both these funds already have over \$50,000 in assets, and ASOR anticipates that we will be able to give inaugural awards from both these fellowship funds next year, in Summer 2016. We also are planning some special events to celebrate Carol and Eric Meyers, Jim and Carolyn Strange, and the establishment of Carol and Eric Meyers Fellowships and the Strange/Midkiff Families Fellowships at the ASOR Annual Meeting in November, 2015.

This summer, moreover, we celebrate the inaugural award of the William G. Dever Fellowship for Biblical Scholars, a very generous (\$6000) fellowship available to a qualified American untenured faculty member in the field of biblical studies who wants to acquire elementary, first-hand experience in field archaeology and research in Israel.

The intent of the award is to help foster a dialogue between archaeology and biblical studies in colleges, universities, and seminaries, as well as in the larger discipline. This year’s winner, Dr. Thomas Blanton, who works on issues of economics in early Christianity, will use the award to join the CAP-affiliated excavation at Shikhin, directed by James Riley Strange, David Fiensy, and Mordechai Aviam, for a month and then will spend a second month resident at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem and traveling to other digs.

I am especially pleased that the Dever Fellowship offers ASOR the opportunity to extend funding to one of its professional members, for while we have been very successful in the past several years in raising fellowship funding to send students to the Middle East to participate in fieldwork projects, we have not been able to make much funding available to our professional members to further their research (whether in the field or in other venues): there are only the Harris Grants, which had funds this year of about \$3000-\$4000 to support worthy field projects that are CAP-affiliated. Yet one thing I have heard at several points from our professional members is that they would like to see ASOR develop more funding to assist them in their research and in other aspects of their professional lives. The Dever Fellowship is an important step forward in this respect.

In addition, I am very pleased to announce that ASOR has begun work to endow the Joe D. Seger Fund, which, like the Harris Grants, will provide funding to our professional members to support field projects that are CAP-affiliated. This fund has been inaugurated by a generous donor who has put forward a \$25,000 gift, provided ASOR can raise a matching \$25,000 to establish an initial \$50,000 endowment. So far, we have already raised \$11,000 of this \$25,000 match, so we are well on our way and fully optimistic that we will have the funds in place by the time of our November, 2015, meeting – and just in time to celebrate Joe’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday! Indeed, in addition to the special events to celebrate Carol and Eric Meyers, Jim and Carolyn Strange, and the establishment of Carol and Eric Meyers Fellowships and the Strange/Midkiff Families Fellowships that we will hold at the ASOR Annual Meeting in November, 2015, we will also

hold a special event celebrating Joe and the Joe D. Seger Fund. So pack plenty of party clothes for Atlanta!

## **Publications**

Our various publications have seen some significant changes in the last few months in terms of personnel: most notably, Eric Cline and Christopher Rollston have assumed their new positions as *BASOR* co-editors; Hanan Charaf has assumed the position as the editor of ASOR's Archaeological Reports Series, and Kevin McGeough has assumed the position of editor of AASOR. All of these editors have published descriptions regarding their editorial visions in our monthly e-newsletter, *News@ASOR* (see <http://www.asor.org/news/2014/09/rollston-cline.html> and <http://www.asor.org/news/2015/01/editors.html>), and based on the number of "hits" these letters have garnered, they seem to have been warmly received by our membership.

Just this month, moreover, *BASOR* has inaugurated a new policy of posting on-line (via the JSTOR Current Scholarship Program, available to individual *BASOR* subscribers and those whose institutions have subscriptions) articles from the forthcoming hard-copy of the journal. This means that *BASOR* subscribers who have access to JSTOR and who wish to see and cite articles prior to the appearance of the print edition will now be able to access digital versions of the articles several weeks or even months before the arrival of the print edition via postal mail twice per year (in May and November, as per usual). And *BASOR* authors benefit as well, as the results of their research is disseminated and made available as soon as possible. Eric and Chris report themselves to be "absolutely delighted" with this innovation (see <http://www.asor.org/news/2015/04/basor.html>), and I think we as a Board – given that we should always be looking for new ways to serve our members – should be absolutely delighted as well.

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Of course, the Board's most important work in terms of serving ASOR's members are the gifts – both financial and of time and effort – that each Board member gives to secure ASOR's continued well-being. I have said since the beginning of my presidency that I have been both awed and humbled by how dedicated ASOR's members are to our organization – and we are very fortunate that on our Board, we have those members who are the most deeply dedicated of all. I would especially like to acknowledge the Chair of the Board, B.W. Ruffner, Past President Tim Harrison, Vice-President Sharon Herbert, Secretary Lynn Swartz Dodd, Treasurer Richard Coffman, and our Executive Director, Andy Vaughn. Like all of you, these officers go well beyond what we might reasonably expect to make ASOR thrive. Like all of you, therefore, they make my job easy, and I am most grateful.