

DRAFT Minutes of the ASOR Executive Committee Meeting
The Westin Georgetown, Washington, D.C.
Logan Room
9:00 AM – 1:30PM EDT
October 4, 2015

Present: B.W. Ruffner (Chair); Susan Ackerman (President); Sharon Herbert (Vice President); Tim Harrison (Past President); Richard Coffman (Treasurer); Lynn Swartz Dodd (Secretary); Andy Vaughn (Executive Director); Ed Wright (Chair of Development Committee).

Absent: P. E. MacAllister; Eric Meyers; Ann-Marie Knoblauch; Joe Seger.

1. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:02AM by B.W. Ruffner.
2. Approval of the Agenda: Approved by acclamation.
3. Approval of the Minutes from the April Meeting (April 17, 2015)

No corrections were noted. The minutes were approved by acclamation

4. Approval of Committee Appointments

Be it resolved that the EC endorses with enthusiasm the nomination Patrick Alexander as a member of the Committee on Publications effective January 1, 2015, through December 31, 2017. Passed unanimously.

5. Treasurer's Report (Richard Coffman)

**FY 2015 INCREASE IN UNRESTRICTED ASSETS AVAILABLE
FOR OPERATIONS (i.e., UNRESTRICTED NET INCOME)**

At the Spring Board Meeting, we projected FY 2015 unrestricted net income to be a modest \$1,289. We, however, far exceeded this projection. While the annual audit is not yet complete, FY 2015 unrestricted net income is projected to be approximately \$18,250.

FY 2015 INVESTMENT RESULTS

This report inaugurates two significant changes. First, under the theory that "less is more," several Board members have requested that the monthly Investment Reports be streamlined, so the attached FY 2015 Investment Report eliminates the columns for FYE 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012. The current year (FY 2015) + two years of comparative financial information is plenty.

Second, a new column to the far right, entitled "ASOR Custom Benchmark," has been added. At the Spring Board Meeting, Sheldon Fox and I discussed migrating from the S&P 500 Index to a new comparative benchmark calculated using a formula that more closely resembles ASOR's actual investment allocations under the current investment policy. Comparing ASOR's investment results to the S&P 500 Index is like comparing apples to oranges. It is time for a change. Ergo, the new ASOR Custom Benchmark, which is a derivative of the benchmark developed by Sheldon's firm to evaluate the investment performance of certain non-profit organizations' endowments.

Eighty percent (80%) of the ASOR Custom Benchmark is composed of the MSCI All Cap World Index ("ACWI"). The ACWI is based on a global stock portfolio of large and mid-cap stocks—as opposed to the S&P 500 Index, which includes only U.S. large cap stocks. It makes more sense to use the ACWI since a portion of ASOR's investments are in international and small cap equities. The ACWI benchmark is commonly used by pensions and endowments.

The remaining 20% of the ASOR Custom Benchmark is composed of the Barclays Aggregate Bond Index, the leading index for benchmarking fixed income returns.

Sheldon suggested the 80% ACWI/20% Barclays Aggregate Bond Index combination because 80% of the Schwab investment model utilized by ASOR consists of equities. For the 12-month period ending June 30, 2015, the ASOR Custom Benchmark is 1.36%, which is calculated as follows: +1.23% (ACWI) x .80 plus +1.86% (Barclay's) x .20.

That said, ASOR's FY 2015 investment results were solid once again. ASOR Fellowship Accounts generated a collective gain of \$39,091 (+5.8%), while the Endowment Accounts generated a collective gain of \$35,097 (+5.4%)—both of which substantially exceed the FY 2015 ASOR Custom Benchmark of 1.36%. See Exhibit B. For transitional discussion purposes only—and this will be the next to last time—the S&P 500 Index for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2015 was +7.4%.

FY 2015 CASH AND INVESTMENT ACCOUNTS

General Fund. The General Fund comprises the three cash accounts containing unrestricted cash available for operations. Subject to any adjustments arising out of the annual audit, the General Fund balance at June 30, 2015 is projected to be \$559,375, which is a 17.64% increase over the June 30, 2014 General Fund balance. See Exhibit B.

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Year-end General Fund balance	\$400,939	\$494,371	\$475,494	\$559,375

Increase over previous year	N.A.	+23.3%	-3.82%	+17.64%
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Investment Accounts. Subject to any FY 2015 audit adjustments, the total market value of the Investment Accounts at June 30, 2015 is \$1,525,081, which is a 7.12% increase over the market value of the Investment Accounts at June 30, 2014. See Exhibit B. As reflected in the following table, since FY 2013, the year-end market value of the Investment Accounts has steadily increased despite fluctuations in the financial markets. Id.

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Year-end market value of the Investment Accounts	\$930,619	\$1,156,038	\$1,423,738	\$1,525,081
Increase over previous year	N.A.	+24.2%	+23.16%	+7.12%

Total value of all financial accounts. Subject to any FY 2015 audit adjustments, the total value of all financial accounts (checking accounts, savings accounts and Investment Accounts) at June 30, 2015 is projected to be \$2,415,579, which is a 15.19% increase over the total value of all financial accounts at June 30, 2014. See Exhibit B. In fact, as reflected in the following table, since FY 2012, the total year-end value of all financial accounts has steadily increased despite fluctuations in the financial markets. Id.

	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Total year-end value of all financial accounts	\$1,459,559	\$1,776,422	\$2,097,097	\$2,415,579
Increase over previous year	N.A.	+21.7%	+18.05%	+15.19%

FY 2015 MEMBERSHIPS AND SUBSCRIPTION REVENUE

Memberships and subscription revenue (on a cash receipts basis) decreased 1.72%, from \$412,741 in FY 2014 to \$405,633 in FY 2015. See Exhibit A.

SUMMER 2015 EXCAVATION SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRANTS

Due to ASOR's generous donors and sound fiscal management, ASOR was privileged to award 65 excavation scholarships and grants for the 2015 summer dig season—an all-time high. As reflected in the following table, the number of summer excavation scholarships and grants has steadily increased since 2012.

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of awards	42	55	59	65
Increase over previous year	N.A.	+31%	+7.27%	+10.17%

FY 2015 ANNUAL AUDIT

Romeo, Wiggins & Co., LLP, the ASOR outside audit firm, has completed its fieldwork. No issues have been identified to date, so we anticipate receiving another clean audit report well in advance of the Annual Meeting in November.

FY 2016 BUDGET

ASOR is on track with the FY 2016 budget passed by the Board at the Spring Meeting. Exhibit C. To date, we have not identified any issues that may significantly impact the budget. We are pleased to report that the projected revenue from the renewed ASOR/Department of State cooperative agreement is greater than anticipated (\$900,000 vs. \$772,500). We, however, have elected not to submit a revised FY 2016 budget since the majority of the additional funds are in/out-designated expenditures for the web application, heritagemonitor.org. This is not reflected in the budget, but the funds have been received.

FY 2016 INVESTMENT RESULTS TO DATE

For the two-month period ending August 31, 2015, ASOR Fellowship Accounts generated a collective loss of \$21,374 (-2.8%), while the Endowment Accounts generated a collective loss of \$18,625 (-2.8%). The ASOR Custom Benchmark for the same period held steady at +1.36%. For transitional discussion purposes only—and this will be the very last time—the S&P 500 Index for the same two-month period was -4.1%.

Again, and based on ASOR's investment allocations, while we generally will not achieve the highest of the highs, we will not experience the lowest of the lows.

Andy Vaughn commented that ASOR had a better year than some other organizations. We are still in the black.

Richard Coffman mentioned that Sheldon Fox is looking after ASOR's investments very well.

Be it resolved that the EC accept the Treasurer's report. Unanimously approved.

6. Other Business

- a. Membership: a discussion of membership growth strategies, targets, and member benefits (such as fellowships and grants that might be made available to members) ensued.
- b. Lynn Dodd asked for input from the Executive Committee about criteria that the CAP Fellowship Sub-Committee will use in making

recommendations for awards going forward as they revise and tighten the process to facilitate comparisons among applications, especially when they are received from applicants at very different stages of their careers.

7. **Discussion Items:**

- a. ASOR Excavation Fellowships (Susan Ackerman): Currently, ASOR Excavation Fellowships typically are awarded in the amount of \$1000 (although this is nowhere indicated on the website). It was proposed that we might raise this amount, given that the award has been at the \$1000 level for many years, while expenses for fellowship recipients (e.g., plane fares) have risen. It was concluded that if the amount was to be raised, the awards would need to be at the \$2000 level, especially because of the way our Heritage Fellowships are funded. Ed Wright indicated that raising the amount of the awards is desirable, in part to create greater loyalty of grant alumni to ASOR. It was also agreed that the amount of the award for the fellowships will be added to the website. Tim Harrison and Sharon Herbert weighed in that they feel CAP's fellowship subcommittee should continue to award the funds.

Be it resolved for the fellowship year 2016, the amount of excavation fellowships shall be set at \$2000. Unanimously approved. President Ackerman and Ed Wright strongly encourage that this news item gets posted on the ASOR website.

- b. New ASOR web page (Andy Vaughn): A mock-up for a new ASOR website was made available to the EC, and discussion about the new website designed ensued. EC members encouraged the ASOR staff to ensure that the web designer understand the aspirations of ASOR and our hope that the website, among other things, could be a place that people can come for information, whether media or public. Also, it has the potential to be a resource portal for accessing archives, data repositories, and knowledge about Middle East. Andy Vaughn indicated a plan to create a Sandbox (template for homepage) that the EC can critique by the time of the Annual Meeting.
- c. ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (Susan Ackerman, Andy Vaughn)
 - i. On September 11, 2015, ASOR's cooperative agreement with the Department of State was renewed for a second year (through September 30, 2016), at a funding level of \$900,000.
 - ii. ASOR is building the capacity and infrastructure needed for the increased staffing needs for the CHI project. Andy and Selma will need more education and training to meet federal requirements.

- iii. AIA and ASOR received a \$30K grant from the NEH for a conference to support collaborative initiatives by groups undertaking cultural heritage documentation in zones of conflict. The summit will take place over December 10-11, and NEH Chairman William Adams has agreed to participate.
- iv. ASOR has signed a collaborative MOU with the German Archaeological Institute and the Museum of Islamic Art, Berlin. ASOR CHI is considering other MOUs with organizations doing similar work.

Ed Wright congratulates the ED Andy Vaughn for the evolution of the cultural heritage effort. Andy acknowledged the work of the four co-directors (Danti, Casana, Branting, and Moaz) and the entire ASOR CHI staff.

- d. ASOR Strategic Plan, 2016-2020 (Susan Ackerman and the Strategic Planning Task Force) The Task Force includes Susan Ackerman, Sharon Herbert, Richard Coffman, Ed Wright, B. W. Ruffner, Gary Arbino, Sten LaBianca, Fred Winter, Heather Parker, Vivian Bull.

Comments on the draft Strategic Plan

Susan Ackerman: The core questions are: Who are we and where are we going? What would a strategic plan that represents that look like? How can we be bold? One thing presently under consideration: a redefinition of regional focus, to allow for expansion to Near Eastern and greater Mediterranean worlds.

Lynn Dodd: ASOR's role in the world, in relation to cultural heritage, and the situation is changing/will change in a post-conflict scenario. In that case, how is it that people will wean off the cycles and systems of looting, etc. and what role will ASOR play in that changed reality?

Sharon Herbert: How would ASOR publications be an educational resource/clearinghouse for our field work, and how might ASOR develop capacities for digital publication (not necessarily open access) but 3D digital reconstructions with artifacts available?

Andy Vaughn: Ceramic crowdsourcing – Andrea Berlin, and the CRANE project (Tim Harrison), are in complementary ways leading the field in this. ASOR could be involved.

Fred Winter: Urged attention to the relationships between ASOR and the centers.

Lynn Dodd: editors of all publication/media channels should join COP *ex officio*, regardless of lines of direct report.

Andy Vaughn: described the need for ASOR to adapt its committee structures as it grows.

Gary Arbino: encouraged that there be more integration of committees with staff.

Susan Ackerman: it is essential that members are the governance of ASOR.

Tim Harrison: we are a professional organization and can make incremental changes in the areas that have been discussed so far...strengthening them without necessarily radically changing them. Also, suggested that the plan be targeted toward one key area in which ASOR could transform decisively, based on the strong foundation of ASOR as a professional organization.

Following discussion, these areas of emphasis emerged:

- a. Internationalization
- b. Cultural Heritage
- c. Outreach: Broaden definitions of profession and more generally.
- d. Foster the next generation.
- e. Continue to nurture historical core (excavation fellowships for students) while developing a stronger program of research funding for our members. Support varied research of members (rather than field work only), although Tim Harrison urged that ASOR prioritize funding to support research for dig directors, versus support for travel and museum/archival research, as there is a lot more cost involved in fieldwork and it is harder to come by than is funding for other things. Tim suggested this is a place where ASOR could make a big difference and, moreover, parlay a competitive peer review grant application process into impacts on best practices.
- f. Provide directors with advice on archiving, etc.
- g. Expand diversity.

Susan Ackerman suggested reconceiving the discussion:

1. ASOR's Core Historical Functions
2. Envisioning the Future from Iberia to India

8. The meeting was adjourned by B.W. Ruffner at 1:21pm