

**DIG DEEPER, REACH HIGHER**  
**The ASOR Strategic Plan, 2016-2020**

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For the past five years (2011-2015), ASOR has been well guided by the Strategic Plan adopted by its Board of Trustees in April 2010. Indeed, ASOR has achieved many of the goals identified in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan, especially with respect to the ASOR annual meeting, ASOR publications, the Excavation Fellowships program, programs in public outreach and education, and the promotion of the highest ethical standards of academic scholarship.

ASOR also successfully implemented the organizational restructuring that the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan put forward. ASOR has in addition realized many of the Strategic Plan's fund-raising goals, through the enormously successful "Building a Foundation for ASOR Campaign." This campaign raised \$1.7 million (approximately 30% more than our \$1.3 million goal) between July 2011 and June 2014.

These accomplishments all provide ASOR with the solid infrastructure it needs to move forward. But more work needs to be done. ASOR's primary goals for the next five years (2016-2020) are (I) to build on the accomplishments we have realized in four key program areas—the Annual Meeting; Publications; the affiliated Overseas Research Centers; and the Fellowships and Grants program (Strategic Goals #1-4), and (II) to undertake four new initiatives that will best serve ASOR's increasingly diverse membership.

These new initiatives (Strategic Goals #5-8) include fostering the next generation of professionals who specialize in the study of the Near East and wider Mediterranean, expanding and enhancing ASOR's international character, and increasing ASOR's outreach beyond its traditional academic constituency. ASOR also aims to participate energetically in worldwide efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of the Near East and the wider Mediterranean world.

**Who We Are and What We Do:**  
**ASOR's Mission Statement**

ASOR, founded in 1900, is an international organization whose mission is to initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean, from the earliest times, by:

- Fostering original research, exploration, and archaeological fieldwork;
- Encouraging scholarship in the region's languages, texts, traditions, and histories;

- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner through a robust publication program and annual meeting, and through other venues;
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse;
- Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching;
- Promoting educational opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in institutions of higher education around the world;
- Developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public;
- Supporting and participating in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of the Near East and the wider Mediterranean and to raise awareness about its degradation.

## **I. Strengthening ASOR's Key Program Areas (Strategic Goals #1-4)**

### **Strategic Goal #1: ASOR's Annual Meeting**

**Our Goal: Conduct an exceptional professional meeting dedicated to scholarship on the history and cultures of the Near East and also the wider Mediterranean.**

#### **1A. Size of the Academic Program**

The current size of the academic program (approximately 96 sessions over the course of a three-day meeting) should remain roughly as is (i) to preserve the intimacy of the meeting, and (ii) to make it feasible for meeting participants to attend most (or all) of their desired sessions, with minimal scheduling conflicts.

#### **1B. Content of the Academic Program**

The current quality of the academic program is high. Applications to present papers exceed the time slots available, with the result that only the best papers are accepted. Maintaining the current size of the academic program (above) will guarantee that the quality of the academic program continues. To guarantee this further, the Program Committee should commit to reviewing regularly the Annual Meeting's "ASOR-Sponsored Sessions." This review should make certain that the topics of these sessions continue to reflect ASOR members' primary areas of scholarly interest and engagement.

#### **1C. Attendance**

The Annual Meeting is not financially self-sustaining. To be self-sustaining, ASOR would need to grow Annual Meeting attendance by 15-20%. Preserving the intimacy of the meeting, however, is a priority (above). ASOR thus aims to grow its annual meeting incrementally, all the while evaluating the trade-offs between a larger and smaller gathering. The ASOR staff will be tasked with

developing new marketing and outreach strategies for facilitating this incremental growth: for example, targeting scholars in geographic regions in which ASOR members increasingly work, such as central Asia and the western Mediterranean.

#### **1D. Meeting Time and Location**

Given the reunification of the AAR and SBL, and the consequence—ASOR’s increasing inability to access hotel space reasonably close to the AAR/SBL meeting—ASOR must re-evaluate whether meeting at the same time and in the same location as AAR/SBL remains a viable prospect. Alternatives include (i) meeting on our own; (ii) meeting with AAR/SBL every other year; or (iii) meeting with another professional organization (for example, AAA, AIA, SAA, MESA, or AOS).

ASOR will appoint an *ad hoc* Annual Meeting committee to address this issue. This committee—which will include, among others, representatives from the current Program Committee—will be charged with (i) evaluating the meetings in Atlanta (2015) and San Antonio (2016) and gauge the impact of the lack of geographical proximity to AAR/SBL and the number of ASOR members affected, and then (ii) make recommendations about the way forward. Those recommendations should be in place in time for ASOR to enact potential scheduling changes by 2020 (currently scheduled for Boston) or 2021 (currently scheduled for San Antonio). This committee should also (iii) consider whether ASOR would like to cultivate closer relationships with organizations such as the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE) or the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT) to see if these organizations might be interested in participating in ASOR’s Annual Meeting.

## **Strategic Goal #2: Publications**

**Our Goal: Enhance ASOR's monograph publishing program and develop new publishing venues appropriate to the twenty-first century.**

### **2A. Monographs**

ASOR reaffirms its historic commitment to monograph publishing, as this investment in knowledge production and knowledge dissemination is an important service ASOR provides to its members and to our discipline. As part of this commitment and investment, ASOR will not only continue its current program of publishing three monograph series—the Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research (AASOR); the Archaeological Reports Series (ARS); and the *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* Supplement Series—but seeks to resume publishing the ASOR Books Series.

In order to facilitate our members' publication efforts, ASOR also seeks to develop grants to subsidize subventions for members who publish in ASOR's monograph series.

### **2B. Digital Publications**

ASOR acknowledges that publishing in the twenty-first century, especially the publishing of archaeological data, will increasingly benefit from digital modes of publication that make possible the presentation of hypermedia, videos, three-dimensional reconstructions, and animated fly-throughs and that allow as well for the presentation of the voluminous bodies of evidence now collected during archaeological excavations.

ASOR will thus investigate developing a high quality digital publishing venue that makes possible the publication of scholarly works incorporating evolving digital media. ASOR will also investigate the digital publication of classroom resources: for example, state-of-the-art textbooks or course modules on various aspects of the archaeology and history of the cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean.

## **2C. Open Access**

In 2015, ASOR made available through Open Access 65 volumes from its various monograph series that were previously available only to Hathi Trust subscribers. Indicated here is ASOR's deep and fundamental commitment to broad-based knowledge dissemination, which dictates that as appropriate, and as economically feasible, ASOR should strive to expand its Open Access offerings. This is especially important in the case of ASOR monographs, for while ASOR's journals are widely (albeit not universally) available in electronic form, the monographs are not.

## **2D. Publications Oversight**

The Committee on Publications will continue to oversee ASOR's scholarly publications (the three journals and the monograph series).

ASOR's outreach publications, *News@ASOR* and *The ANE Today*, as well as the ASOR Blog and the ASOR website in general, are the face of ASOR to the general public, as well as academics—all of whom are prospective new members and sources of support. It is critical that the content and presentation of these outreach publications be of the highest quality. It is also important that distribution of the outreach publications steadily increase. Responsibility for their oversight must be determined to ensure excellence and a wider distribution. The Chairs Coordinating Council (the CCC) should decide whether this responsibility should be assigned to the Committee on Publications, the Membership and Outreach Committee, or someone else.

“Oversight” of our outreach publications also should be precisely defined. Once responsibility for these publications' oversight is determined, the designated committee must make decisions regarding the need for a periodic review of the editor of *The ANE Today* and limits to this editor's term of service and must consider policies regarding editorial policy for the ASOR Blog.

## **Strategic Goal #3: ASOR's International Affiliations**

**Our Goal: Strengthen relationships with ASOR's affiliated Overseas Research Centers and develop formal organizational ties both with other Overseas Research Centers and in countries beyond those where overseas research centers are currently found.**

### **3A. ASOR's Affiliated Overseas Research Centers**

ASOR's relationships to its affiliated Overseas Research Centers (the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, the American Center of Oriental Research, and the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute) are foundational and distinguish ASOR from many other learned societies. ASOR

enthusiastically endorses these relationships and commits itself to exploring how to make those relationships more effective, functional, and mutually beneficial to both ASOR and the affiliated Overseas Research Centers. For example, ASOR could pair its commitment to protecting and preserving of cultural heritage with the Overseas Research Centers' in-country infrastructure to establish programs in sustainable archaeology and heritage protection and preservation, including, for example, programs that offer employment opportunities in-country (see further below).

### **3B. Other Overseas Research Centers**

While ASOR assigns high priority to strengthening its relationships with its affiliated Overseas Research Centers, ASOR also seeks to develop relationships with Overseas Research Centers located in other regions where ASOR members work: for example, the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE); the American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII); the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC); the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS); the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA); the American Academy in Rome (AAR); the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT); the American Institute of Iranian Studies (AIrS); and the American Institute for Yemeni Studies (AIYS).

### **3C. ASOR's Overseas Committees**

ASOR seeks to expand its formal organizational ties in countries beyond those with affiliated and non-affiliated Overseas Research Centers, such as Lebanon, by establishing overseas committees within its governance structure, analogous to the already extant Baghdad Committee, Saudi Arabia Committee, and Damascus Committee.

## **Strategic Goal #4: Fellowships, Grants, and Other Forms of Support for ASOR Members**

**Our Goal: Increase and enhance fellowships, grants, and other forms of support available to individual members and to the faculty, students, and staff of institutional member schools.**

### **4A. Membership Benefits in the Twenty-First Century**

ASOR thrives because of its dedicated members, and ASOR strives to support its members, both individual and institutional, through benefits that repay their dedication. Historically, these benefits have included subscriptions to ASOR journals. Given the ready access that many ASOR members have to electronic resources such as JSTOR, and even more so in a world of Open Access, this benefit is no longer as attractive. ASOR must thus identify and provide new and different membership benefits to sustain and even grow our membership base: for

example, the development of significant fellowship and grant funding that would be available to individual members and to the faculty, students, and staff of institutional member schools. As these fellowship and grant funds are developed, ASOR will also need to determine a mechanism for vetting applicants and awarding funding.

#### **4B. Fieldwork and Fieldwork-Related Research Grants**

ASOR has excelled in developing fellowship funding to support students engaging in archaeological fieldwork (approximately \$225,000 in endowed funds raised since 2012). However, ASOR has not met the goal outlined in the 2011-2015 Strategic Plan to fund excavation and fieldwork grants to support dig directors. ASOR thus seeks to augment its current Harris Grant program (which currently has about \$6000 in funding available per year) by developing comparable funds to facilitate key yet discrete activities that benefit members' archaeological fieldwork: for example, funds to purchase a special piece of equipment, or to pay the fees for otherwise unfunded laboratory tests, or to cover the cost of hiring a particular technological specialist.

ASOR also seeks to develop grants that support archaeological fieldwork in other ways: for example, publications grants for subsidizing subventions, especially for ASOR monographs (see above), and grants that demonstrate ASOR's commitment to the communities and countries in which ASOR members work by supporting fieldwork projects that engage with surrounding communities or that otherwise enhance ASOR's engagement with local or national interests.

#### **4C. Fellowships Beyond Fieldwork-Related Funds**

ASOR seeks to develop fellowships and grants that support the work of its members in areas beyond fieldwork-related projects, such as (i) "travel to collections" grants (funding to conduct work in museum collections; fellowships to work in the ASOR archives); (ii) fellowships to support travel to the Annual Meeting, especially for junior scholars and international scholars, as well as for non-tenure-track scholars, independent scholars, and similar scholars who otherwise lack the funds to attend; (iii) fellowships that support publication of non-fieldwork related scholarship (for example, publications in the reinvigorated ASOR Books monograph series).

#### **4D. The Development of In-House Resources in Support of Archaeological Fieldwork**

In order to meet the challenge of archiving fieldwork records, and more specifically the challenge of digital archiving and data recording, ASOR will become a venue for the development and promulgation of standards for digital archiving.

ASOR will also develop web resources that help facilitate the work of fieldwork projects by, for example, providing a place for directors to list fieldwork projects that are looking for volunteers, or by providing directors with advice on best practices when it comes to the increasingly important issue of site curation (for example, long-term site preservation and public presentation).

ASOR's development of web resources will also serve others of ASOR's members, and the members of ASOR's "Friends of ASOR" Program, by functioning as a clearinghouse for all sorts of information about archaeological fieldwork in the Near East and wider Mediterranean world.

## **II. Serving ASOR's Diverse Membership (Strategic Goals #5-8)**

### **Preamble**

ASOR values diversity. ASOR will thus strive to inaugurate programs and institute policies that best serve the many diverse interests within its membership—for example, members' rapidly increasing interests in cultural heritage protection, preservation, and presentation—as well as the many diverse constituencies within its membership. These include student members, members who are just beginning professional careers in the study of the Near East and wider Mediterranean, members whose professional expertise lies elsewhere, international members, and members from ethnic and minority communities that have been traditionally underrepresented within ASOR. In addition to making sure these diverse constituencies are better represented among ASOR fellowship and grant awardees and among Annual Meeting session chairs, ASOR committees, and other governing bodies, ASOR commits to the following four strategic goals.

### **Strategic Goal #5: Fostering the Field**

**Our Goal: Advocate frequently and forcefully on behalf of the importance of scholarly study of the Near East and the wider Mediterranean within the academic community and elsewhere, and through this advocacy, and through other means, engage vigorously in processes and programs that promote the success of the next generation of scholars of the Near East and wider Mediterranean world.**

#### **5A. Advocacy**

ASOR will seek to promote the study of the Near East and wider Mediterranean by regularly and consistently engaging the national humanities community. For example, ASOR will regularly attend the annual meeting of the National Humanities Alliance, both to advocate on behalf of the field of Near Eastern and wider Mediterranean studies and to assert overall the value of the humanities.



ASOR will also increase its involvement in public advocacy in the federal arena: for example, by speaking out in support of (i) continued or increased NSF funding available to the social sciences (and so to archaeology); (ii) continued or increased funding for the ECA grants that help support ASOR's affiliated Overseas Research Centers; and (iii) continued or increased NEH funding available for humanities research. ASOR also will speak out, as appropriate, about funding decisions that negatively affect our mission: for example, the recent NEH decision to cease funding overseas summer institutes and seminars.

In undertaking these efforts, ASOR will seek to work together with other organizations that share these same goals: for example, other scholarly organizations with interests that intersect with those of ASOR (such as AAA, AIA, SAA, MESA, AOS, SBL) and like-minded federations, such as the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC).

ASOR will also engage scholars in other disciplines pertaining to ASOR's core mission: for example, engaging cultural resource specialists in discussions about ASOR's work in cultural heritage safeguarding and preservation and in site presentation.

## **5B. The Next Generation**

ASOR seeks to support the development and advancement of programs dedicated to the study of the Near East and wider Mediterranean in institutions of higher education. Advocacy on behalf of the study of the region (above) is an important means by which ASOR seeks to advance scholarship dedicated to the study of the Near East and wider Mediterranean within the academy, and ASOR commits as well to advocate on behalf of academic colleagues whose departments are threatened with cuts by their institutions' administrations. ASOR also seeks to advance the career prospects of scholars within the academy by, for example, writing in support of junior faculty members' reappointment and tenure cases.

At the same time, ASOR recognizes that faculty careers in institutions of higher education are no longer as likely a career option for scholars in Near Eastern and wider Mediterranean studies. ASOR thus seeks opportunities to support the professional development of scholars who may not pursue, or who are no longer pursuing, a career as a faculty member in an institution of higher education. ASOR will present programming on various career tracks at its Annual Meeting: for example, alt-ac's; NGO's; government agencies; IT; consulting; cultural resource management work; museum work; the fields of publishing and journalism. The Junior Scholars discussion at the Annual Meeting—one place where conversations about various career tracks is likely to take place—will be better publicized.

ASOR will also work to enhance the AIA/ASOR job posting site by dedicating part of the site to the posting of non-academic careers. This part of the site will

also include links to other sources for non-academic jobs (for example, [www.usajobs](http://www.usajobs), to search for federal jobs available in archaeology).

ASOR's excavation scholarships are the primary way in which ASOR reaches out to advanced undergraduate and graduate students. ASOR will increase its engagement with those students by increasing the award amount of the excavation fellowships and by cultivating a fellowship "alumni" community.

## **Strategic Goal #6: An Increased International Identity for ASOR**

**Our Goal: Expand ASOR's increasingly large community of international members (about 22% of our membership, from 35 countries outside North America) and enhance ASOR's engagement with these members.**

### **6A. Increasing International Members' Access to ASOR's Programs and Benefits**

As noted above, ASOR seeks funding for fellowships to support travel to the ASOR Annual Meeting for (among others) international scholars.

ASOR also aspires to bring its meeting to its international members, by adding international meetings to its current schedule of annual meetings in North America. International meetings should be held on a regular basis, possibly every other year, in the years that the International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE) does not meet. The ASOR Office, in conjunction with the Membership and Outreach Committee, should develop plans for these meetings' logistics (location, time, financial model), at which point the Chairs Coordinating Council will need to develop structures for oversight (especially of the academic program).

### **6B. Ensuring ASOR's International Members are Fully Enfranchised**

Currently, ASOR's international members are not eligible to apply for CAP affiliation for fieldwork projects. The Membership and Outreach Committee has, however, identified as a priority that ASOR members should have equal access to the benefits of membership. Membership and Outreach and CAP should work together to try to resolve this issue.

ASOR's name—the American Schools of Oriental Research—reflects profoundly the organization's origins and early history: a North American-based organization that established a school (later schools) in the Near East (or, in the parlance of ASOR's founders, the "Orient") for research purposes. But should a more international, and twenty-first century ASOR, continue to use this name? Or should ASOR be simply known by its initials: ASOR (à la IBM and KFC)? Or should ASOR be named something else? This discussion should be taken up within the Board of Trustees.

## **Strategic Goal #7: Outreach**

**Our Goal: Expand our outreach efforts to and engagement with the general public.**

### **7A. Current and Future Outreach Efforts**

Public service and outreach are central to ASOR's mission. Our Board of Trustees proudly includes many non-academic trustees who play key roles in ASOR's leadership. In addition, all ASOR programs are open to the public, and our members regularly make themselves available to serve the public through lectures, advising, and other activities. Moreover, ASOR offers several online and print publications designed specifically to serve the general public's interests in the ancient Near East and wider Mediterranean world.

ASOR is committed to expanding its outreach efforts. ASOR also intends to increase membership in the "Friends of ASOR" program by offering those members additional opportunities to engage with ASOR's people and programs.

### **7B. Staffing Support**

ASOR will seek permanent funding for the position of Outreach Specialist in the ASOR Office. This person will facilitate ASOR's public service efforts (media contacts, lectures, special events), outreach publications (*News@ASOR*, *The ANE Today*) and social media initiatives (Facebook, the ASOR Blog, Twitter, ASORtv, etc.).

## **Strategic Goal #8: Cultural Heritage**

**Our Goal: Participate energetically in worldwide efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of the Near East and the wider Mediterranean.**

### **8A. Protecting and Preserving Cultural Heritage**

ASOR recognizes that the protection and preservation of the historical and cultural heritage of the Near Eastern and wider Mediterranean world is at the core of ASOR's mission and an area of profound interest to ASOR members. ASOR is proud of the work it has done to document the damage done to the region's historic and cultural heritage during the past two years, at a time when this cultural heritage has been so gravely imperiled, and to promote global awareness about that damage.

ASOR, through its Cultural Heritage Initiatives Program, will continue to participate in large-scale governmental and non-governmental projects to protect, preserve, and promote awareness about the historic and cultural heritage of the

Near East and wider Mediterranean, provided such projects are appropriate, effective, financially viable, and can be managed within the resource structure of the organization.

### **8B. Site Preservation and Site Presentation**

In war-torn regions such as Syria and northern Iraq, ASOR's attempts at site preservation are, by necessity, limited to planning post-war preservation projects. Elsewhere, site preservation and site presentation is both a more immediate prospect and a necessity. As noted above, ASOR seeks to use its contacts in-country—for example, ASOR's affiliated Overseas Research Centers—to develop resources and programs for site preservation and site presentation.

### **In Conclusion**

If we are able to achieve the goals detailed here that build on ASOR's long and distinguished history, in five years ASOR will be stronger and will have a more global reach. It will have achieved international recognition for its support of twenty-first century scholarship; its diverse membership; its successful educational outreach; and its achievements in heritage protection, preservation, and presentation. As a learned society devoted to understanding the past, we will continue to dig deeper and reach higher.