



ASOR Executive Committee Meeting  
**Minutes**  
Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel  
April 28, 2017

Present: Richard Coffman, Susan Ackerman, Sharon Herbert, Ann-Marie Knoblauch, Joe Seger, Ed Wright, Lynn Dodd, Andrew Vaughn, Selma Omerefendi.

The meeting was called to order at 9:06 by Richard Coffman.

1. Approval of Agenda

**BE IT RESOLVED:** The Agenda is approved with the correction of the typo under point 9 (Comemnts should be Comments).

2. Approval of the Minutes from the November EC Meeting (November 19, 2016)

**BE IT RESOLVED:** The Minutes from the November Executive Committee Meeting on November 19, 2016 are approved as submitted.

3. Treasurer's Report (Andy Vaughn, for Chris White)  
a. Adoption of the FY 2018 budget

We are a bit behind our cash flow projections (not accrual based) while our investments are performing slightly above the ASOR benchmark. The budget for next year assumes several recently emerging situations, such as the Whiting Foundation grant, the renewal of the State Department cooperative agreement, and the lease of new space in Boston. We have good reason to believe that we will have a balanced budget next year.

We are ahead of where we were last year for Annual fund contributions. ASOR has been successful with grants, and we look forward to continuing generous contributions from the board.

The ASOR office team is working hard to reduce the material that needs to be moved by shredding and disposing in a strategic manner. Also, the elevator has been broken for 105 days.

The Whiting Foundation gave ASOR a \$244,000 grant to conduct work in areas just being retaken from ISIL control. We strongly feel this is the kind of work that ASOR should be doing. ASOR will be making efforts to develop funding from other foundations to support this kind of work.

Exhibit E has not been included in past budget reports and it details ASOR investment Allocations

Andy Vaughn: A final comment about the financial health of ASOR is that we are growing. Some other learned societies are experiencing the opposite trend. Thus, we are in a position where we can think about diversification and not just focus on staying afloat.

**BE IT RESOLVED:** The EC accepts the Finance Committee motion and recommends that the Board approve the FY 2018 budget.

4. Chairs Coordinating Council Report (Sharon Herbert)

- a. The CCC chairs had four monthly conference calls this winter. Irene Winter has accepted ASOR's invitation to be the Plenary Speaker for 2017, and she was the CCC's first choice.
- b. Regarding the travel ban: Is ASOR a political organization or not? No, ASOR is an advocational organization. ASOR placed a statement on the website, one of the first learned societies to do so.
- c. A statement on what constitutes "prior publication" and "prior presentation" was accepted by all committee chairs.
- d. Junior Scholars has a new chair: Heather Parker. She has been very active. There has been a slight change of direction. Originally this group was weighted towards pre-PhD, now it will be re-weighted to new PhDs and early-career scholars.
- e. Leadership issues in committees: Chuck Jones is ending his second term as chair of COP (ends 2018). Tom Levy is completing his first term as CAP Chair and would like to step aside. Steve Falconer had been nominated as a new Chair.
- f. Challenge of CCC: Strategic Plan calls for ASOR to become more internationalized. The Committee on Membership and Outreach (Randy Younker, chair) has been very active in supporting international activities. The Programs Committee is less enthusiastic and worries that our program/annual meeting will be placed in competition with other international ASOR events. Another concern is that we maintain standards of quality. Any ASOR symposium chair will be required to prepare a report to the CCC.
- g. There is an ongoing discussion of oversight for ASOR's web publications. Recent conversations occurred about an ANE Today article

about Egyptian sources and the Hebrew Bible which generated controversy and responses from membership to President and Executive Director. A discussion ensued about positive aspects of controversy, the need to exercise editorial oversight for anything published with ASOR's name, and the possibility of developing an advisory board for ANEToday.

5. Development Committee Report (Ed Wright)

- a. ASOR made a strong push for donations this year and was successful in March Madness, receiving gifts from \$10 to \$2000, for a total of \$800. Overall, we will fund 24 excavation fellowships for Summer 2017, out of a total of 132 applicants.
- b. A discussion ensued about new endowment initiatives related to long time excavators and excavations. This is merely in the discussion stages,
- c. Please consider making a planned estate gift to ASOR. One was received recently this year, and we are grateful for the vision of the donor.
- d. As part of the Strategic Plan, ASOR seeks to establish a Senior Scholar Research Grant. We have substantial resources for our students, but less is available for senior scholars. A longtime ASOR member might be honored with a named fund set aside for this purpose.
- e. Considering a means of honoring Andrew Vaughn for his ten years of service, along with his parents.
- f. We will send out a donor letter in May and we are continuing to look at those who have not given. We don't care how much is given from these folks. The message is: send something. Granting agencies and donors want to see demonstrated member buy-in. We are working toward 100% participation from our members in our fund-raising efforts.
- g. Question: What is our next big drive? Our last major fundraising effort was \$1.3 million and ASOR raised \$1.7 million. Board support in the past five years has been 100% and we continue to work on that this year.
- h. ASOR's vision is that every member is a donor in support of our mission: if people have not yet made an Annual Fund gift...this could be a challenge, if we could have 100 more individual donors of any amount, then perhaps a board member will contribute...x amount.. to leverage that. We are at 267 individual donors this year; 100 more would get us closer to 400.
- i. Fellowship Madness: \$8000 was given in total, and one of the fellowships (\$2000) was funded by a person who was a Friend of ASOR two years ago and then they become a member. Every 5000 friends yields roughly one or two four-figure gifts.

6. Other Business

7. EC Meeting Schedule (Susan Ackerman) We are planning a January or early February Executive Committee retreat in Tuscon, AZ so that the location can be more convenient for some of us; warmer for everyone. Informal comments in support of this plan were made by all in attendance.

8. Questions and Comments about the President's and Executive Director's

Reports (Susan Ackerman, Andy Vaughn)

Q: Ann Marie. We have experienced dramatic growth from \$1.2 to \$2.2 million. What has been the impact of the growth?

Susan Ackerman: Program Committee reports that we have had 700 submissions for November, 2017 and there were 540 for November, 2016. They continue to address the dual directive of preserving the intimacy of the annual meeting and increasing the financial sustainability of annual meeting (growing the meeting). The Program Committee is discussing adjusting the acceptance rate (which matters for pre-tenure people) in order to ensure a high scholarly standard.

Andy Vaughn: increased goals of membership help with sustainability. Societies that are growing (e.g, in communications and cinema) are doing things considered valuable in the 21st century world. Some traditional learned societies are financially challenged. What types of org are growing? ACLS: interdisciplinary and newer types of studies are the ones that are growing. Organizations that have not embraced newer more contemporary ways of doing scholarship are not experiencing growth.

We require membership for people to submit papers. As of Monday, there were 35 people who had not joined. We wrote them saying that if they don't join...their proposal will be pulled. We wanted to grow and now we have: ASOR has become a programmatic organization.

Susan Ackerman: how can ASOR preserve the intimacy. Would there be a way to incentivize growth and allow the individual groups to gain benefits as a reflection of growth? How to reflect the growth but not leave others out? We could consider supporting encouraging social events for larger sub-groups. ASOR can give personal attention, as compared to an 8-12,000 attendee meeting, so we should not overlook this opportunity.

Growth areas include broader geographical and chronological diversity (central Asia, Caucasus, etc.). Member proposed sessions have provided room for these papers. Thematic proposals have increased, including ones that have become standard (feasting, dress ornament, gender).

ASOR has experienced a 35-40% increase in paper proposals. Program committee was selective on sessions. Some proposals were from European groups and they invited USA participants as well. In 2016, there were 37 member organized sessions and in

2017 51 member organized sessions. Some proposals were not accepted.

Susan Ackerman: She will develop a retreat agenda for January 2018 (post mortem of 2017 meeting; how did that big meeting go)?

Andy Vaughn: The endowed funds were up \$800 to \$1.75 million. We should celebrate and embrace that it has doubled. Susan Ackerman pointed out we offered 17 scholarships (at \$2000, up from \$1000).

Andy Vaughn: we started giving scholarships and hoped this would encourage our membership to grow. Three of 190 people took us up on the offer to become members with a discount and part of their fee supporting Fellowships. A question remains: will we create more loyal future members by giving people \$2000 versus \$1000?

Susan Ackerman commented that we need to continue to do more for our members instead of trying to look for ways to cultivate students. So, as we develop new funds, a priority should be to develop membership benefits.

Lynn Dodd: some Junior Scholars and also multiple senior scholars have expressed concerns about associating with an organization with oriental still in its name, and that ASOR's willingness to engage in discussions about this (beyond the rebranding period) will be important to maintaining membership loyalty from such people.

Susan Ackerman: Member organized session proposal to include Susan as a speaker was delayed after being proposed, but ASOR will consider the session again in 2018.

Andy Vaughn: we gave 24 student fellowships. Should we be overt about seeking applicants who are Early Career by allocating 6 of the 24 as early career members? Twenty recipients came to the Annual Meeting and were recognized with a ribbon. A comment was made that the Legacy dinner is great, and perhaps some attendees could buy a ticket for a scholarship recipient to come as well.

Andy Vaughn mentioned that he received his first fellowship in 1991 and had given \$25 or more to ASOR since then.

Joe Seger: generational linkage is vital. When Cobb Institute did that for AV as an early career scholar, it fostered a sense of belonging.

Ann-Marie Knoblauch: If we invited fellowship recipients, it would require only \$800 to invite one to attend and join each table.

Andy Vaughn: There has been a shift in giving generationally. Younger folks don't give to sustain an organization; they give for a purpose. Syrian/Iraq efforts and Fellowships are seen as a cause. Millennial generation may be drawn to an effort to match funds from a Foundation as a cause rather than to support the Annual Fund.

Ed Wright: people find specific organizations with specific projects. For ASOR, perhaps the Syrian Heritage initiative is an attraction. Millennials are not making substantial transformational gifts yet, but that will come. These people drill down online, so ASOR's content is a positive for such people as the website has deep resources.

Use of President's Suite for ASOR affiliation groups. CAP Dig Directors conversations in the suite were positive. Junior scholars want networking opportunities, so perhaps opening the Presidents Suite for them would be positive. Currently the Junior Scholrs have an "off the books" pub crawl (goal is to find noisiest pub; drink and scream). Using the Presidents Suite instead could be productive for side bar conversations and networking. This could be a regular event for Junior Scholars, which could encourage more Muslim scholars to participate.

#### 9. Board Trustees, Class of 2018 (Susan Ackerman)

Jeanne Marie Teutonico has a Conflict of Interest, and so is not able to serve as a board appointed trustee position, so a position is now open.

**BE IT RESOLVED:** The position of Trustee appointed board member Jeanne Marie Teutonico shall be held open until an appropriate candidate is found. Passed unanimously.

Break for lunch.

#### 10. ASOR Bylaws

Ed Wright thanked Susan Ackerman and Richard Coffman for an outstanding job with the ByLaws revision.

A full discussion ensued on the question of the relationship of ORC representatives (as Trustees, as members, benefits of meeting with ASOR).

A discussion ensued about the process used to nominate the Chair

for the Board of Trustees. Officer's Nomination committee reports to the board. Susan Ackerman pointed out that "Board appointed" should be added in advance of "Trustee" for people who fall into that category.

Joe Seger: Should By Laws reflect practice or practice reflect the bylaws? There should be a note about the Trustee Nomination Committee and its responsibility.

How should we elect or affirm members of the committees?

Joe Seger: we should document this in ASOR records.

Andy Vaughn: Around 2005, some committees had become quasi-independent. The COP Chair had ability to hire and dismiss staff and to run the office. COP appointed its own members. CAP appointed its own members. To make it clear that all committees were subcommittees of the board, approval by the Board became *pro forma*.

Lynn Dodd suggests that the CCC should make the motion and the Executive Committee could approve the committee membership and Editors with no action required by the full Board of Trustees.

Andy Vaughn: Academic freedom would say that the editor should choose the Editorial Board and that there would be approval by COP, which is then approved by Executive Committee. The editorial board is approved by COP.

Richard Coffman: the ByLaws committee will come up with language that addresses all the concerns that have been raised, and they will be presented in the future to the EC.

#### 11. Personnel Committee Report (Susan Ackerman)

Lynn Dodd thanked Susan Ackerman for the work of writing the Executive Director Evaluation report.

Ed Wright responded that the report reflects his sense of Andy Vaughn.

The recommendation of the Personnel Committee was discussed

**BE IT RESOLVED:** Personnel committee recommends that the contract of Andrew Vaughn, Executive Director for another year. Unanimously approved.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 4:34PM.