

## History

The American Schools of Oriental Research's U.S. based coordination center, its publications program and its three affiliated overseas centers in the Middle East have been in the forefront of American research efforts and publications related to these efforts since 1900.

Under the leadership of three learned societies, the [Archaeological Institute of America](#), the [Society of Biblical Literature](#) and the American Oriental Society, twenty institutions organized themselves as charter members of the new organization. Among the founding institutions were Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Columbia, Boston and Johns Hopkins Universities, Andover Theological Seminary, Episcopal Theological Seminary (Philadelphia), Union Theological Seminary (New York), and Hebrew Union College (Cincinnati).

The major overseas effort started with the building of a permanent Institute in Jerusalem in 1925, with an emphasis on archaeological and biblical research programs. The Jerusalem Institute has had a profound impact on ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Judaic studies programs in North America. This is the result of its long history of involvement with excavations at major Biblical sites, its pivotal role in the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the ongoing program of scrolls study and publication. Among its distinguished alumni are many of the world's major Near Eastern and Biblical scholars. Pre-eminent among these was William Foxwell Albright, a leading pioneer in the development of scientific archaeology in Palestine. For many years he directed the work of ASOR in Jerusalem, at the Institute that now bears his name.

### Purpose

The purpose of the organization was spelled out in its initial letters of incorporation and remains the same today:

The main object of the Schools is to enable properly qualified persons to pursue Biblical, linguistic, archaeological, historical, and other kindred studies and researches under more favorable conditions than can be secured at a distance from the Holy Land. The School is open to duly qualified applicants of all races and both sexes, and is free from obligations or preferences in respect to religious preference. Furthermore, ASOR is apolitical.

### Recommended reading

For more information on ASOR's history, please see the following two volumes:

King, Philip J. 1983. *American Archaeology in the Mideast: A History of the American Schools of Oriental Research*. Philadelphia, ASOR.

Seeger, Joe D., ed. 2001. *An ASOR Mosaic: a Centennial History of the American Schools of Oriental Research, 1900-2000*. Boston, ASOR. available through the David Brown Book Company.