

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on an ASOR Code of Conudct
submitted by Emily Bonney

Committee Members: Emily Bonney, Helen Dixon, Emily Hammer, Mara Horowitz, Ian Jones, Scott Moore, Tine Rassalle, Alison Thomason, Lynn Welton, Vanessa Workman

My thanks to the committee members for their engagement. In what follows I have inserted initials of committee members as appropriate for their comments on the draft report circulated following meeting in San Diego. Those documents were sent in a separate message to Sharon Herbert.

I am going to summarize the comments to identify what emerged as the primary concerns and then lay out my own thoughts about some of these measures. A consistent theme is the need for clarity about whom should be contacted and how. An online document would allow ASOR to identify repeat offenders but there also should be someone "on the floor" whom individuals could contact to determine whether the incident merits an official complaint. The Code should specify who makes the final decision, outline an appeal process and articulate what "removal from the conference" means.(TR) The contact numbers on the badges were helpful and additional information could be included in the communications to conference participants prior to the meeting. The online form is good but as TR asserts there should be a person or people on call during the event - but who? And what is the role of the EC? Does the EC make a ruling? What if the complaint is about someone on the EC? Are the police involved? (LW) ASOR could supplement the information on the badges and communicated to attendees with placards in prominent locations alerting attendees to the existence of a code and spelling out what to do. Rather than the EC as primary contact ASOR could recruit a trained Ombudsperson to serve in that capacity. Who ever is the initial contact as well as the members of the body processing and "adjudicating" the complaint should receive training on how to deal with sexual and other kinds of harassment and bullying.(AT) The initial contact should certainly be someone with HR-like training and should be approachable, i.e. someone with whom a younger member would feel comfortable sharing her/his concerns. So an intake person who makes a recommendation to the EC [which seems to be the entity most people favored handling these issues] about next steps. (VW) AIA added an Ombudsperson this year precisely because of what happened in San Diego, so ASOR reasonably could do the same. Enforcement is more complicated, and perhaps the Code need not

spell out all the details as training for the EC would set up the basics procedure. (IJ) At the same time these are perilous matters with significant liability issues. Anything that the board or some other appointed ASOR entity did could be held liable either for not doing enough [in the end someone felt unprotected] or for doing too much [unfairly expelling someone from a meeting without due process]. (HD)

I think that the trend of these views seems clear. Committee members want a trained professional, perhaps an Ombudsperson, to serve as an initial point of contact and guide next steps which could include an online complaint form that contained queries for basic information - when did the event occur, where, etc. Any decisions would be made by the EC. There would be some sort of an appeals process. While there are concerns about potential liability for ASOR, there is unanimity that the organization be seen as proactive and working to provide a safe space for conference attendees. These views reflect, I suspect, broadly-held views among ASOR members, particularly those who are early or mid-career. I am concerned about the proposal that the online form could be the foundation for a database to track repeat offenders as there may be legal issues with doing that. On the other hand personnel files at universities just get added to over the years so perhaps there is no issue there.

At this point the committee needs guidance from the EC on the following points:

1. Should there be a professional and approachable Ombudsperson at the meetings to serve as an initial point of contact and move the process along as appropriate?
2. Should EC be the adjudicatory body?
3. What does removal from the conference mean, and how would we enforce this? Legal advice on this point seems critical.
4. Should the complaint be entered with an online form?
5. Should there be an appeals process, and if the EC made the original judgment who should serve in the appeals capacity? The entire ASOR Board?
6. Should ASOR appoint a separate committee apart from the EC empowered to process these kinds of complaints? (This is actually my question - the committee assumes EC is the proper body to handle these matters while also recognizing that the EC is very busy at the

meetings. The separate committee might be some other subset of board members.)