

Finally, we continue to publish books, but we don't sell many books. Once things have calmed down a little more from our move and other transition, I would like to talk with the Publications Committee about how we might provide more support for books. We have funds from the Opportunity that we could utilize, and books were an important part of our strategic plan that we have not moved forward as much as we would like.

**Membership and Friends of ASOR:** I think all Trustees likely have experienced first-hand the care and thoroughness that Felice Herman has brought to her work as Membership and Friends of ASOR Manager. She (and all of the staff) benefitted from a long overlap period with Inda Omerefendic, and Felice has now put her own touch in membership relations and outreach. I have never seen reminders go out with such regularity, and she is constantly gathering data and feedback about how billings and reminders have worked. We experienced a slight drop in membership after the Boston Meeting in 2017, but we are starting to reach those highest numbers again. I anticipate that we will continue to see steady growth.

Of particular note has been the growth in sustaining memberships. Felice has corresponded with members to discuss how this type of membership supports our work and give the members added benefits. We now send all sustaining members a free ASOR book (based on availability), and we are looking at other ways to incentivize people upgrading to a sustaining membership—and to recognize them for their support. If you are not a sustaining member, I hope that you will consider upgrading your membership during the Annual Meeting or before the end of December.

Felice has also been working with the Friends of ASOR steering committee to revitalize our Friends Program. The *Ancient Near East Today* continues to be the primary benefit of the Friends program, but we are looking to add other benefits such as a photo archives, maps, back content, and access to special lectures and seminars.

Related, Felice has worked with Steve Dana to prepare a budget for the FOA program so that FOA can be self-sustaining. Programs that will generate revenue and public memberships include seminars and workshops, trips to the Middle East, and possibly a public track for the Annual Meeting. The Membership and Outreach Committee will be reviewing these programs, and we hope to institute some of them in 2020. As of the date of our Board Meeting, the number of active Friends has grown to a little over 15,000.

**Cultural Heritage Initiatives:** FY2020 will see a much-reduced level of activity and funding in ASOR CHI, but we continue to do good and important work. I also see this as an area of growth in calendar year 2020 and FY2021.

*First*, a summary of the places where we have consolidated... After much deliberation last year, ASOR decided not to apply for funds to conduct restoration work at religious minority sites in northern Iraq. We thought that we might have been particularly competitive for these NOFO's (Notice of Funding Opportunities) because our team had written the background papers. At the same time, the final NOFO excluded restoration projects at religious majority sites (i.e., Islamic sites), and we decided to pass on what might be seen as a political decision that could have negative implications for our members in years to come.

With the conclusion by the current US administration that ISIS had been defeated, the need for our monitoring, reporting, and fact-finding work was deemed as non-essential. Thus, that funding ended. Several of our core team members, including ASOR CHI Academic Director Michael Danti, were successful applicants (with the University of Pennsylvania) for stabilization projects in Iraq. We continue to benefit from Michael's consultation and advice, and he remains on our ASOR CHI advisory team. At the same time, he now is working full-time on a project affiliated with Penn. We had to furlough our other staff as grants expired.

*Second*, we applied for several other grants, and we have had conversations with non-federal donors and foundations about other work—especially in the areas of education and stewardship activities.

The first and largest of these programs was a substantial sub-contract from the World Monument Fund for work in Libya. The time-frame was very short because these funds had to be expended by the end of the end of calendar year 2018. Building on a training session in May 2018 and led by William Reynolds Susan Ackerman and I participated as well), we worked with the Historic Cities Authority in Benghazi to conduct rapid conservation and field assessments that would supplement the work by our geo-spatial team.

That work concluded in January 2019, but ASOR registered as a non-profit in Libya as part of that project. This registration and the connections that we made enabled us to apply successfully for two grants with the State Department that began this fall. ASOR was awarded an AFCP (Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation) grant to work with the Libyan Boy Scouts and Girl Guides to conduct educational and stewardship programs in Libya. Will Reynolds, Heba Abd el Salam, and I traveled to Tunis last month to kick-start this program.

In addition, ASOR received a separate grant of about \$64,000 from the Embassy to Libya that is housed in Tunis to conduct activities that will advance the MOU between Libya and the United States relating to the trade of illicit antiquities.

This second grant, combined with remaining funds from the Whiting Foundation for digitization work of an archive in Ghadames, Libya, enable ASOR to hire Dr. Heba Abd el Salam as a half-time employee—as Manager of Cultural Outreach Programs. Dr. el Salam is an Egyptian American who has won several international awards for her stewardship and community program in Egypt. It has been invaluable to have a native Arabic speaker on staff as we work on the activities in Libya.

In addition, the Public Affairs Officer for Libya visited our office last week, and we have been encouraged to apply for further funding in the spring. We are also working with Prof. Susan Kane of Oberlin College on supporting colleagues in Libya for a 2020 AFCP grant.

Not all of our grant applications have been successful. We partnered with the John McCain Center at Arizona State to utilize our archives of cultural heritage damage in Syria and Iraq to develop legal cases against non-state actors. This grant was submitted in late June, and we just received a negative response last week.

After receiving a positive response from a two-page concept proposal for education and stewardship activities with Syrian and Lebanese youth in Lebanon, we resubmitted three lengthy revisions for a large (about \$300,000) grant. Hanan Charaf and other colleagues in Lebanon played a key role in these proposals, and we are grateful for their support. Unfortunately, we have not received word on this proposal (either positive or negative). The proposal was submitted to Near Eastern Affairs and the division of the State Department working in Syria (START). As we have not received any response or feedback, we can only surmise a negative answer and/or that everything is on hold with regards to Syrians and Lebanon.

We still have one outstanding grant that we submitted to the NEH in partnership with the Center for Digital Antiquity of Arizona State. We should hear about this application in December 2019.

At this point, we are focused on work in Libya, and I will be talking with the Cultural Heritage Committee about new proposal ideas. We would like to use the James Strange Center to carry out intangible heritage programs in Alexandria, and we have received positive initial feedback from BB&T, and it looks like local community foundations might be interested.

### III. Fundraising—Immediate needs

I realize that my report has grown very long, so I will be brief at this stage... We have two pressing priorities.

First, we need to raise \$50,000 in new gifts or pledges for the James Strange Center in order to “earn” the last \$100,000 of an extraordinary challenge gift. We have four “asks” outstanding that may account for \$30,000 to \$40,000, but nothing is firm. I hope to receive some good news on this front during the Annual Meeting. I encourage all trustees to consider a new pledge (or consider giving a little more). We have until December 31, 2019, to meet this challenge. This is an amazing opportunity to have your gift doubled, and to endow the operations of our new home.

Second, we need raise \$125,000 in our Annual Fund. As we discuss in April, the Annual Fund is especially important this Fiscal Year. While we celebrate paying off our line of credit for the Strange Center, we do not yet have a building endowment that has accumulated funds to pay for the operations of the building. We thus need the Annual Fund this year as much as any in the past. Many of us (and I include my wife Amy and myself here) have focused our giving on the Building Fund. At the same time, we need to think about the Annual Fund—especially during FY2020 and FY2021, while our Building Endowment is growing.

### IV. Next Steps and Immediate Priorities

I think that it is appropriate to remember our Board Chair Emeritus, P.E. MacAllister in this conclusion. I was pleased and honored to have visited with him at length in late April, and we spoke on the phone four times this fall. He was enthusiastic about ASOR’s future and about us reaching new heights. During our conversations, he reminded me of the importance of being a