

President's Report

When I succeeded to the presidency of ASOR on January 2020, I wrote to the membership that I was fortunate to come to the leadership at a time of the unprecedented strength for the society. That strength, which comes primarily from our membership—now approaching a record number of 2000—continues in these critical times. In that same welcoming letter I wrote, “All we know for certain about the future is that there will be change.” I was certainly not envisioning life in the time COVID-19 and the challenges that has brought to every facet of ASOR's work and fulfillment of our mission in this spring of 2020.

In his Executive Director's report, Andy Vaughn has stressed that ASOR is stable and positioned to stay that way financially and functionally. This is an excellent and rare thing to be at a time when the ground is literally shifting under our feet, and we have little idea of what the landscape will be like when the world emerges from the current global crisis. For the time being we have effectively adjusted to changed conditions. Our staff is working remotely, with individuals going into the office once or twice a week to deal with the mail. Staff and committee meetings go forward on Zoom, and as you all know, we are holding our first Zoom Board of Trustees meeting this Thursday, May 14. May the Electronic Forces be with us!

Thanks to the rapid work of Andy, our Board Chair Richard Coffman, and our staff, we attained a forgivable PPP loan that assures our ability to keep our staff on the payroll. In addition to the blessing of stability that this has brought us, we are working in dynamic and innovative ways to help our members meet the challenges of remote teaching and research. Since the earliest days of the crisis, our committees and staff, in addition to carrying on our normal business, have been devising ways to help our membership with the creation and addition of distance learning and teaching resources to our website. Our Early Career Scholars have been particularly proactive in these efforts. Just yesterday, May 11th, we submitted a grant to the CARES Program of the NEH to collaborate with a local southeastern organization based in Washington, D.C., Archaeology in the Community (www.archaeologyincommunity.com). In this project, we propose to combine the expertise of the two organizations and to develop new digital resources for both K-12 and post-secondary educators. Moving effectively into K-12 education has long been an unmet goal for ASOR. We have realistic expectations that this project will help meet this goal and engage us with more diverse audiences.

There is no denying there have been losses, and that we are taking unavoidable hits to some of our core programs. Due to travel restrictions, this will sadly be the summer without digs. Excavations do not lend themselves to social distancing. CAP and our staff worked quickly to shut down our March Fellowship Madness drive and to preserve fieldwork fellowship funds for next year when it became clear there would be no fieldwork in the summer of 2020. The closing of libraries has made research more difficult, but the librarians among us are working to bring more books and journals into open access during the closings. Researchers are moving forward with what they have. As you can see in Andy's report, we are concerned about our 2020 Annual Meeting. This meeting in Boston is poised to be our largest ever on the occasion of our 120th

anniversary, and we are making every effort to ensure it will take place. But at this moment, we cannot be sure travel and large congregations of people will be possible even by November. We are exploring the possibilities and varieties of virtual meetings and consulting with our sister societies who find themselves in similar situations.

That is it—the good, the bad and the ugly. To my mind there is much good. ASOR is stable and can weather this crisis financially thanks to adept fiscal management and to the generosity of our donors. Moreover, it is a resilient and dynamic organization with agile leadership and a dedicated, hardworking membership of nearly 2000 who will not be kept down. In the end it is all about the membership. I and all the leadership team have faith in you, and you have faith in ASOR. That will bring us through.