

From: **Randy Helm** <peytonrhelm@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Aug 6, 2020 at 12:29 PM
Subject: From the Ad Hoc Committee on ASOR's Name
To: Sharon Herbert <president@asor.org>
Cc: Emily Bonney <ebonney@fullerton.edu>, Emily Hammer <ehammer@sas.upenn.edu>, Eric Cline <ehcline@email.gwu.edu>, Eric Welch <Eric.Welch@uky.edu>, Kiersten Neumann <neumann@uchicago.edu>, Lisa Ackerman <lackerman@columbuscitizens.org>, Randy Helm <peytonrhelm@gmail.com>

Dear Sharon,

As you know, I shared both your emails of Monday 8/3/20 with the members of the Ad Hoc Committee on ASOR's Name. On 8/4/20 the Committee (missing Lisa Ackerman, who was unavailable) discussed the EC recommendations to the Board and our next steps as a committee. This letter conveys our thoughts.

We are grateful for the leadership's efforts to address the important issues raised by earlier discussions of the organization's name and by the recent Open Letter. We agree that ASOR must proceed clearly, decisively, and expeditiously in its response. As you know from my email of 7/22/20, the ad hoc committee felt it appropriate to pause our work until getting guidance from the Board on these matters. We thank you for the heads up about the EC's recommendations to the Board and believe that we should share some important thoughts and reactions with you in this brief but important period before the Board of Trustees special meeting.

1. The committee has been working toward a long-term solution to the issue of ASOR's name, and we believe we can achieve that goal. Nobody wants to see the organization compelled to commission another ad hoc committee on ASOR's name in the near future. Thus, while circumstances clearly create a sense of urgency, we recommend completing that work rather than just reverting to ASOR as a brand not an acronym. The situation the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute faces is instructive. Simply adopting the acronym "OI" has not solved anything as one still must use the word "Oriental" to introduce the institute. We believe, therefore, that ASOR must have either a new name that can preserve that acronym OR a new name with a new acronym. The ad hoc committee members are unanimous in their opinion that "Oriental," "Near East," and "Middle East" are (or soon will be) problematic and should not be used.
2. Analysis of the demographics of responses to our original survey, which was designed and administered prior to the recent great renewal of public interest and concern about ethnic and racial justice, suggested that older members of ASOR may be more inclined to retain the current acronym, while younger members are more open to a new name. We would like the Board of Trustees, in considering the EC's recommendations, to be aware of its own demographic composition and to consider the apparently different perspectives of different age groups in the membership.
3. The members of the ad hoc committee are concerned that this may not be a time for the Board of Trustees at the top of the ASOR hierarchy to choose a name without further consultation with the entire membership. In particular we believe we should not place too much emphasis on the last ASOR name survey as it was circulated prior to the recent major shift in climate concerning ethnic and racial justice. We want it to be clear to the membership that the Board of Trustees is listening. We would suggest that the ad hoc committee narrow the name possibilities to two or three choices (at most) and submit those to the Board of Trustees and then to a vote by the full membership. We would include an update from the Ad Hoc Committee on ASOR's Name. The report would reassure the membership that their response to our surveys have not fallen on deaf ears. Examples of names we could propose (with a tagline) are the following: (a) American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR): From Africa to the Indus Valley (tagline); OR (b) The Society for Archaeological Research and Cultural Heritage Education (SARCHE): From Africa to the Indus Valley (tagline).

Please feel free to share these thoughts with the Board leadership and with the full Board prior to the special meeting, in the hope that it can facilitate a productive discussion of these important issues. Of course I'm happy to consult by phone about any of these suggestions if you would find that helpful.

Sincerely,

Randy (on behalf of the ad hoc committee)