



# asor

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting  
September 17, 2020 2:00 PM-3:00 PM EDT ZOOM

Present: Richard Coffman (Chair of the Board); Sharon Herbert (President); Chuck Jones (Vice President); Heather McKee (Treasurer); Ann-Marie Knoblauch (Secretary); Jane DeRose Evans; Eric Meyers; Joe Seger; Andy Vaughn (Executive Director), Susan Ackerman (Past President); Lynn Swartz Dodd

Guest: Meagan Shirley

### Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 2:02 PM (Richard Coffman)

#### 1. Approval of agenda

- **BE IT RESOLVED:** The agenda is approved by unanimous consent.

#### 2. Approval of Minutes Past Meetings

- Approval of EC Minutes from May 12, 2020, Zoom Board
  - Susan noted that the amended by-laws are not currently posted on the ASOR website
  - Minutes approved by unanimous consent.
- Approval of EC Minutes from August 3, 2020 Zoom Board
  - Susan noted motion under item 3 the resolution should read the Executive Committee recommends to the Board, not the Ad Hoc Committee
  - Minutes approved by unanimous consent with Susan's correction.

#### 3. Discussion of Ad Hoc Committee on the Name of ASOR Final Report and associated documents

- Sharon began the discussion by calling attention to the final report of the

Ad Hoc Committee on ASOR's Name, dated August 28, 2020. (attachment A)

- The Ad Hoc Committee recommends a vote to the entire ASOR membership, with a choice between two names:
  - 1) ASOR with one of the two full names:
    - American Society for Overseas Research (ASOR), with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"
    - American Schools for Overseas Research (ASOR), with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"
  - 2) AARCHE (Association for Archaeological Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education) with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"
  
- Sharon noted that AARCHE came in dead last in the most recent membership survey (where there were two slightly different options for what AARCHE would stand for; both options were voted last or second to last).
- The results of the membership survey are made more problematic because the survey included more highly-voted acronyms that use "Middle East" or "Near East." Since the survey, the Ad Hoc Committee has determined such terms are problematic and not acceptable as a name for the organization.
- Once options that included "Middle East" or "Near East" were removed from consideration, the only option left was the least popular, AARCHE.
- AARCHE is what the Ad Hoc Committee recommends be presented to the membership for vote as an alternative to "ASOR".
- Richard noted that the results of the July membership poll (407 responses) shows that the membership is overwhelmingly okay with name options that include "Middle East" or "Near East."
- Susan further noted that the AARCHE name that the Ad Hoc Committee proposed in their final report is slightly different from either of the AARCHE options on the July survey, so the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee proposes a name option that was never voted on by membership.
  - Survey options voted on by membership:
    - AARCHE: Association for Archaeology, Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education (received 22 votes)
    - AARCHE: Association for Archaeological Research and Cultural Heritage Education (received 16 votes)
  - Recommendation in final report of Ad Hoc Committee:
    - AARCHE: Association for Archaeological Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education
- After some more discussion of the results and recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, Sharon posed the question: do we accept the recommendation in the Committee's final report?
- We have a motion from the August 19, 2020 Board meeting, to table to a specific time an EC recommendation that was made during its August 3

meeting. The Board motion (from August 19) is copied here for convenience:

- *Susan Ackerman moved, Jane DeRose Evan seconded:*
  - *The Board of Trustees tables the Executive Committee recommendation to the Board of Trustees that the organization keep the acronym ASOR until the Ad Hoc Committee has presented its report to the ASOR Board.*
  - *Unanimously approved.*
- Sharon clarified the matter by explaining we can recommend that 1) accept the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, although there are some inconsistencies with their reporting and the alternative name to “ASOR” they are proposing was unpopular with membership; or recommend 2) decline the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee and only put forth the “ASOR” acronym options.
  - Sharon made several points referencing the membership survey that potentially muddy the water (for example, in the March survey, members were never asked explicitly whether they supported removing the word “Oriental” from ASOR’s name, and in the second survey in July, members were asked to vote on six name options, all but two options included “Middle East” or “Near East”); both that did not contain Near East or Middle East gave the acronym AARCHE, and were voted 5th and 6th choice by the membership.
  - Where to go next?
    - Option 1: get new data from professional survey people.
    - Option 2: go with the data we have, which (to Sharon) means at least putting an “ASOR” name out to ratify.
  - Joe called attention to the BASOR except from 1921 included in the Board Documents for this meeting which gives some context for “Schools” in the name ASOR, but made the point that “Schools” does not inform about who ASOR is or what we do. (attachment B)
  - Susan noted that “Schools” speaks to ASOR’s history, its overseas research centers, as well as the institutions of higher learning involved in the founding of ASOR.
  - Several members of the Executive Committee weighed in on what should be included in a membership ballot.
  - Richard recommended the vote not include taglines, to provide more flexibility for the tag line in the future without needing revision of the articles of incorporation.
  - Andy reminded the committee of a membership poll taken during the transitioning the title of the journal *Biblical Archaeologist* to *Near Eastern Archaeology*. The poll showed strong support for retaining the title *The Biblical Archaeologist*, but the Board decided to change the name anyway. If an ASOR membership poll shows strong support for a name that the Board finds unacceptable, it puts the Board in a difficult situation.

- Sharon reminded the committee that the only question on the first survey that achieved consensus was that the name reflects where we work, and neither the new options for ASOR nor AARCHE reflects this.
- Lynn brought up Andy's assessment paper on the impact of the name change (attachment C), particularly the costs involved with the change, with AARCHE incurring higher costs than would a variation of ASOR. She questioned if additional costs connected with AARCHE is how ASOR wants to spend its limited funds. The name AARCHE comes with a price tag.
- Lynn noted that neither name provides geographic specificity, but at least "ASOR" has a history and is well known for where it works.
- Susan noted that the recommendation made to the Board on August 19 was made before the Ad Hoc Committee had submitted its final report, so the recommendation was considered premature. Now we have received the final report.
- Jane reminded the committee that these surveys were being held while the Black Lives Matter movement was unfolding, prompting greater reflection on the words. She suggested that the results of the first survey, taken in March, may be dated for that reason.
- Heather found Andy's attention to the potential costs of change very helpful. She indicated she supports a membership poll between ASOR with Schools, or ASOR with Society.
- Chuck noted that ASOR is known as "ASOR" world-wide.
- Eric reminded the committee of comments made by Erin Darby at the August 19 Board of Trustees meeting, advocating for "Society" over "Schools."
- Andy asked whether the EC wants to go on record as having a recommendation? Another option is to present the recommendation from the Ad Hoc Committee to the Board without a recommendation from the EC. He noted that the Development Committee chose to go on record expressing support for the acronym ASOR, but the Executive Committee is not obliged to make a recommendation.
- Joe noted that the EC has the right and responsibility to thank the Ad Hoc Committee for their service, and based on our evaluation of their final report, make a recommendation.
- Lynn confirmed that the Development Committee voted to recommend to the Executive Committee that ASOR keep the acronym "ASOR."
  - Susan Ackerman moved, Jane DeRose Evans seconded:
  - The Executive Committee rescinds the recommendation about retaining the acronym ASOR that was made by the Executive Committee on August 3, 2020, and presented to the Board of Trustees on August 19, 2020.
  - Unanimously approved.

- **Discussion and vote on revised recommendation(s) from the Executive Committee to the Board on next steps in name change.**
  - Now that we have received and reviewed the final report of the Ad Hoc Committee, we are prepared to make a recommendation that includes all information.
  - Andy noted that if the membership is polled about more than one possible new name, it will then be necessary to poll the membership a second time so that they may vote or ratify the eventual new name chosen by the Board. His understanding is that the membership must vote yes or no to amend the Articles of Incorporation with the new name.
  - Lynn supported a scenario in which the EC chooses a name and recommends it to the Board of Trustees, the Board discusses and votes on that recommendation, and then membership ratifies the name voted by the Board.
    - Susan Ackerman moved, Joe Seger seconded:
    - The Executive Committee recommends to the Board of Trustees that the organization retain the acronym ASOR, and that it be put out to the membership for a vote whether ASOR should stand for The American Schools of Overseas Research or The American Society of Overseas Research.
    - 9 in favor, 1 opposed (Dodd), 0 abstentions

The meeting adjourned 3:13 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch

**Ad Hoc Committee on ASOR's Name**  
**Final Report**  
**8/28/20**

**Overview**

Committee Formation and Charge

The Ad Hoc Committee was appointed by outgoing President Susan Ackerman and incoming President Sharon Herbert in December 2019. Members included: Randy Helm (Chair), Lisa Ackerman, Emily Bonney, Eric Cline, Emily Hammer, Kiersten Neumann, and Eric Welch. The charge was “to consider whether ASOR’s name is still appropriate for the organization and, if not, to recommend to the Board of Trustees a new name, or a modified name, or some selection of new or modified names that ASOR might adopt instead. Any decision to change or modify ASOR’s name would ultimately be made by the Board.”

Process and Timeline

The Ad Hoc Committee (AHC) met by Zoom eight times between January 21 and August 24, 2020. It reviewed past discussions and papers on the subject of ASOR’s name (and particularly the problematic aspects of the word “Oriental”) dating from 1982–2019. From the outset, the Committee members were unanimous in the opinion that the word “Oriental” is no longer useful or appropriate since its meanings and connotations have changed since the organization’s founding in 1900.

Our first objective was to gather feedback from the membership on what direction to move forward in thinking about revising the name. Our first survey, conducted from March 18–28, revealed a striking lack of consensus about ASOR’s name. For example, approximately 41% of members supported changing the original name vs. 45% in favor of keeping it. Approximately 42% did not support the option of retrofitting a new name to the acronym ASOR while approximately 40% favored such an approach. Other options, including new names with new acronyms, or names without acronyms, were offered with similarly divided results. After reviewing the survey results, the AHC proposed five possible names/acronyms to the membership for consideration in a second survey in the first two weeks of July. In what, retrospectively, was probably a misstep, this list did not include an option that retained the ASOR acronym, and also proposed options that included the terms “Near East” and “Middle East.” Membership’s response to this second survey was also divided and a significant number of respondents selected “none of the above,” some expressing a preference for retaining the ASOR acronym in some form or other and others proposing entirely new names. Many also expressed the opinion that the geographical indicators “Near East” and “Middle East” either were or might soon be problematic because they assumed a Western-centric perspective.

## Recommendations

After further discussion and consideration, which addressed the results of this second survey as well as the open letter submitted to ASOR and the very different climate in which we find ourselves (with respect to worldwide reckoning with discrimination and social injustice), the AHC agreed that a new name should not include any of the following terms: "Oriental," "Middle East," "Near East," and ultimately recommended that the Board of Trustees conduct a vote of the full membership, with the ballot to include:

**Association for Archaeological Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education** (AARCHE - pronounced "Ar-kay"), with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"

and *one* of the following:

**American Society for Overseas Research** (ASOR), with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"

**American Schools for Overseas Research** (ASOR), with the tagline "Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley"

### Pros and Cons of Each Suggestion:

#### **AARCHE:**

pro: the name is more descriptive of the organization's actual purpose and activities, potentially enhancing recognition beyond academia and our immediate communities

con: it does not retain the ASOR acronym which has a long history and is a well-known brand

#### **ASOR:**

pro: the acronym retains the ASOR brand and history

con: the name is somewhat misleading in that "overseas" is not accurate for members and institutions that are based outside the United States, especially our local, in-country colleagues

The AHC recognizes that no option will satisfy all members, and that each of these options has advantages and disadvantages. The AHC also believes that it is crucial that the membership be offered a true choice in the vote on a name. A ballot that tenders only two slightly different versions of ASOR creates the impression of a top-down choice that is not a true choice. What is more, the AHC expresses concern for the term "Schools" which to some evokes an air of exclusivity and connection with elite institutions rather than a tone of inclusivity and reflection of the membership today, which we are hoping to achieve with a new name. We would propose honoring the schools to which ASOR has a historic connection and even those elite institutions that played a role in the success of the organization in its earliest years through other forms such as the website and marketing materials.

## INCORPORATION OF THE SCHOOLS

An important and gratifying step in the history of our institution is its legal incorporation, which was effected in June under the laws of the District of Columbia. Since 1900 the American School in Jerusalem has existed without a charter, the Archæological Institute of America being its guardian and holding title to its property. But with the development of our prospects and especially the obligation to have a corporation able to take title to property, it was decided to secure incorporation, the step having the unanimous endorsement of the contributors and of President Egbert, of the Archæological Institute.

The name chosen for the new corporation was the AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH. The plural term was selected so as to cover the proposed School in Mesopotamia and also any other undertakings we may assume in the Near East. The charter allows us to undertake archæological works anywhere in the Orient.

The first meeting of the new Board of Trustees took place in New York City, June 17, 1921. Organization was then effected and officers elected—whose names appear on the last page. It will be observed that the fifteen Trustees include the former Executive Committee of the School in Jerusalem, to whom we have been so fortunate as to add Prof. A. V. Williams Jackson, of Columbia University; Prof. Howard C. Butler, of Princeton University; Mr. Edward T. Newell, of the American Numismatic Society, and Mr. Wilfred H. Schoff, of the Philadelphia Commercial Museum. Three of the fifteen Trustees are appointed by supporting societies, Professor Egbert representing the Archæological Institute; Professor Moulton, the Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis, and Mr. Schoff, the American Oriental Society. The remaining Trustees are elected by the contributors, four retiring from office each year.

## DEATH OF PROFESSOR JASTROW

An irreparable loss to the Schools has been suffered in the death of Professor Morris Jastrow, Jr., of the University of Pennsylvania, who died suddenly on June 22. Scholarship will mourn his loss as one of its most gifted devotees; he will be missed by wide circles to whom his teaching and his books have been a fascinating introduction into Oriental lore. The management of our Schools profoundly deplores his loss, as one of its most energetic and useful members and as a beloved and charming comrade.

Dr. Jastrow attended the first meeting of the Trustees of our new corporation five days before his death. He had made his plans to spend next winter in the Orient, the first months in Egypt, and the latter part in Jerusalem on the staff of the School, and it was hoped that he might proceed to Mesopotamia and take part in establishing our long-prospectured School in Bagdad. Dr. Jastrow was a scholar of astounding activity and he gave to our institution not only the prestige of his name but also the unselfish devotion of his hearty service.

## RECENT OBSERVATIONS OF OUR ACTING DIRECTOR

The following interesting items are taken from a recent report which Dr. Albright made to the Chairman of the Committee. The items are of interest to a wide variety of readers.



Assessment of the impact of the A-S-O-R Acronym  
Andrew G. Vaughn, ASOR Executive Director  
September 16, 2020

Sharon Herbert asked me to write my assessment, as the chief administrative officer of ASOR, on what impact changing the acronym A-S-O-R might have on ASOR's business interests and related activities.

**What is an ASOR?**

In talking to the public, my response to this question has revolved around describing what the acronym does not describe—how it causes confusion. I would say that “research” is pretty accurate. We are indeed a scholarly society, a “learned society.” “American” can confuse because 1/3 of our members live outside North America, “Schools” can cause confusion because it's a vestige of a 19th century way of doing scholarship by establishing research centers. I would then say, “Oriental,” in addition to being politically insensitive, causes people to think of Asia and China. My conversations with potential members, donors, or foundation heads then typically turns to telling the story of what we do.

**Does changing one word really make a difference?**

I've spent almost 15 years telling people what an ASOR is not. In this context, I think that yes, changing this single word (“Oriental”) makes a difference. I have found that most public members move quickly to an understanding of “what is an ASOR” after they get past the word, “Oriental.” With the aid of a good tagline (as the Ad Hoc Committee recommends), I think that we can tell our story with either ASOR or AARCHE.

**Does our current acronym have branding value and recognition?**

*Name recognition, history, and longevity*

In short, yes—120 years of recognition for excellence. We have been recognized as the “gold standard” by a former Secretary of State (Kerry), and Irina Bokova (Secretary General of UNESCO) has recognized ASOR in at least three plenary addresses. Just last month, Assistant Sec. Marie Royce (a Trump appointee) held up ASOR and our work. Foreign ministry officials in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Italy know the ASOR name.

Local stakeholders and officials in Middle Eastern and North African countries know the acronym A-S-O-R, and they have a positive association with that name. Grant funders, from ALIPH (Swiss) to Prince Klaus (Dutch), to the Getty, Kaplan, and Whiting, all know the ASOR name. Further, it is my sense and assessment that the loss of branding and name recognition would be pronounced among speakers of non-European languages, particularly among native Arabic and Farsi speakers. It has been my experience that “ASOR” is something that they simply understand as an “ASOR.” It's a strange English word anyway, and so they don't try to translate the words found in the acronym. It is simply a vocabulary item known as “ASOR” that they describe by what we do.

Stated another way, one longtime ASOR member who works in Jordan reach out to me to comment (paraphrased), “I'm not sure people know how well known the name 'ASOR' is known around the entire region.”

### *Branding, style sheet, and logos*

Following a long and thorough process, we created a new logo five or six years ago. The logo is fresh and clean, and we have a style sheet for all communications and for our website. We can certainly do that work again with a new acronym, but there would be a cost in terms of time and money.

The prior branding initiative cost about \$30,000 for the consultant, travel, and other direct costs. The website development was identified at \$28,500 in our audit. That initial website development cost has been supplemented with at least \$50,000 of staff time for transferring multiple old platforms and websites to the new website (ASOR Blog, ASOR CHI website, Boston University files). Our past experiences lead me to conclude that development of a new website (with the acronym and URL *aarche.org*) would cost somewhere between \$50,000 and \$100,000—depending on how much we could automate in the transfer. I realize that is a large range, but much would depend on how much of the transfer we could automate. Because our WordPress site was built in customized steps, I think that it is likely that automation would be difficult.

The more significant cost is not monetary. In my mind, the larger cost is how much we would lose from changing all of the semi-static URLs to *aarche.org* from *asor.org*. We have made an intense effort to develop online resources since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and all of that work would have to be redone. We would most likely have to cease temporarily out efforts to develop online resources for at least 6-9 months—at a time when they have never been in higher demand.

### *The society name and our publications*

The biggest impact from an acronym change will arise if we need a new ISSN. I do not think that *NEA* and *JCS* would not need to change their names or receive a new ISSN. It is certain that *BASOR*—*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* will change its name, but a new ISSN is uncertain if the acronym *BASOR* is maintained.

I have been told that the Library of Congress (LOC) often assigns a new ISSN if one of the first five words changes. In our case, keeping “Schools” instead of “Society” may mean that we do not require a new ISSN. That would be positive for us in terms of institutional subscriptions. Kari Roane of UCP summarized the situation as follows: “[I] think that retaining “Schools” makes it less likely that the Library of Congress will require a new ISSN. Changing only one word instead of two is less of a change—even to my eye it flows in a more recognizable fashion. **But I have to caution that there is simply no way to know for sure what the LOC will do until the paperwork is put through.**” Kari continued with an assessment of sales even if the LOC required a new ISSN if “Schools” was retained: “In terms of sales, we’re looking to avoid market confusion. While I can’t quantify the amount of confusion avoided—sticking with ‘Schools’—it seems to me that it would be slightly less changing one word instead of two.

Trustees will remember that ASOR went through this process when changing *The Biblical Archaeologist* to *Near Eastern Archaeology*. Librarians are used to name changes, but ASOR experienced a significant drop in subscriptions when that change (from *BA* to *NEA*) was made. A new ISSN and new name would likely result in some institutional subscribers taking a fresh look at *BASOR*, which is not good in the current economic environment. In terms of ASOR

and AARCHE—we know that institutions will subscribe to *BASOR*, and it is unknown if a change to *BAARCHE* would impact subscriptions.

### **How do we legally change our name, and should the tagline be a part of our name?**

The name of our organization is spelled out in our Articles of Incorporation, and our law firm (Arnold and Porter) has informed us that we must amend the Articles of Incorporation in order to change our name. As a non-profit that is incorporated in the District of Columbia, amendments to the Articles of Incorporation must entail a ratification vote by the membership.

On the other hand, our society can change our tagline without amending the Articles of Incorporation—that is, if we do not make a new tagline part of our new, legal name in the Articles of Incorporation. Indeed, we changed our tagline five or six years ago to “Unearthing the Past Since 1900” with a vote of the Board. I thus encourage the Board to consider the tagline and our name in the Articles of Incorporation separately.

### **Complications or issues of branding and identity—how my assessment has changed**

It might be helpful to self-disclose that my opinion and assessment has changed since I completed the initial survey in March. If one looks at the graphs and percentages, one observes that the membership was split. Like me, those responses may be very different now that “Oriental” is off the table.

From looking at the numbers and graphs, I can tell that I was one of the few people that had been a member for more than 20 years who wanted a completely new name and acronym. In retrospect, I yearned for a name that succinctly summarized “our story” in three or four words. I wanted to end up with something akin to “Society for Classical Studies” (SCS) like happened with the American Philological Association. In my mind, if we could agree on a name that worked as well as SCS, the benefits of telling our story in a few words would outweigh all of the troubles that we might encounter.

The events and experiences of May and June reinforced the need to remove “Oriental” from our name, and I am pleased and proud that the ASOR Board has taken decisive action on that.

Related to finding a name that better describes our areas of work, the increased attention to Eurocentric issues of equity and inclusion led the Ad Hoc Committee to conclude that the terms “Near East” or “Middle East” should not be used in a name. With that decision (which I don’t debate and with which I do not disagree), the ability to choose a three or four-word name that describes our society became even more difficult. For me, if we had a better name and acronym (other than A-S-O-R) that would tell our story, it might be worth whatever costs, complications, or challenges we might face.

The question that faces the board is whether or not a name like AARCHE accomplishes so much that we should move away from the acronym A-S-O-R and all of the history and benefits associated with that 120-year-old acronym. One also should ask if the financial and other costs (tangible and intangible) are justified.