



# asor

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Minutes of the ASOR Board Meeting  
Sept 24, 2020 2:00 PM-3:30 PM EDT ZOOM

Present: Sharon Herbert (President), Richard Coffman (Board Chair), Andrew Vaughn (Executive Director, non-voting), Charles Jones (Vice President), Susan Ackerman (Past President), Heather McKee (Treasurer), Ann-Marie Knoblauch (Secretary), Lisa Ackerman, Emily Miller Bonney, Theodore Burgh, Erin Darby, Lynn Swartz Dodd, Peggy Duly, Jane DeRose Evans, Paul V. M. Flesher, Debra Foran, Randolph Helm, Øystein (Sten) LaBianca, Susan Laden, Carol Meyers, Eric M. Meyers, Robert Mullins, Timothy Potts, Ann V. Sahlman, Joe D. Seger, Carolyn Midkiff Strange, F. Bryan Wilkins, Meagan Shirley (Guest, ASOR Staff, non-voting).

Absent: Sheila T. Bishop, J. P. Dessel, Joe Greene, Michael Hasel, W. Mark Lanier, Eric Welch

### Call to Order

- The meeting was called to order at 2:06 PM (Richard Coffman)

### 1. Approval of agenda

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

### 2. Approval of Minutes Past Meeting

#### a. Approval of Minutes from May 14, 2020, Zoom Board Meeting

- It was noted that there are different tag lines for the new name options, this was not intentional.
- Susan Ackerman noted the Chairs Coordinating Council meets monthly during the academic year. She also pointed out a typo under topic 13.
- The minutes were approved and adopted by unanimous consent, with those changes.

#### b. Approval of Minutes from August 19, 2020, Zoom Board Meeting

- Susan Ackerman noted three times when a recommendation from the Executive Committee was indicated as being to the Ad Hoc Committee

on ASOR's name, when technically the recommendation from the EC was to the Board of Trustees.

- The minutes were approved and adopted by unanimous consent, with those changes.

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

- a. Sharon began by thanking the Ad Hoc Committee for their work, performing a "heroic duty" for ASOR, including the submission of a final report (attachment A); with the submission of that report the Ad Hoc Committee has fulfilled its charge.
- b. Sharon summarized the work of the Ad Hoc Committee as presented in the interim and final reports.
- c. The recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee is that we put out to vote by the membership a choice of two names: the acronym AARCHE and the acronym ASOR.
- d. The Executive Committee had a serious discussion of the Committee's recommendation at its Sept 17 meeting and arrived at a different recommendation (copied here from the minutes of the EC meeting on Sept 17 for convenience):
  - *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*
- e. Sharon noted our task today is to decide what options should be put to a vote by the ASOR membership.
- f. As a point of procedure, Richard reminded the Board that at the end of the Aug 19 Board of Trustees meeting, the Board voted to table a recommendation by the Executive Committee, (copied here from the minutes of the Board meeting on Aug 19 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.*
- g. This motion was rescinded by the EC at its Sept 17 meeting, and replaced with the recommendation presented above [under bullet d].
- h. It was confirmed that we will be discussing three name options:
  - Association for Archaeological Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education (AARCHE)
  - American Society for Overseas Research, tagline Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley (ASOR)
  - American Schools of Overseas Research, tagline Unearthing the Past from Africa to the Indus Valley (ASOR)

- i. Sharon confirmed that those are the three options, Jane clarified that the EC did not consider the tagline when discussing the legal name, since that adds complications to the actions required to legally change the name of the organization. Leaving the tagline off of the legal name allows for future flexibility.
- j. Richard suggested we compare the current EC recommendation [bullet d above] with the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee (excerpted and copied here from the Final Report of the Committee 8/28/20 for convenience):
  - ... the AHC ... 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"
- k. Sharon noted that, put very broadly, we are deciding between the recommendation of the Executive Committee and the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, and the decision of the Executive Committee to offer its own recommendation came only after much debate. She noted her own reading of the survey results indicates that the membership was split, and AARCHE was not a popular option with the membership. Sharon asked for others to weigh in on the data.
- l. As a point of procedure, Richard noted that we can accept the EC recommendation or the Ad Hoc Committee recommendation, or we can come up with our own game plan.
- m. Eric Meyers spoke in support of retaining the ASOR acronym, reminding Board members that the Development Committee enthusiastically supports retention of ASOR as the acronym, since we have been known by that for 120 years. It would be difficult to replicate that recognition for fundraising as well as recognition in the national and international community.
- n. Sten spoke in support of the ASOR acronym that retains "schools" because it sets us apart and describes us, in that we have institutional members. It keeps it cleaner.
- o. Erin noted that "schools," if retained in the new name, may require some explanation, pointing out that the Ad Hoc Final Report indicated that some see the word "schools" as elitist.
- p. Timothy Potts pointed out that "overseas" is vague and does not reveal the nature of our work, but maybe the tagline will help. He further suggested an option where the "A" in ASOR stands for "Archaeological."
- q. Joe Seger pointed out that originally "schools" in ASOR referred to the Overseas Research Centers, first Jerusalem and then Baghdad; later Jordan and Cyprus, not the institutional members. [attachment B]
- r. Jane responded to Timothy Pott's suggestion of changing the "A" to stand for "Archaeological," citing two problems: 1) our members don't just do archaeology;

- and 2) Andy's report noted that changing more than one word of ASOR may have financial implications if it requires a new ISSN for *BASOR*.
- s. Andy clarified that University of Chicago Press publisher indicated that if we just changed one word ("Oriental" to "Overseas") there is a chance that we might not have to change our ISSN with the Library of Congress for *BASOR*. However, we won't know until they actually submit the name change. Most costs would be if we changed the acronym; if the acronym remains the same—we would not incur new design and branding expenses.
  - t. Randy (as Chair of the Ad Hoc Committee) provided a summary of the discussion that considered both possibilities, inviting Emily and Lisa (as members of the Ad Hoc Committee) to join in. According to Randy, the Ad Hoc Committee discussed several times (but ultimately rejected) the word "archaeological" for the reasons Jane mentioned. The Committee felt giving the membership a real choice was important, rather than two "ASOR" acronym choices. Since the "schools" were at one time an important part of ASOR, but not necessarily an important part now, that should be considered.
  - u. Emily noted that the Ad Hoc Committee had warmed to the alternative to ASOR, although she understands the resistance to it. AARCHE reflects the breadth of what the organization does in ways that ASOR—either version—does not. She also pointed out that if membership votes only on ASOR options, we need to include with the ballot the reasons for either "schools" or "society," to clarify what these words mean. Also, by sending out a ballot with options "ASOR 1" or "ASOR 2" is not really giving membership a choice.
  - v. Paul noted he is in favor of the ASOR acronym, but pointed out that SANER was the clear winner according to the July 16 report, beating out ASOR. He suggested that many members will say "I voted for something else that doesn't show up here." He also noted that the membership does not seem to have a problem with Middle East and Near East, since so many people voted for SANER.
  - w. Andy pointed out 1) there is a currently a publication that has the acronym SANER; 2) the ad hoc committee determined that there is an issue with using either Middle East or Near East; and 3) the acronym ASOR was not an option in the July survey.
  - x. Sharon concurred with Paul, that in the voting, everything with Middle East and Near East did well, because it reflects where we work, and a name that reflects geographical range of our work was the one thing everyone agreed on.
  - y. Randy noted that "ASOR" was not an option (perhaps mistakenly) because of the committee's process. He also noted that there was enthusiasm for AARCHE in the committee, and further noted that even when ASOR was not on the ballot, there were a lot of write-ins for ASOR. He is not sure how members will fall on "schools" vs. "society"; and if we chose a name that includes Near East or Middle East, we will be revisiting this issue in the future. It's impossible to arrive at a name that describes where we work, which is why the tagline can be so important. Finally, the committee felt strongly about giving membership a real choice.
  - z. Lisa Ackerman, as another member of the Ad Hoc Committee, noted that in some ways the committee was trying to balance existing members' sentiment, looking

towards the future, and also ensure that members felt like they were being given a real choice and not a predetermined decision from the Board. The committee also acknowledged that ASOR has a legacy that it is important to retain. In the end the committee felt positively towards AARCHE, as it could signal to the members that real change was possible. Given the events that have occurred since the surveys were sent out (COVID, Black Lives Matter) the questions asked and the responses might be very different.

- aa. Erin asked Lynn to share her reasons for casting a vote against the EC recommendation.
- bb. Lynn explained her 'no' vote was intended to communicate a dissatisfaction with the options offered, although she understood the financial benefits of keeping the ASOR acronym. Lynn explained, among other things, that we have asked membership for input through a survey, but then key parts of the results were thrown out because of intervening unfortunate situations that have happened in the meantime. Lynn explained her 'no' vote was to signal that we asked for meaningful input, then decided not to use that input. She indicated that we will need to explain clearly to membership why the popular results of a member-wide poll (i.e., SANER) are not among the final options.
- cc. Richard asked Lynn whether her 'no' vote meant she was advocating for another member-wide survey. Lynn clarified that her 'no' vote was a reflection of the dissatisfaction she felt with asking membership for information and then not using that information. One way forward is to ask for additional feedback from the membership, a second option is to give them the less popular (ASOR) options and explain why.
- dd. Richard asked Lynn to clarify what she meant by "meaningful input."
- ee. Lynn indicated that she thinks it's perfectly acceptable to go to the membership, as a Board, and explain that the two ASOR options are the best we have right now and ask them to vote and ratify on the ASOR options.
- ff. Eric Meyers noted that membership is not likely aware of the challenges of changing the acronym, and it's important to communicate that to the membership. We can engage membership by asking for their input in the tagline to go with ASOR.
- gg. Sten noted that a lot of documents have been prepared about this process, and perhaps we could make those available to those who want to see them, to open up the process. ASOR has done a good job of making the decision making-process more transparent (through the CCC, etc.). He then asked about the disadvantages of sending out all three names (ASOR/Schools; ASOR/Society; AARCHE).
- hh. Sharon noted that after reading the final Ad Hoc Committee report she thought of a ranked vote: 1. Are you in favor of AARCHE? (y/n) 2. If no, do you prefer American Schools of Overseas Research or American Society of Overseas Research? This way all three options could be considered, but there would not be a three-way split vote.
- ii. Randy commented that whatever ballot choices are sent out, the pros and cons of each choice should be explained. He also noted that the Ad Hoc Committee suggested they have a role in crafting the language of the ballot, which may be an overreach of their charge.

- jj. Timothy Potts asked whether there was an option where we keep the acronym as a “meaningless name” (like IBM) and the tagline becomes the descriptor?
- kk. Randy explained that the committee considered that option, and that one of the most important priorities was that there would clarity about the name and not contention. They concluded that early career / rising scholars feel strongly that the name must be clear and should not contain the word “Oriental.” The Oriental Institute attempted this (just an acronym), and it has not been successful.
- ll. Sharon reminded the Board that this was a question on the March survey (ASOR with no words behind it), and it was not popular. The same poll asked membership about a completely new name, and 51% were against a new name; and 35% were in favor of a new name.
- mm. Chuck noted that the CCC met several times this summer, mostly to discuss the strategic plan. Everyone on the CCC supports removing Oriental from ASOR. Everyone on the CCC with an opinion is in favor of retaining ASOR (because of issues of branding, publications, etc.).
- nn. Sten noted that Chuck’s report is very important because the CCC reaches out into the community very well. It seems people are generally in favor of ASOR.
- oo. Teddy noted that we won’t find the perfect solution. Whatever we choose, it will be necessary to include a considerable amount of explanation for how and why it the options were chosen. This explanation must be directed at the public to dispel perceptions of elitism. We need to explain why, as this will give us a chance to show the organization’s values and integrity.
- pp. Andy returned to Lynn’s earlier comments (points bb-ee above) and the option to start over and return to the membership in light of the new times we live in. Andy noted he did not believe this would change the outcome. If we ask membership to choose between ASOR/Society and ASOR/Schools. The Board is in a position where it can make a choice. Amending the articles of incorporation requires a vote be put out, and we must take care in explaining why (as others have suggested). The name tells a story; “overseas” is broad and allows us to tell that story. The tagline will not be a part of the articles of incorporation, but it can describe and help define who we are. Andy suggested that the Trustees consider putting out the name they feel is best, and let the membership know why that was the choice.
- qq. Andy noted that the Board could ask membership to ratify the choice to change the name, amending the articles of incorporation and change the name from American Schools of Oriental Research to “Overseas” or something else.
- rr. Richard posed the question about what would happen if the new name is not ratified.
- Randy Helm moved, Emily Miller Bonney seconded:
  - The Board of Trustees put a ballot to vote by the Membership that gives them two different options, AARCHE (Association for Archaeological Research, Cultural Heritage, and Education) or ASOR (American Schools of Overseas Research, or American Society of Overseas Research, whichever version of ASOR the Board decided is best) with an explanation of the pros and cons of each name.

Discussion before vote:

- ss. Erin asked whether members of the Ad Hoc Committee had engaged with early career scholars to let them know about the costs involved with changing the name.
- tt. Randy responded no, but that early career scholars were represented on the committee by Eric Welch and Emily Hammer.
- uu. Andy reminded Board members that the vote to amend the articles of incorporation will go out to every voting member as well as every institutional representative.
- vv. Jane noted that at the CCC deliberations, members representing early career scholars did not have a strong opinion about AARCHE.
- ww. Carol noted that while the financial costs associated with changing the name are important, more important are the reasons pointed out in Andy's assessment of the acronym change [attachment C] about ASOR's brand and its place on the international stage. It is forward thinking to maintain our traditions and our forward trajectory.
- xx. Andy reminded Trustees about the name change of Biblical Archaeologist to Near Eastern Archaeology. The membership was asked their opinion about the name change, and the overwhelming response was to retain the name The Biblical Archaeologist. The Board decided to go against the desire of the membership. At the time, as a member, Andy was personally disappointed, why was he asked his opinion, and why didn't the Board hear the response of the membership? He cautioned the Board not to put something out for a vote, if the Board does not see it as viable.
- yy. Erin noted that it is important that we communicate our intentions not just in a general email or putting the information in the ballot. But it is necessary to actively reach out to people to explain the change was a sign of acceptance and inclusivity; and talk to these members face to face to get a sense of what they care about.

- 11 in favor, 14 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion Failed.

zz. Eric reiterated that we allow the membership contribute ideas for the tagline.

- Ann Sahlman moved, Joe Seger seconded:
- The Board of Trustees accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee with a full and complete explanation of the process and the reasoning behind it.

Discussion before vote:

- aaa. The recommendation of the Executive Committee is copied here for convenience: *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.*

bbb. Sharon agreed with Erin that some type of face-to-face communication plan was necessary, such as town halls with members of the Ad Hoc Committee to explain

- 20 in favor, 3 opposed, 0 abstentions. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:49 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch