

ASOR President's Report November 2021

2021 has been another year of challenge and change for ASOR and its membership. When I wrote to the trustees in December 2020 I envisioned an upcoming year of continued progress and renewal in the wake of the global pandemic. Although that “wake” has not yet completely materialized, I am pleased to report that we are emerging from this rollercoaster year in many ways stronger than we began. As Andy Vaughn’s Executive Director’s report so lays out in detail we are again stronger financially and stronger in numbers of members and members’ participation in our activities than ever before. Our outreach efforts in cultural heritage and education continue to expand both in the US and abroad, particularly in North Africa. Our proposed strategic plan for 2021-2025 reflects an organization building on past strengths while also actively responding to current concerns and circumstances, what this year’s plenary speaker envisions eloquently as “ASOR Archaeo-activism and a Future for 21st Century Archaeology”, one of several paths forward for ASOR.

As I write this report on the eve of the 2021 in-person Annual Meeting in Chicago, the first of two components to this year’s AM, the second being the virtual events of December 9-12, I am struck by how emblematic this format is of ASOR’s efforts to provide the best possible services to all its members. The decision on the two-part format was taken last December in an effort to be prepared for whatever 2021 would bring in terms of social distancing and health protocols. It has resulted in 1027 registrations to date, significantly more than the 700+ that attended the December 2020 VAM and more than attended our 2019 meeting in San Diego. Some 500 of the 2021 registrants will be present in Chicago. This dual format, and ASOR’s commitment to accommodating the changing circumstances of the presenters, has resulted in an enormous amount of extra work by the staff and the Program Committee. We owe tremendous thanks to Arlene Press, Jared Koller, and the Program Committee (especially the co-chairs, Helen Dixon and Allison Thomason). We will assess how the dual format worked after the conclusion of the virtual component. Other societies are experimenting with hybrid meeting formats, that is meetings in which the in-person and virtual events take place over the same days. We at ASOR will need to continue to consider other possible meeting formats as well.

I have highlighted here the Program Committee’s role as producer of one of ASOR’s most public events, but it is just one ingredient of the secret sauce that makes ASOR a vibrant, effective, forward looking society. It is our over 400 hardworking, engaged members who as volunteers staff the working committees and governance bodies of ASOR, including especially you trustees, that make all the difference. In these difficult times when we all are facing double duty at home and on their day jobs I owe you special thanks.