

Charge to Ad Hoc Committee on the Governance of ASOR

Members: Emily Miller Bonney (chair); Matt Adams; Sarah Costello; Randy Helm; Ann-Marie Knobloch

The affairs of ASOR are managed by a governing Board of Trustees elected and appointed from the membership. ASOR's by-laws set out a multi-tiered system of governance. An Executive Committee, led by the President and the Chair of the Board of Trustees, develop and supervise the programs of ASOR in conjunction with the Executive Director and their staff. Two sets of standing committees – the Standing Board Committees and the Standing ASOR Committees – guide the activities of the individual programs. The Chair of the Board in consultation with the President appoints the members and chairs of the Standing Board Committees. are appointed. The Standing ASOR Committees select their members from nominations by the general membership. Their choices are subject to approval by the Chairs Coordinating Council, a group consisting of the chairs of all the ASOR Standing Committees and chaired by the Vice-President. The chairs of the Standing ASOR Committees are nominated by a Chairs Nominations Committee subject to approval by the Chairs Coordinating Council and the Board of Trustees. All officers and committee members are appointed to three-year renewable terms, limited to a total of six years.

This system works well in general and encourages broad participation in ASOR's governance by a wide range of members. Concerns have been raised, however, on some points. These are: 1. The length of the President's term; 2. The structure of ASOR Committees; 3: Institutional memberships and their representation on the Board of Trustees. I take these concerns up individually below in the charge to the committee. The committee is of course free to make recommendations about other, related issues regarding ASOR's governance.

1. As it stands now, the President normally serves for two terms and at the end of those six years serves another two terms as Past President. This results in a twelve-year commitment to the governance of ASOR. Since the President frequently will have served at least one or even two terms as Vice-Chair this can result in an 18-year commitment. Might a shorter term result in more and better candidates for the presidency and the shorter rotations result in more effective leadership? The Ad Hoc committee is encouraged to examine the practices of similar societies (AIA, AAA, SAA, SBL) and recommend alternative models if they choose.

2. The selection process for membership in the standing committees' has by and large resulted in vigorous, engaged, and hardworking cadres. We are fortunate our members are willing to serve at the levels they do. There is some sense, however, that the appointment methods of the two groups—the Board Standing Committees exclusively in the hands of the executive officers, and the Standing ASOR Committees largely self-generating—can lead to different types of narrowness. What procedures might we put in place to avoid this?

3. The Board of Trustees as it now stands has six members appointed by Institutional Member Organizations. These organizations include any university, college, seminary, museum, or other institution that pays dues as established by the Board of Trustees. The numbers of dues paying Institutional Member Organizations have been shrinking in recent years—down from over 100 to 60. This seems to be an on-going trend. Should we consider adjusting the numbers of institutional trustees?

All the procedures outlined above are laid out in ASOR's by-laws. Any recommended changes to them will need to be discussed and approved by the Board of Trustees. I encourage you to submit a report to them by early October of this year.