



**ASOR Executive Committee February Retreat
February 24–25, 2024
James F. Strange Center, Alexandria, VA**

Present: Susan Ackerman, Emily Miller Bonney, Lynn Dodd, Jane DeRose Evans, Sheldon Fox, Kate Grossman, Sharon Herbert, Chuck Jones, Ann-Marie Knoblauch, Eric Meyers, Andy Vaughn

Guest: Marta Ostovich

**Preliminary Matters (Sheldon)
9:06 call to order**

1. Welcome

Sheldon thanked Joe Seger for his service on the Executive Committee. He welcomed Kate Grossman.

2. Approval of Minutes from the November 2024 Executive Committee Meeting

Emily noted a misspelling of “Chuck” on page 6/7. Lynn submitted edits to Ann-Marie via email.

Lynn moved. Jane seconded. Minutes approved with the above changes.

Financial Matters (9:00–9:15) (Emily and Andy)

Emily reported that ASOR’s finances are looking good. Andy shared a handout showing ASOR’s assets. ASOR is in a strong financial position. Even if we use some of our available surplus for new staff/other staff salaries, we have about \$750,000 in prior year surplus. ASOR has \$1 million more than the start of the FY in named endowments. We anticipate awarding \$250,000 in 2024 for fellowships, scholarships, and grants (roughly the same as last year). Andy reported on new office equipment (received gratis) from another society in the area (color printer, new chairs, and video conferencing equipment).

Andy noted that the 990 has been sent.

Susan asked about the Mary Elizabeth Strange Endowment. Andy replied that the details on this endowment are still being worked out, but it will be something to do with diaspora heritage (residents in the Alexandria area from countries in which ASOR works). Carolyn Strange is working on guidelines. The account has been opened, but still needs to be approved by the Board. It will have \$800,000 when it opens. An additional gift of \$200K will fund renovations to the first floor of the Strange Center to make it a meeting/classroom/workshop space for diaspora heritage programming (see further below).

A few corrections were noted in the investment handout:

- Susan: FY21 should be FY24.
- Sheldon: 31 December should be 15 February.

Development update and announcement of building gift (9:15–9:30) (Andy and Lynn)

Lynn thanked development committee, including Joe, and also the newest member, Kiersten Neumann. She thanked Andy for his persistent action and thanked the EC for their generosity.

Lynn shared a handout. For FY24, the Annual Fund is at \$79,600. The ASOR 2025 Fundraising Initiative is at \$3,338,000. Lynn noted the growth of endowments. Seven of 34 Trustees have submitted pledge forms.

Lynn acknowledged the many donors who made the James F. Strange Center purchase possible. There is now a plaque right by the door acknowledging donors who gave \$10K+. There are still open spaces on the plaque. Andy acknowledged Susan's help in moving this forward.

1. Action item: vote to accept gift to remodel 1st floor of Strange Center (\$200,000)

Sharon reported on a gift from Carolyn Strange to renovate the first floor of the Strange Center. The goal to create space for intangible cultural heritage initiatives and community outreach space while also making sure the first floor is an ADA-compliant workspace.

Carolyn has pledged \$1 million (\$800,000 for Mary Elizabeth Strange Endowment and \$200,000 for remodeling first floor). This involves a conference room and kitchen remodel. ASOR cannot accept gifts to do capital building projects without approval of Board, although in this case, the EC is going to act on behalf of the Board. The EC needs to accept gift for the remodel, with details to be determined in conjunction with the Facilities Committee and in consultation with an architect.

There was discussion of the remodel, when it will happen, who will be moving offices, and how much meeting space will be available. Concerns were voiced over possible cost overruns and the cost of renovating a historic building. Andy suggested, conversely, that he thought the remodel could be done for \$100-\$125K. Any funds left over from the remodeling fund will become a part of the Mary Elizabeth Strange Endowment.

Sheldon asked about restrictions on the gift and Andy replied that the only restriction is that the first floor multi-purpose conference room be named for Mary Elizabeth Strange.

Eric moved. Emily seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the Board, accepts with gratitude the gift of \$200,000 so that the Facilities Committee can move forward in implementing the renovation. The renovated conference space will be named in memory of Mary Elizabeth Strange. Unanimously approved.

Susan brought up the naming of other spaces in the Strange Center and acknowledging larger donors the building. Andy has a list that the Development Committee can look at for this.

Discussion Topic 1—the Office (9:30–10:45) (Sharon, Andy, and Sheldon)

Staffing and use of Strange Center. Retention of current staff: discussion of salaries and benefits Possible further expansion of staff to support broad programs (CHI, FOA, ANE Today, etc.).

Sharon stated that this is the beginning of the discussion on how ASOR is working. ASOR is a much different organization than 5–10 years ago, but the staffing has not expanded to reflect that. There was discussion of the search for a new position at ASOR, the Cultural Heritage Programs Manager. Darren Ashby was recently hired for this position and will start March 1. His job will be to manage compliance issues with federal grants, and seek out new funding opportunities.

Discussion of ASOR staff organizational charts.

Susan noted that the acronyms are overwhelming. Emily said that it would be nice to have a key.

Sheldon asked whether ASOR has the right staffing level to support ASOR 2025. What else does ASOR need in the next 5-10 years? This conversation will also happen May, perhaps with the full Board. Sheldon and Sharon talked about focus groups for different stakeholders (staff, committee chairs, etc.).

There was discussion of how to retain current staff. Sharon noted that the CH Programs Manager is committed for 3 years, but ASOR will need to find funding after that. The position is not dependent on grants.

Sharon stated that COP, H&A, and Friends of ASOR all want more social media support. Andy reported on recent hires which means that ASOR now has 8 full time staff and a total of 16 FTE (with some on current-year/soft money funding). Most organizations ASOR's size have 1.5–4 employees, and a budget of \$500-\$600K, as opposed to ASOR (a budget of \$2 million).

Susan noted that lots of people have held the Office Coordinator role and there was discussion of the history of staffing this position.

Sharon brought up Friends of ASOR and how the program relates to social media. Jennie Ebeling and Jessica Nitschke, who run the academic side of FOA, need more support.

Emily voiced concerns over people appearing twice on the organizational chart. She asked what are the functions that are needed and who fulfills them. Volunteers/Officers are at the top, but they do not oversee the day-to-day operations.

Susan noted that the two major FOA initiatives (*ANE Today* and webinars) have two different reporting lines.

There was discussion of the possible need for a media or communications person.

Eric brought up how to communicate CHI achievements. More needs to be done to communicate and promote these both to the public and to members.

Sheldon provided a chart on the history of ASOR salaries history. Salaries paid with unrestricted dollars (AF, memberships, subscriptions, etc.) reflect a steady state. Even as we grow, this is staying the same. Andy's and Britta's time have been allocated more to cultural heritage and were not paid with unrestricted funds, but out of cultural heritage grant dollars. Andy's time is only 10% CHI right now, but was 40% last year.

Susan noticed that salaries have increased, because we went from \$0 for cultural heritage salaries in FY14 to close to \$500K in FY23.

Sheldon stated that the unrestricted amount available has gone up over the past three years, but the unrestricted available for salaries has remained pretty flat, ca. \$500,000-\$700,000. However, the hiring of the new CH Programs Manager and a full-time office coordinator (a position not staffed since COVID) has pushed the salary cost up to \$850K, and \$900-\$920K if one adds in journal contractors. Andy said that the hope is to add more grant funds.

10:45–11:00: Break

There was discussion of monitoring the new CH Programs Manager's success on grants.

Eric asked about capacity for ASOR CHI to expand into fieldwork in the countries where ASOR is conducting CHI work.

There was discussion of how to get members' opinions on areas where ASOR should grow and whether this is part of FOA, COM, or a separate focus group.

Susan brought up the possibility of endowing or partially-endowing positions.

Kate asked about changing overhead on grants and Andy replied that this would require an application for a NICRA.

There was further discussion of focus groups and who should be involved.

Eric asked how competitive fieldwork scholarships are and Kate replied that roughly 1 in 5 get funding, but this varies by the award.

Andy encouraged people to be in touch with Britta about the organizational chart as well as Sheldon, Sharon, and Emily as Personnel Committee.

Discussion Topic 2 Governance Report (Emily)

11:30-12:00 Proposed changes to Board membership and committee structure

12:00-12:15 Changes to by-laws

Sharon provided background on the Ad Hoc Governance Committee that Emily chaired. The need for this committee came out of a report from the Officers Nominating Committee which called for rethinking ASOR governance, officer terms, and committee organization and terms. Sharon would like to have recommendations for the Board to review in May. The ad hoc committee submitted a report, with recommendations

Emily shared a table showing other organization models. There were concerns over the length of terms, the vice president role, and transparency on committees. The recommendation of the committee is for terms to be shortened to two 2-year terms. The Past President would serve a 1-year term.

Kate noted that EC numbers would fluctuate as past president drops off for a year.

There was discussion of the changes to the Past President role (only serving one year) and the President Elect position. There was consensus that these were good changes and would aid transitions.

There was discussion of the Vice President's role, and it was agreed that it makes sense the VP should be the head of the CCC. The VP will not necessarily be the next President.

Sharon asked whether the candidates for Vice President and President need to be nominated at the same time.

Eric brought up course reductions for officers and Susan replied that it might be useful for the President, but the Vice President probably does not need it. Course reductions are done through universities, not through ASOR.

The general proposed schedule is:

November: select President elect (one year plus of overlap)

Following year: focus on Vice President

There was consensus to change term for the President to one 3-year term.

There was discussion of the positives (diversify the position, things will move quickly, everyone has a chance to serve) and negatives (potential of Executive Director having too much power, flip-flopping back and forth between people) of having one 3-year term for President

12:21–1:04: Lunch

Reconvened at 1:04pm

Emily suggested a place on the website to tick a box and say you are interested in serving on a committee. This would provide a pool of applicants to draw from. There was further discussion of how this could work with ASOR's online portal. Someone could also upload a CV once they had expressed interest. Andy: done through the online portal. Susan: include on membership renewal page.

Emily introduced discussion of the number of institutional member representatives on the Board as the number of institutional members is shrinking. There was discussion of the benefits of Institutional Membership and whether other learned societies have this level of membership. It was decided to wait on changes to the number of Institutionally-elected Board members as the changes to the officer terms is a big one.

Sheldon stated that there will be a healthy discussion of the change in terms and roles at the Board meeting in May. The Officers Nominating Committee can work on finding a President Elect by November, then Vice President Elect by next year. The President Elect will need to step up to the President's role in January 2026.

There was discussion of the timing of revisions to the bylaws and it was decided that it is best to do them all at one time.

Emily moved. Chuck seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee recommends that the Board discuss a proposal to:

1. change the term of the President to a single three-year term.
2. create a new officer of President-Elect for a single one-year term.
3. change the term of the Past President to a single one-year term.

Unanimously approved.

Sheldon: thanked the committee. Will need an edited memo for the May Board Meeting.

1:40: Discussion of two over-arching questions

Topic 1 (Sharon) Should ASOR be making political statements and if so what kind and how?

One possible answer briefly discussed at November Board is adopting something like the UC Kalven Report. See links for the report and a couple of commentaries:

https://provost.uchicago.edu/sites/default/files/documents/reports/KalvenRprt_0.pdf

<https://www.thefire.org/news/wisdom-university-chicagos-kalven-report>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2023/12/26/the-kalven-report-and-the-limits-of-university-neutrality/?sh=674cd7fc3bf0>

This touches on several items of current business before the Executive Committee:

- Contested territories language report;
- Land acknowledgement statements.

The overlapping, sometimes conflicting, issues involved:

1. freedom of speech/academic freedom (but hate speech???)
2. the expectation that a learned society provide a safe place for all voices to be heard in civil discourse at a time when a number of our members all calling for social activism from the organization.

Sharon gave some background on the Kalven Report, which was written 1967. She noted that ASOR has made statements on issues that directly impact ASOR members.

Susan stated the report provides a blanket policy of neutrality, which fits with ASOR being apolitical.

Kate noted that the report is explicitly for universities, which ASOR is not.

There was discussion of:

- Political nature of cultural heritage.
- University policies of restraint
- ASOR producing its own statement of neutrality
- Advocacy and ASOR
- Difficulties of drafting statements-no framework/guidance for doing so
- Reactions to the October statement
- Potential of statements to cause conflict between members
- Role of ASOR as a welcoming space where people can share thoughts, yet no one did so at the members meeting in November.

2:44–3:00pm Break

Reconvened at 3:00pm

Return to discussion of what action to recommend on contested territories language report.

Sharon noted that the report was written before October 7th. Both the PC and COP have requested stronger guidelines for how ASOR deals with contested territories.

The report suggests modest revisions to Policy on Professional Conduct. Susan noted that the language in point 4 “may consider for inclusion” while the report says, “In general, ASOR publications and presentation venues will not be platforms for disseminating research that has been undertaken in occupied territory as recognized by the United Nations.” There was concern that the report does not provide the guidance that PC and COP were seeking.

Lynn moved. Eric seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the EC thanks the Ad Hoc Committee on Contested Territories and receives their report.

Unanimously approved.

Jane asked whether this needs to go to the Board or whether it can go straight to the committees for discussion. The report can be passed onto committees.

There was further discussion of occupied territories and the phrase “customary international law” and the suggested new phrase, “occupied territory as recognized by the United Nations.” Neither phrase really has any specific guidance associated that helps define what is to be understood as “occupied territories.”

Unanimously approved.

There was discussion of whether this report provides enough help to those who was requested guidance (PC and COP). The consensus is that these are small steps in the right direction.

Land acknowledgement statements.

Sharon acknowledged the work done by the DEI Committee. They initially recommended a land acknowledgement statement to be read at the start of the Chicago meeting, but this needed to be approved by the Board first. Land acknowledgements may not be the best way to deal with responsibilities to indigenous groups (performative or perceived as performative).

There was discussion of the format of a land acknowledgement. The consensus was that the EC liked the idea of providing recommendations and resources for people to visit and educate themselves. This could be included as part of the program.

There was discussion of if ASOR were to do a land acknowledgment who would do it (which indigenous group? federally-recognized?).

Ann-Marie suggested presenting the complex history of occupation as a poster. There was also discussion of how this would work for the Alexandria office.

Jane moved Emily seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee thanks the DEI Committee for their suggested policy on land acknowledgements for ASOR and receives their report.

Unanimously approved.

Lynn moved. Kate seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee recommends that the Board consider charging the DEI committee with developing educational materials that inform members about the indigenous and other histories of the land on which the annual meeting takes place and ASOR's James F. Strange Center is located.

Unanimously approved.

There was further discussion of the complexity of land acknowledgements and who is getting acknowledged. There was also discussion of how it impacts ASOR's work overseas.

Susan voiced concerns about the EC sending too much to the Board and Jane agreed.

Chuck acknowledged the tremendous amount of work done by the DEI committee.

Topic 2 (Sharon and All) If not statements, actions?

Sharon emphasized the importance of actions, as opposed to statements. She reported on conversations with a member and committee chair who works in Gaza who had resigned.

Examples of possible actions include documenting of sites and empowering people with tools to document in Gaza and supporting archaeological students from Gaza to continue their studies in Egypt. One donor has already contributed \$5K to support students from Gaza. Documentation efforts need to wait until after the war has ended.

These conversations ongoing and the member has agreed to stay on as chair of the committee.

There were discussion of other times ASOR has taken concrete action (Syria, Benghazi, etc.) and what type of action is possible in this case.

Eric voiced concern over the reaction in Israel. There is a need for concurrent action for displaced peoples in Israel.

More thought is needed on possibilities for actions.

4:50pm adjourned for the day.

2/25 Morning

Present: Susan Ackerman, Emily Miller Bonney, Lynn Dodd, Jane DeRose Evans, Sheldon Fox, Kate Grossman, Sharon Herbert, Chuck Jones, Ann-Marie Knoblauch, Eric Meyers, Andy Vaughn

Convene at 8:00 AM Adjourning at 11:30 AM sharp

The meeting was called to order at 8:29

New business

1. (Sharon) Publications digital plan now under discussion in committees. (See Board Info webpage)

Chuck noted that the Publications Committee submitted a digital plan to the CCC, where it is now under discussion. It outlines a set of best practices without that expectation that everything will be adopted. The report discusses appropriate husbandry of data, and the need for the infrastructure necessary to meet these goals. The report bears on the conversation of staffing and organizational issues, as there will be money involved in many of these enterprises. If we were able to adopt the recommendations of the report, it would put us at the forefront of publishing and data management.

Andy explained that, as an example, a lot of the data we collected as part of our Cultural Heritage work in Syria and Iraq in 2014-2018 are media showing CH crimes, and (in some instances) it is the only evidence that exists. The data have been given to the DOS and the UN, but the challenges of archiving this data in usable form are enormous.

Several ideas were discussed, including the possibility of archiving the digital data with ASOR's other archived material at the American Heritage Center, asking ASOR's new grants manager to investigate sources of funding for this type of work, starting with a small aspect of the project to get a sense for what is involved, and whether UCP could assist (for example, with assigning stable URLs)

Andy acknowledged that the submitted document from the committee is aspirational, and Andy requested a list with priorities and price tags

It was acknowledged that digital data is a challenge for many, and as archaeological data is being collected and stored digitally, it creates problems for those working in the field.

Chuck suggested that committees think about digital data curation as they are doing their work. Lynn noted that one can't get an NSF or NEA (or NEH) grant without a data curation policy. CAP does not require one, and maybe we should.

Sharon suggested that a small task force might help to look into a pilot project.

2. (Sharon and Andy) Discretionary funds for Committees

Sharon noted that certain committees have tasks that involve expenses (for example, the Publications Committee has requested money for translating abstracts, a diversity and accessibility issue). Should committees be given an annual budget (it would not roll over) or do we ask them to ask for money?

Andy noted that there is money set aside for chair support, but they have to ask for it, and it has created a bargaining culture. Andy feels committees would be empowered if they had their own discretionary funds to spend it as they see fit, as long as it meets the work of the committee. Committees would not be given the same amount. Andy noted that as an example the Early Career Scholars have asked for money to develop educational materials.

Sheldon asked Andy to submit a proposal about how the process might work. Ann-Marie suggested that the proposal be specific about how the money can be spent, so as to avoid creating a hierarchy of committees based on the amount of their discretionary funding. Sharon noted each committee could report on their spending as part of their annual report.

Andy asked whether the EC was comfortable raising the Chairs' Support Fund from 20K to 30K. Until something more formal is written up, committee chairs with a need for funds can write up a proposal for \$1K-5K and send it to Chuck.

Susan proposed increasing the budget line for committee support to \$30 or 40K. This could be done without having the process nailed down with how the money will be allocated, or how decisions will be

made about allocating that money. It is reasonable to ask the CCC how to best manage the process for soliciting.

3. (Sharon and Andy) Possible Board elected trustees (bios document distributed and later collected and destroyed). Discussion continued.
4. Break
5. Return to topics of 2/24 PM and other matters arising after a night to sleep on them

Emily asked about the spring meeting and scheduling additional time for groups to meet (as opposed to participate in cultural activities) because of the number of important issues that the Board and the EC will need to discuss. A schedule was proposed:

Friday:
Dinner on Friday for whoever is here

Saturday:
EC 8:30-12:30; Full Board 1:30-4:30
Reception 5:00-6:00
Dinner Saturday as a group

Sunday:
Board meeting 8:30-12:30

Lynn thanked the ASOR staff for organizing this meeting, specifically bringing into ASOR new-to-us furniture and equipment by virtue of relationships and Andy's willingness to go pick up the materials. These include chairs, a copier, teleconferencing, big screen TV.

After discussion Jane made a motion that we withdraw the resolution from Saturday.

Jane moved, Susan seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee withdraw the resolution following resolution from Saturday:

***BE IT RESOLVED** that the Executive Committee recommends that the Board consider charging the DEI committee with developing educational materials that inform members about the indigenous and other histories of the land on which the annual meeting takes place and ASOR's James F. Strange Center is located.*

Unanimously approved.

Chuck moved, Susan seconded.

BE IT RESOLVED that the Executive Committee, acting on behalf of the Board and with the strong recommendation of the CCC, elects Mahri S. Leonard-Fleckman as the co-chair of the ASOR's honors and awards committee.

Unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 11:22 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Ann-Marie Knoblauch, with assistance from Marta Ostovich