

On 15 and 16 April Sheldon Fox and Emily Bonney conducted four hour-long focus groups. The groups comprised the ASOR staff, the editors of ASOR publications, the chairs of DEI, Honors and Awards, Early Career Scholars and CAP and the chairs of Cultural Heritage, Membership, COP, Development and Programs.

Sheldon and Emily introduced the sessions by recounting how rapidly ASOR has grown over the last 10 years both in membership and in financial resources both in donations and endowments and in successful grant applications. These factors have enabled an expansion in programs and necessitated an increase in paid staff. At the same time the ASOR 2025 initiative looks very much to the organization's future. Given these circumstances it seemed appropriate to the Executive Committee to take stock and determine whether we have the right people in the right places and whether we are effectively maximizing our measures to achieve ASOR's mission.

Participants were assured that every effort would be made to keep comments confidential. Each participant began with a detailed description of what he/she does and as appropriate what appears to be the remit of the committee. A thoughtful compilation of this information might be helpful for future planning.

After the introductory section Sheldon and Emily posed the core questions. How is the organizational structure actually working in terms of committees? How well are the interactions between volunteers and paid staff going?

As a preliminary one should note that all participants expressed appreciation at being given the opportunity to express their views on these topics. All were invited to send supplemental comments via email and several have done so. A second constant was that the remarks on the interaction between committees and staff were completely constructive. In every instance the feedback clearly was intended to enhance achievement of ASOR's mission. We should consider conducting such conversations on an annual basis.

A constant theme was that nearly all the committees depend on ASOR staff to perform their work, and in particular they rely on Marta Ostovich. A smaller number rely on Jared Kollner and Arlene Press because of the more specialized nature of their assignments. Katherine Schmitt also has taken minutes for committees.

In the end because of limited number of people it is hard to achieve absolute anonymity for people but at the same time mostly positive nature of remarks seems to mean not such a problem. Rather than turn salient comments into an edited text providing list of

points identified during these conversations (with several key points that were reiterated multiple times highlighted).

- *Student help is good, but someone more permanent would be good. Website and mobile versions could be better to improve outreach overall for ASOR.
- *Perhaps more need for support for Arlene
- *May be other ways to engage staff in development.
- *Increase in membership might mean need more staff
- *Increase in efforts to get grants will almost certainly mean need more staff with grant-writing skills
- *concern about lack of interaction with local staff in CHI areas
- *six-year committee chair terms may be too long particularly Program Cmtte
- *positive feature that staff defer to committee members on academic issues
- *facing volunteerism issue with younger members - sense that early career scholars are less willing to step up
- *not easy to identify committee opportunities - email invitations not effective - need something on the website
- *question about ASOR swag - who decides what to get.
- *generally think support from ED is good - not always available quickly because of travel schedule
- *decline in responses to call for session chairs
- *be more intentional about outreach to potential members abroad
- *how big is ASOR if we have projects in Denmark
- *helpful to have someone in the office who keeps track of publications and has records of what is happening
- *helpful to have ASOR policy on who and what gets published. Handle on ad hoc basis now and not always positive. Don't want to censor
- *difficult to get to ASOR publications from the website - easier to get access to NEA through Upenn than through ASOR
- *helpful if ASOR had guidelines for things like copyright and dedicated publications person who could keep updated "The answer can't always be Marta"
- *maybe same person be point person for social media
- *interest in changing relationship LCP and ASOR
- *perhaps new office coordinator could also do social media and do simple website updates. Not a clear map of who should be doing what so Jared ends up doing small things.
- *with few volunteers a lot will fall onto Marta
- *interest in increasing membership particularly for committees with seasonal (e.g., H&A, CAP) workloads

- *helpful to have template for certain kinds of emails
- *strong interest in a central calendar so easier to plan for upcoming events and deadlines
- *Some interest in using outlook calendar
- *would appreciate clarification on the relative allocation of work. Collaboration staff and volunteers works well but not always clear who should be doing what. Volunteers increasingly want to be compensated in some way. This point was raised more than once.
- *financial constraints on junior scholars largely underpaid anyway and on scholars outside the continental USA.
- *occasional inefficiencies because Andy is out of the office
- *people on the west coast feeling disenfranchised because meetings are always in the east
- *concern about insufficient coordination on CHI with significant duplication of effort. Getting better but needs further central coordination
- *need more fund-raising and grant-writing to support scholarships
- *make Annual Meeting more accessible with room-share list or lists of local child-care.
- *FOA no clear direction. No clear audience of goal. Not clear how to market.
- *need strategy for keeping new members who often stay only a year or two
- *strategy for growth outside English-speaking world - different levels of interest and different needs - address with different languages in social media