

ASOR Chairs Coordinating Council
Conference Call, February 12, 2015 10:00am

Present: Sharon Herbert, Laura Mazow, Cynthia Rufo-McCormick, Chuck Jones, Randy Younker, Susan Ackerman, Andy Vaughn, Danielle Fatkin, Erin Darby

Absent: Tom Levy, Robert Darby, Geoff Emberling

I. Approval of December Minutes

Minutes approved.

II. Update on 2015 Plenary Speaker (Susan Ackerman)

In the last conference call, it was decided that Sue Alcock was the committee's first choice for plenary speaker at the 2015 Annual Meeting. Since that call, Susan invited her to speak, and heard back on Dec 29th. Dr. Alcock was gracious, flattered and very pleased by the opportunity. Outreach and pedagogy will likely be a large portion of her talk. Andy has made registration and hotel arrangements for her.

III. Report on Strategic Planning Meeting in Dallas (Susan Ackerman)

The Strategic Planning Task Force is made up of nine members. Six were able to convene in Dallas. Vivian Bull and BW Ruffner were unable to come for various reasons. Susan Ackerman, Sharon Herbert, Ed Wright, Gary Arbino, Fred Winter, and Heather Parker attended. Dr. Parker was included because Susan felt it was important to include someone who represents ASOR's next generation.

There were three major elements of the discussion:

1) An evaluation of the failures and successes of ASOR's current strategic plan, which expires at end of 2015. The consensus was that there has not been a lot of criticism of the current plan, and the task force took this to mean the current plan is going well, as ASOR members do not hesitate to share their opinions. The restructuring of the board and committee governance has worked very well, and particularly the formation of the CCC.

2) Ongoing strategic initiatives, and how they will be applied from 2016 going forward. There are five initiatives that have long comprised ASOR's concerns and mission: the mission statement, the Annual Meeting, publications, fellowships and archaeological support, and membership support.

3) Strategic initiatives and concerns that are more recent, like cultural heritage protection, promoting Near Eastern studies in the 21st century, and promoting professional standards and practices.

In giving examples of the types of topics discussed for which feedback is needed, Sharon mentioned that one question that arose was whether the Annual Meeting is big enough. It was suggested that while we may want to expand the number of attendees, there are enough sessions. Publications were also discussed. Specifically, do we want to continue publishing books and journals as we have been, even though we lose money on it? It was decided that we do because it's important to our mission.

Susan added that in terms of fellowships, the task force decided that we need to provide more fellowships that directly support our membership. Right now, most of the fellowships go to students to fund excavations. We have very little support for people doing excavations, no support for people to travel to do research, etc. Are there ways to enhance the diversity of our membership? Is there work we could be doing to foster diversity in the next generation?

Many of these topics overlap with the aims of the committees represented in the CCC. It was suggested that the second item, ongoing strategic initiatives, be discussed in greater detail with the CCC. The task force would like to get input from the committees on the topics discussed. Susan proposed that she would submit a synthesis document to each of the committees with items that relate to each respective committee and request feedback on subject such as whether the task force's priorities for each committee make sense, and are there issues that should be considered that the task force did discuss.

Regarding the synthesis document that Susan would provide to each committee, it was suggested that a summary of all the topics discussed be sent out, rather than summaries specific to each committee.

Susan agreed to provide a complete summary, and stated that she would be available to discuss the topics with each committee in a conference call, or that each committee may hold a private discussion – whatever works to generate feedback.

The Board of Trustees and Executive Committee will be discussing this report at the spring board meeting on the weekend of April 17th.

Regarding a CCC retreat to discuss this, and other topics, Cynthia will send out possible retreat dates in both the spring and early fall.

Susan will send out a draft of her report out to all the committee in the next week or so and would like feedback by April 1st. A revised version of the report will be taken to the board meeting.

IV. Branding, i.e. “What is ASOR?” in 25 Words (Andy Vaughn)

Andy would like to have new business cards made, with a one sentence “tagline” or description of ASOR on the back. Suggested lines include:

- "Understanding the past to understand the present"
- "Knowing the past to understand the present"
- "Know the past, understand the present"
- "Find out about the past, understand the present, save the future."
- "We find out about the past to understand the present to save the future"
- "Knowing the past for the sake of the future"
- "Know the past, transform the future"
- "Discover the past, transform the future"
- "Illuminate the past to transform the future"

The opinion was expressed that “shorter and punchier” is preferable.

It was observed that none of the suggested lines are regionally specific. Is this intentional? Regional specificity is important to what ASOR does. This was followed by a discussion of the political and cultural difficulties that come into play when trying to define the areas relevant to ASOR’s focus.

Susan summarized by stating that not including geographic specificity was not intentional -- it was more about trying to find language to describe the part of the world ASOR focuses on. We didn’t come up with an answer, which is why a region isn’t included.

It was suggested that the tagline that is chosen could be printed over a map, which would suggest a general region without the specificity of words.

It was asked if the phrase “the ancient world” should be avoided, as it excludes much of the Islamic world, which comes close to modernity.

Susan stated that she will include this discussion in her report about the strategic planning meeting.

V. Reports from Other Committees

The Annual Meeting Program Committee reminded everyone that paper abstracts are due Feb 15th.