

Chairs Coordinating Council
Conference Call
January 26, 2017 3:00 PM EST

Present: Andy Vaughn, Heather Parker, Chuck Jones, Cynthia Rufo, Susan Ackerman, Sharon Herbert, Laura Mazow, Tom Levy, Helen Dixon, Geoff Emberling

Absent: Randy Younker

1. Approval of November Minutes

Minutes were approved as emended.

2. Discussion of Nominees for 2017 Annual Meeting Plenary Speaker

The Programs Committee co-chair said that there was a strong consensus for Zainab Bahrani and Sumaya Bint El Hassan, the princess of Jordan. Sten LaBianca had suggested the Princess and has enjoyed hearing her speak before. The three other nominees (Irene Winter, Eric Cline, and Abbas Alizadeh) received a lot of support as well. What does the committee think?

Susan reminded the committee that she is the person who ultimately contacts the speaker and gives them some coaching on the tone and presentation of their talk. For the past few years, she has suggested that speakers look at Brian Rose's 2013 plenary presentation. However, Susan believes that the most recent speakers have emulated his casual style of speaking and not necessarily the very substantial content of his presentation. This year's speaker should be someone with gravitas, as well as an engaging speaking style.

Sharon mentioned that Bahrani's area of expertise would be very pertinent to current events.

The Programs Committee co-chair agreed, stating that while Bahrani is an art historian, she wrote her dissertation on Lagash so she crosses boundaries in terms of art history, archaeology, and cultural heritage. She is a dynamic speaker, who is also very theoretical and critical, and possibly controversial. She is of Iraqi origin and could address the current political moment from a variety of approaches. She would be an edgy choice. She says we are so focused on monuments, but we should talk more about the people in the region.

The Junior Scholars chair said that this made Bahrani her top choice. She has heard rumblings from membership that it is good that we take care of monuments, but we neglect including language about the people in conflict zones in the regions in which ASOR members work. She thought that this is something that needs to be addressed. It would be useful to hear the sort of language someone who works with material culture uses when speaking about material culture and the people. A lot of us do not have the vocabulary to talk about both of these things at once.

Sharon asked what we know about El Hassan.

The Programs Committee co-chair said she is very dynamic, charismatic, and sometimes funny.

The CAP chair said he is partial to Princess Sumaya. Her English is beautiful. She is not going to be an edgy speaker. She has been very involved with the archaeology of Jordan. The issues of grappling with people and antiquities are very familiar to her. She knows a lot about ASOR and ACOR. She is a kind of diplomat for Jordan and would provide an elegant way of hearing about archaeology from the perspective of a country in the Middle East.

The Programs Committee co-chair said he had some concerns, not knowing anything about whether she would give a conceptually vacant talk about how we all need to work together. Does she have any ability to be analytical or critical?

The CAP chair said he believes so. He once organized a conference on radiocarbon dating and the bible and she came to it. I think if someone could coach her on the big issues, she would be open to enhancing her talk.

Susan asked what the committee thought about Irene Winter?

The CAP chair heard her speak recently and thought she was great. The Programs Committee co-chair agreed.

Susan said Winter has a ton of scholarly heft and wondered if it would be a slap in the face if we were in her home city for the meeting and brought in a different art historian (Bahrani) to give the plenary.

The Programs Committee co-chair said we have talked about bringing in plenary speakers who are still in the building phase of their career, rather than senior scholars. Though within the last few plenary speakers, we have had some of these younger scholars.

The CAP chair offered that Irene Winter is full of wisdom and he would like to hear what she has to say about where she thinks the field is going. (Several other chairs agreed.)

The Programs Committee co-chair said that it sounds like the first choice is Sumaya and second choice is Irene?

Sharon pointed out that we are not going to have Irene around forever. Someone who has been so formative in the field and is still at the top of her game - we don't have that very often. In this instance, Susan thinks the seniority might be a real plus. Also, the gravitas issue would not be on the table. She is serious and is also a fine and compelling speaker.

The Programs Committee co-chair said that the PC did also discussed the 2018 anniversaries coming up: CAARI 's 40th and ACOR's 50th. There was a suggestion that having a Jordanian focus in 2018 might be off-putting for CAARI. If we want to choose Irene as #1, we might want to be conscious that we are putting Sumaya off for two years.

Sharon suggested that in the future, plenary speakers might be selected two years in advance.

The CAP chair asked if we could we have two keynotes? One at the beginning of the meeting, and one at the end?

The Executive Director said that in order to do a second plenary talk, we would have to lose space for nine academic sessions, so we would have to extend the meeting into Sunday. The program is very packed at this point.

Who is everyone's first choice?

Programs Committee: Irene Winter. A co-chair thinks we are missing an opportunity to have someone from the Middle East speak at this moment, but Irene will do great.

Honors and Awards Committee: Irene Winter

CAP: Irene Winter

Publications Committee: Irene Winter, though the princess would be great some day.

Sharon: Irene Winter

Helen – It sounds like Irene is our first choice and Sumaya is our second.

Susan said that she will extend an invitation to Winter as the First choice, with El Hassan as the second choice.

3. Discussion of Prior Publication Policy

Several committees circulated the policy, but did not discuss substantive comments. Discussion will be postponed to the next call.

4. Plan to Revise Speaker Attribution in Program Book

The Program Committee co-chair said they are waiting to have all comments from the Annual Meeting collated before discussing this. Once the committee has those comments, they will discuss and then make a determination about what to do for the 2017 meeting.

5. Discussion of Executive Order for Potential Ban on Visas for People in Countries in Which We Have Colleagues and Wish to Work

Susan gave a summary of the executive order:

On Tuesday evening, there was an announcement about a proposed executive order entitled, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States."

On Wednesday there was a draft text of the order. The crucial part is a line that says, "I hereby proclaim that the immigrant and nonimmigrant entry into the United States of aliens from countries referred to in section 217(a)(12) of the INA, 8 U.S.C. 1187(a)(12), would be detrimental to the interests of the United States, and I hereby suspend entry into the United States, as immigrants and nonimmigrants, of such persons for 90 days from the date of this order." The countries in question seem to be Iraq, Iran, Syria, Somalia, Libya, Yemen, and Sudan. The order applies to immigrants and visitors. It seems to include people who have visas in hand. The instruction to Homeland Security is to make sure there are stringent checkpoints in place.

Susan asked whether this is something ASOR would want to respond to, and if so, when and in what form.

The Programs Committee co-chair said that it is hard to imagine that anything we could do would have a practical policy impact. This order is antithetical to everything ASOR stands for. This group of countries is a random assemblage. It would be awful to see this extend to other countries, like Turkey.

Susan stated that this order is talking about people who are our friends and colleagues, with whom we have worked for years.

The Executive Director said that we are actively trying to find more information about the order. He has spoken to people with decades of experience in foreign service and are at a loss about what is happening right now. ASOR has some government contacts through the board and the research centers, and we have the ability to respond forcefully. However, at this moment, we just do not know what is happening, and what to respond to.

Susan said that the other proposals announced on Tuesday included an order about the Mexican border, and an order regarding Syrian refugees. Those were signed on Wednesday. This order has not been signed yet, so we are hoping cooler heads have prevailed and that is the reason for why this one hasn't been signed.

The Junior Scholars chair asked whether it is cooler heads prevailing, or is it testing the waters? A strong immediate statement is something that might be very important right now. Could we at least state that we stand in solidarity with our colleagues who might be affected by this?

The Programs Committee co-chair asked if a statement be more forceful if it was a joint statement with other organizations?

Susan asked if she should draft an email to the membership to tell them we are closely monitoring this proposed order, and also that we are considering what could happen with the NEH. Do people want to get email like that?

Agreements all around that this is an emergency situation and a message from Susan about it would be well received.

Sharon said that we may not have much power, but that does not mean we should not speak up. It is better to say something as Trump is running it up the flagpole instead of waiting to deplore it after he does it.

The Programs Committee co-chair suggested that someone from our organizations need to get in front of these issues sooner rather than later.

Susan said it would be productive to ask other organizations how we can become allies in their lobbying efforts.

The Junior Scholars chair felt conflicted about what the best timing for a statement would be. If we say something too soon, we run the risk of being watered down. Someone suggested seeing what statements have already been made. If people are searching around for statements, we want people to find ASOR's statement.

The Programs Committee co-chair wondered if it would be better to band together with other archaeologists, or if we should cross academic borders and make a general argument in behalf of academic study.

The CAP chair pointed out that the administration would look at us like a bunch of elitist, left wing professors. If we want them to relate to us, we need to present ourselves as part of what America is and give them a way to relate on a personal level.

Susan decided that a good place to start would be to make a statement to the membership, and then move on to statements we could make beyond the membership.