

ASOR Program Committee Annual Report 2025

Kiersten Neumann and Allison Thomason, Co-chairs, Program Committee
Arlene Press, ASOR Director of Meetings and Events

Summary of PC Activities

In 2024, the Program Committee successfully navigated ASOR's second hybrid meeting and thanks to ASOR staff, especially Jared Koller, and ASOR session assistants, there were few technical issues, with the AM running quite smoothly. Accordingly, we've maintained the same structure and format for the 2025 AM, which will run in conjunction with SBL. We continue to work with several of ASOR's committees on issues and opportunities related to inclusion and accessibility at the AM.

Following an open call for applications, we welcomed two new members to the PC in January 2025. We recently posted another open call for applications for four new members to begin in January 2026. The PC will review the applications in December and forward names for approval.

In keeping with our new practice and timeline for nominating plenary speakers, in May 2025, the PC forwarded a 3-person list to the CCC and EC, who nominated/chose the plenary speaker for 2026. This is 1.5 years in advance of the in-person plenary and gives both ASOR and speakers more time to plan.

Program Committee Membership

In 2025, the PC welcomed James Fraser and Tom Landvatter. The PC thanks with deep gratitude and appreciation Felix Höflmayer and Scott Moore, who rotated off in 2024.

Four members will be rotating off this year after two terms of service: Hanan Charaf, Kate Larson, Sarah Wenner (Posters Chair), and Allison Thomason (Co-chair). We sincerely appreciate the time and contributions of these soon-to-be-past members, many of whom continue to serve ASOR in other ways.

With Allison Thomason rotating off from her position as Co-chair, which she held for six years, the PC nominated Debra Foran as Co-chair. Kiersten Neumann's first term as Co-chair ends this year, and she has graciously agreed to stand for nomination for a second term. Both names were forwarded to the CCC and BoT for approval, to begin their new terms in January 2026.

2024 Annual Meeting Recap (Hybrid/Boston)

The 2024 AM proceeded with excellent attendance and smooth technical support in our return to the Hilton Boston Park Plaza. We filled 120 time slots over the three days of sessions/workshops, averaging nearly 11 sessions/workshops per time slot. Most presentations were in-person, with several online. ASOR experienced minimal last-minute presentation cancellations due to problems with travel or illness.

Format

The format of five 20-minute presentations in Member-Organized Sessions and ASOR Standing Sessions and adjustments to the daily schedule—with first sessions starting at 8:15am (previously 8:20am) and the last sessions ending at 6:30pm (previously 6:25pm)—proved to be excellent solutions to some of the technical hiccups in 2023 due to presentation transitions. ASOR session assistants in each room were also superbly trained by ASOR staff and ready to solve technical issues as they arose; the format of having the same assistant in a room for concurrent morning sessions and concurrent afternoon sessions also proved beneficial. Session and workshop chairs also served their sessions well in the hybrid format, ensuring that in-person and online audiences could participate as fully as possible. Finally, the deadline for early submission of presentations to the AM portal allowed most papers to run on the ASOR laptops in each room without difficulties. All agreed that the same timing and earlier upload deadline would be applied for the 2025 AM.

Poster Session

The PC, led by Sarah Wenner (PC member and Poster Chair), allowed in-person and online poster participation. Poster submissions were digital in PDF format or in the traditional large-scale printed format for in-person presenters. ASOR had both the physical posters displayed throughout the in-person conference and a webpage on the AM website with access to the online Poster Gallery. A poster session Q&A with all in-person authors present took place at lunchtime on Saturday in Boston, with laptops available for online poster presenters and Q&A.

Recordings of the Annual Meeting

ASOR recorded each session (with a one-way camera aimed at podium/screen) for registered attendees to view presentations following the conclusion of the hybrid meeting, allowing ASOR and the PC to “extend” the meeting virtually into the near future with password-protected access to registrants. All presenters were given the option to “opt out,” or remove their presentation from the posted recordings. Approximately 15–20% of presenters requested this option.

Special Events and Meetings

Dr. Fikri Kulakoğlu delivered the plenary address at the 2024 AM, speaking on the “Transition from Early Bronze Age to Middle Bronze Age at Kültepe;” this was well attended, as was the cocktail reception directly following the plenary. Preceding the plenary, on Wednesday afternoon, attendees had the opportunity to register for a workshop related to museum objects at Harvard Art Museums, titled “The Museum is Your Classroom.” On Saturday evening, attendees were able to pre-register for and attend a reception hosted by the Harvard Museum of the Ancient Near East, with ASOR-provided shuttle buses to Cambridge. Many thanks to HMANE for welcoming us into your galleries! ASOR badge holders were also able to visit the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, free of charge for the duration of the AM.

Most business meetings were in-person, with ASOR providing continental breakfasts or gift cards for purchasing food in the hotel. The program also included the familiar Session Chairs reception on Wednesday evening, affiliated society receptions, and the ECS Brown Bag Lunch and evening reception, among others. The ASOR Book Awards and Service Awards were presented as usual during the members’ meeting in-person on Friday at lunchtime with pre-

recorded announcements, which were then uploaded to the online platform and ASORTV for attendees to view after November. ASOR-organized Roundtables took place Thursday at lunchtime, with CFP for informal Roundtables managed by ASOR staff (separate from the academic program managed by the PC).

Sustainability Efforts

ASOR's ability to offer its second hybrid AM—and to do so once more on the East Coast at an international airline hub—is a great stride forward in achieving its sustainability efforts. Moreover, ASOR supplied only a limited number of printed programs on request (per ASOR communication to all attendees), with all other attendees navigating the program using the mobile app, hosted on Guidebook, and the PDF program available on the website (updated regularly). Happily, ASOR provided the sustainable and much-loved tote bags for registered attendees. Meeting-area maps were both posted throughout the hotel and available on the app.

Initiatives Related to Inclusion and Accessibility

ASOR's BoT and Executive Director continued to provide scholarship funds to eliminate or reduce registration fees for all attendees who wish to attend. Related, the PC urged ASOR leadership to consider fully funding travel arrangements and meeting registration for invited plenary speaker(s), especially if those speakers are traveling from outside the US and/or if they don't have funding from their home institutions, and happily, leadership agreed to do so.

Prior to the meeting, the GIV and PC Committee Co-chairs attended session chair training (online) sessions to encourage best practices for both running sessions and creating accessible visuals in presentations. The same members created intro slides with related messaging, the goal of which was to have them loop at the beginning of sessions. They also created a webpage with many resources about the host city with links to information on Boston's complex history and surrounding areas regarding indigenous and formerly enslaved peoples.

At the AM, the GIV Committee staffed a welcome desk next to the ASOR registration desk, as well as established dedicated all-gender bathrooms; a communal lounge space for members to relax, meet, work, etc.; and a family room stocked with crafts and games for attendees' family members to enjoy.

The PC continued the practice of not including institutional affiliation on name badges, reflecting our complex discussion of equity issues and balancing that with expectations of members around networking. Sharpie markers and stickers were available at registration for attendees to add information to their name badges. Institutional affiliations were listed in the AM program PDF and in the Guidebook app.

2025 Annual Meeting Planning (Hybrid/Boston):

Format

Based on the success of the early submission of presentation material for the 2024 AM, we maintained this requirement for this third hybrid meeting, with PowerPoint slides and presentation recordings due November 7, 2025. We also maintained the same session format

(20-minute papers) and daily schedule (8:15am–6:30pm). We look forward to discussing at our PC meeting at the AM the inclusion of high school students in the poster session. We will also revisit technological challenges, scheduling changes, and ways to improve the hybrid format.

Withdrawals

Several session chairs and individual presenters withdrew from the 2025 AM, citing concerns related to ASOR's policies, practices, and/or support of work in the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel. The PC regrets losing their participation and respects their values-based decisions to withdraw. In each case, PC Co-chairs and ASOR staff reached out to invite conversation and encourage continued engagement with ASOR's scholarly community, even amid disagreement. We also emphasized that members' values and ethical concerns matter to the association and that dialogue about policy and practices is ongoing.

Institutional Affiliations

Early in 2025, following discussion within the PC, the PC Co-chairs requested guidance from the EC on how to list institutional affiliations for scholars associated with institutions in occupied territories—an area not explicitly addressed in existing ASOR policies but discussed across committees for several years. The EC provided guidelines to the PC, which were incorporated into the ASOR Program Committee Guidelines (Rev. 2025, Appendix D) and applied to affiliation listings in the 2025 AM program. The topic will receive further consideration by the PC, BoT, and EC at their respective meetings at the AM.

Special Events and Offerings

The Plenary address will be delivered by Prof. Timothy Harrison, Director of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures (ISAC) at the University of Chicago and former President of ASOR, on his work and the state of cultural heritage projects in MENA regions. Two workshops are scheduled for the afternoon before the plenary—a seal carving workshop led by Pinar Durgun and a workshop titled “Putting Objects to Work” hosted at the Harvard Art Museums. ASOR has also arranged a walking tour of the Little Syria neighborhood of Boston for the same afternoon. Perhaps the most noteworthy extra-curricular event for the 2025 AM is the 125th Celebration scheduled for Saturday evening—a dinner with an “unforgettable evening of community, celebration, and reflection on ASOR's history.” Tickets cost \$100, while discounted tickets are also available to make the event as accessible as possible for all ASOR members. We look forward to sharing a summary of this milestone event in our 2026 PC Annual Report.

2026 Annual Meeting and Beyond

Planning for the 2026 AM is already underway. The call for MOSW proposals will open December 15, 2025, and close January 15, 2026. The 2026 call for papers will open February 15 and close March 15, 2026. The PC will meet in late January 2026 to discuss the proposed MOSW and again in March to discuss 2027 Plenary speaker recommendations.

ASOR will continue to schedule its AMs in travel-friendly hubs with related cultural interest sites and will continue most dissemination of information and schedules through digital formats (webpages, PDFs, meeting app, etc.).

Respectfully submitted,
Allison Thomason and Kiersten Neumann, Co-chairs
on behalf of the Program Committee

2025 ASOR Program Committee Membership

Kiersten Neumann, Co-chair (2022–2025; member 2021–22)

Allison Thomason, Co-chair (2019–2025)

Hanan Charaf (2020–2025)

Petra Creamer (2022–2025)

Debra Foran (2020–2025)

James Fraser (2024–2026)

Christopher Jones (2024–2026)

Tom Landvatter (2024–2026)

Kate Larson (2020–2025)

Robyn Price (2024–2026)

Madadh Richey (2021–2026)

Sarah Wenner, Posters Chair (2020–2025)