

ASOR 2021-2025 Strategic Plan

Preamble

For the past 5 years (2016-2020) ASOR has operated successfully under a 5 year plan worked out by a Strategic Task Force led by then President Susan Ackerman in 2015, and approved by the Board of Trustees in April 2016. That plan presented 8 goals, 4 of which the Task Force considered enhancement of existing key program areas—1. the Annual Meeting; 2. Publications; 3. ASOR’s International Affiliations; 4. Supporting our members work both in the form of increased fellowships, and enhanced in-house resources for archaeological research. The second 4 goals represented new initiatives that focused on supporting ASOR’s broadening programs and increasingly diverse membership. These included fostering the next generation of scholars, increasing, and better serving both our professional international members and the interested public, and finally, developing a more robust program of cultural preservation and protection.

Periodic strategic planning is a valuable exercise that promotes reflection on and reevaluation of an organization’s goals and priorities. It was this mind that in February of 2020 ASOR’s Executive Committee (EC) spent a day assessing the progress made on the 2016-2020 strategic plan and considered whether these goals still reflected and served the priorities laid out in our expanded mission statement as developed between 2010 and 2015:

The American Society of Overseas Research (ASOR), founded in 1900, is an international organization whose mission is to initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the history and cultures of the Near East and wider Mediterranean from the earliest times, by:

- Fostering original research, exploration, and archaeological fieldwork;*
- Encouraging scholarship in the region’s languages, texts, traditions, and histories;*
- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues;*
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse;*
- Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching;*
- Promoting educational opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in institutions of higher education around the world;*
- Developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public;*
- Supporting and participating in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of the Near East and wider Mediterranean and to raise awareness of its degradation.*

The EC agreed that the 2016-2020 goals remained central to ASOR’s mission and that we had made significant progress toward their accomplishment, but, as always, there remained more to be done and some of our priorities had shifted as circumstances changed over five years. In light of this, and of transformative changing circumstances not foreseen in the 2016-2020 plan-- such as the purchase of the Strange Center and opportunities opening up with the move to Alexandria, the exponential expansion of our cultural heritage activities, the shift of journal publication and distribution to the University of Chicago Press--we discussed whether we needed a completely new strategic plan or a revision of the current plan and who should produce the new or revised document. The EC stressed the importance of feedback from multiple membership sources and

agreed that the planning process should be a major item on the April 2020 Board of Trustees' meeting agenda.

Then came the COVID-19 lockdown. We regrouped in April and May. With circumstances changing on an almost daily basis and no realistic sense of what the post-pandemic landscape would be like, it did not seem to be the time for new long-term initiatives. On the other hand, we did need to respond to and deal responsibly with the changed and changing circumstances. We decided that the Chairs Coordinating Council (CCC) should meet over the summer and with input from the standing committees begin to craft a revised version of the 2016-2020 plan for consideration and revision by the EC in early 2021 and submission to the Board of Trustees for at its Spring 2021 meeting. It was revised after that discussion and unanimously approved by the CCC in October 2021. That version was circulated to the Board for comments in October and two open zoom calls were held in November. At its November 21, 2021 meeting in Chicago The ASOR Board of Trustees unanimously approved the adoption of this plan for 2021-2025.

This resulting 2021-2025 plan thus reflects both revision and expansion of the 2016-2020 document. The first section of the plan (Part I) identifies 6 key areas of activity from the earlier plan that remain central to ASOR's mission and goals, and outlines actions for enhancement in each area. The two most obvious changes from the 2016-2020 plan are the integration of aspirational and programmatic goals into a single section and, more striking, the elevation of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts to a Key Program Area (Area 3). The latter is a response to the massive social equity movement that began in the spring of 2020, the consequent intensification of our member universities' diversity programs, and the growing demands of a large segment of our membership to be a positive part of this movement. DEI appears nowhere in ASOR's mission statement, but efforts to make ASOR welcoming to a more diverse membership clearly further many of our stated goals, including, "Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching; Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse; Promoting educational opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in institutions of higher education around the world, and developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public". While diversity was a repeated theme in the 2016-2020 plan, indeed Part II of that plan is titled "Serving ASOR's Diverse Membership", we focused there on growing and better serving our international membership and nurturing our early career members.

While we had successes and will continue to strive in these areas, the DEI initiative in the 2021-2025 plan foregrounds efforts to bring BIPOC communities into ASOR. These efforts began before spring of 2020 with the push to modify ASOR's name, which culminated in a vote to change the name from American Schools of Oriental Research to American Society of Overseas Research in November of 2020. Part II of this plan outlines needed infrastructure improvement and staff development to help achieve the goals set forth in Part I.

Part I. Strengthening ASOR's Key Program Areas

Area 1: The Annual Meeting

ASOR Mission Rubrics

- Fostering original research, exploration, and archaeological fieldwork;*
- Encouraging scholarship in the region's languages, texts, traditions, and histories;*
- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues.*

Our goals: Conduct an exceptional, broadly attended and widely accessible professional meeting dedicated to scholarship on the history and cultures of Western Asia and the Greater Mediterranean Basin.

Actions

1A. Promote the Highest Quality Content in the Academic Program

The current quality of the academic program is already high. Applications to present papers exceed the number of sessions available, with the result that only the best papers are accepted. Maintaining a healthy number of sessions for paper presentations will guarantee that the quality of this aspect of the academic program continues. To further guarantee this, the Program Committee will regularly review the Annual Meeting's "ASOR-Sponsored Sessions," to make certain they continue to represent ASOR members' primary areas of scholarly interest and engagement. Session chairs will continue to recruit paper presenters whose contributions will enhance the quality of the academic program and develop new directions as appropriate. The Program Committee and sessions chairs will encourage submissions and participation from scholars representing diverse perspectives in support of ASOR's strategic initiative regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion. We will also continue to productively disseminate members' research at the Annual Meeting through mechanisms other than papers—poster presentations, roundtable discussions, and similar events—and develop mechanisms to archive these at our Alexandria office. In addition, to encourage attendance and dialogue the ASOR staff will follow the model of other learned societies and enhance the co-curricular component of the Annual Meeting program by offering museum visits, networking opportunities for various interest groups, movie events, and similar activities.

1B. Increase participation and attendance especially among international participants from regions of ASOR's academic interests and ensure equitable, inclusive, and diverse engagement in the Annual Meeting.

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions in 2020, ASOR's Annual Meeting was held in an entirely virtual format. This improved access significantly for our international participants and others for whom travel is prohibitive in cost. In addition, the virtual platform offered more time for discussion and digestion of papers. The advantages of the virtual format were so great that we are now running both virtual and in-person components one month apart in November and December of 2021 for a single registration fee. Depending on the success of that venture we will test other models of virtual and in person integration in following years. ASOR will continue to reach out to government entities and non-profit organizations to increase participation in the Annual Meeting for scholars from the regions of our research. We will investigate simultaneous translation programs to make the papers more accessible to our non-native English-speaking colleagues.

ASOR recognizes that diversity and equity among participants and attendees of its programs is paramount. Equally important is recruitment of a diverse and inclusive community of scholars into ASOR-related professions. The Annual Meeting as a showcase of ASOR activities provides a potentially powerful recruiting tool. Therefore, ASOR plans to expand existing fellowship programs for registration fees and travel to the Annual Meeting for students and scholars from diverse social groups and economic circumstances. Together with Early Career Scholars and Program Committees we will provide mentorship for new attendees. We will also work to make our virtual platform an intellectually robust and value-added component of the Annual Meeting.

1C. Increase Meeting Revenue

Ensuring the academic rigor of sessions and workshops is the top priority in planning the Annual Meeting. Considerations regarding the meeting's affordability, especially for scholars who might

struggle financially to attend (e.g., students, early career scholars, international scholars, non-tenure-track scholars, independent scholars, alternate career members, retirees, etc.), are a priority as well. Thus, the Annual Meeting is not necessarily financially self-sustaining. Nonetheless, if the Society is to survive to fulfill its other missions, cost effectiveness must be a desideratum.

With these considerations in mind, the ASOR leadership and staff will explore and implement strategies for increasing Annual Meeting revenue: for example, growing Annual Meeting attendance in ways that also enhance the meeting's quality by bringing in papers beyond the geographic regions and chronological periods in which ASOR members traditionally have worked (Bronze Age and Iron Age Levant) to reflect the wider range of research practiced by current members (Central Asia, the Western Mediterranean, Byzantine and Islamic studies). Attendance could also be enhanced by increasing conceptual categories for standing and member-organized sessions (for example, expanding sessions devoted to museums and collections that meet ASOR's standards of professional conduct). Finally, ASOR will continue to develop virtual elements that enhance and broaden participation in future Annual Meetings.

Location and timing are other important drivers of attendance at the Annual Meeting. For ASOR these choices are complicated by the desire of many of our members to meet together with the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), which we have traditionally done to mutual benefit. Recent scheduling difficulties have caused ASOR to re-evaluate the time and location of the Annual Meeting for the next several years. A poll of membership and other constituents revealed substantial support for continued connection with the SBL, but uncovered insurmountable logistical difficulties with a joint venture in some venues chosen by the SBL. Consequently, in 2019 the ASOR Board of Trustees voted to continue to schedule the Annual Meetings generally at the SBL's and ASOR's traditional time (Wednesday-Saturday before the week of Thanksgiving) and to meet in the same city as SBL when hotel and conference facilities allow. However, in years in which the facilities in the same city do not provide financially reasonable or effective accommodations, ASOR will seek another city for its Annual Meeting. This choice will be based on convenience related to international travel hubs, as well as local attractions that would appeal to the academic attendees at the Annual Meeting (such as museums, cultural heritage sites, reception venues, etc.). The Program Committee and ASOR Staff will identify and work closely with local constituencies to arrange special events and visits for attendees between sessions or in the evenings.

1D. Work Toward a Carbon Neutral Annual Meeting

The preservation of cultural heritage is central to ASOR's mission. Climate degradation poses serious threats to cultural monuments in the form of air pollution, fire, and flooding. Travel to the Annual Meeting produces significant carbon emissions—an average of .89 tons of metric tons per year per attendee (Stephens and Herrmann 2019). Therefore, ASOR will explore ways to mitigate these carbon emissions. Strategies include: 1. Meeting in central, hub cities; 2. Moving sections of the program, such as posters, to a virtual-only format; 3. Offering incentives for sustainable travel options (train, carpools); 4. Instituting a carbon offset fee with registration. To that end the President is in the process of establishing an *Ad Hoc* Climate Impact Committee.

Area 2: Cultural Heritage

ASOR Mission Rubric

- *Supporting and participating in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public the historic and cultural heritage of Western Asia and the wider Mediterranean and to raise awareness of its degradation.*

Our Goals: Participate energetically in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public all aspects of the cultural heritage of Western Asia and the Greater Mediterranean Basin and to promote engagement with and understanding of the cultural heritage.

Background

ASOR has always recognized that the protection and preservation of the cultural heritage of its region(s) of study is at the core of its mission and an area of profound interest to its membership. In recent years our active involvement in preservation and education efforts has increased dramatically. Beginning in 2014, ASOR started to work with grants from the US Department of State (DOS) to address the safeguarding of heritage sites, quickly accelerating past the original modest goals for funding. From 2014-2018, ASOR doubled its staff to work within the priorities of the US DOS large grant programs. ASOR enlisted into its projects volunteers from within and beyond its membership in the US, Europe, Middle East, and North Africa. With DOS funding, ASOR teams monitored the condition of cultural heritage sites in Iraq and Syria and assisted in planning and implementing post-conflict recovery. Again, with aid from the DOS, ASOR was able to organize workshops, both at the Annual Meetings and in countries in the Western Mediterranean and especially in North Africa, to counter illicit antiquities trafficking and to advance understanding of cultural heritage, education, and stewardship, especially for children. It also raised funds to bring overseas ASOR cultural heritage workers to the Annual Meeting.

ASOR plans to continue to participate energetically in efforts to protect, preserve, and present to the public all aspects of the cultural heritage of Western Asia and the Greater Mediterranean Basin and to promote engagement with and understanding of cultural heritage. ASOR aims to help carry out transformative work in cultural heritage through local members of the archaeological, conservation, museological, and touristic communities. Building on our core educational strengths we plan to continue these efforts in the following ways:

Actions

2A. Protect and Preserve Cultural Heritage

ASOR, through its Cultural Heritage Initiatives Program, and with the oversight of its Cultural Heritage Committee, will continue to participate in governmental and non- governmental projects to protect and preserve endangered sites, provided such projects are appropriate, effective, financially viable, and can be managed within the resource structure of the organization. While the funding efforts need to be initiated by ASOR, we commit to working with the local communities in the affected areas in order to have the best results. ASOR also commits to encourage complementary initiatives and efforts by its members. We currently fund a small number of preservation projects through the Shepard Urgent Action Grants, inaugurated in April 2020. With the Shepard funds we are able to award two to four grants ranging from \$2,500 to \$10,000 to excavation projects to carry out emergency conservation or stabilization activities at archaeological sites. Our first such project was the successful stabilization of the Tabira Gate at Ashur in collaboration with a team from the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani. We believe ASOR has the expertise to award and oversee more of these programs. We will seek funds from private and governmental sources to sponsor more of such projects.

2B. Promote Heritage Education, Documentation, and Presentation

Educational efforts to our North American membership are a crucial part of the goal to help protect and preserve cultural heritage. ASOR seeks to use its membership together with host-country facilities and contacts to develop resources and programs for site preservation, documentation, and presentation. ASOR commits to promote activities that encourage public engagement with, and advocacy for, the cultural heritage of the regions where we work. We envision these efforts to engage several constituencies. For instance, museums provide important resources for the

preservation of cultural heritage and particularly effective venues for raising public awareness of cultural heritage. ASOR will strive to learn from and contribute to the museum programming of its constituencies. In addition, ASOR will work with local and regional government and non-government agencies, and local communities to ensure the preservation of cultural heritage sites and their utilization as sources of information about cultural heritage for local, national, and international constituencies. Over the past two years we have sponsored, with funds from the US DOS Ambassadors' Program, successful education projects in Libya, including suitcase museum programs at Tripoli, Ghadames, and Derj. We will work to expand such community affiliated projects in North Africa beyond Libya and elsewhere.

Area 3: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

ASOR Mission Rubrics

- Promoting educational opportunities for undergraduates and graduates in institutions of higher education around the world;*
- Developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public;*
- Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching;*
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse.*

Our Goals: Reaching out to and including diverse communities in our activities in meaningful and sustainable ways. In North America, this centers on promoting intersectional diversity with inclusion and equality for BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other underserved communities. Overseas we focus on increasing and serving our international membership and working with local archaeological communities to promote community engagement.

Actions

3A. Increase Membership from BIPOC Communities

ASOR was founded in 1900 by a small group of North American university and seminary scholars, predominantly white and male, focused on studying the Bible in its home territory. Over its 120 years of existence ASOR has expanded its areas of study and its membership. Despite this expansion ASOR remains, as were its founders, a predominantly white organization. We can tally our members of color on a single page. We have made progress on some diversity issues in the recent past. Our gender balance has improved markedly; our international membership has grown, and our foreign members now have full status; and we have worked to empower our early career scholars. Supporting the latter two groups were goals of our 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. Recruiting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to our membership was not a priority then. It must be now. We must make ASOR an organization more in tune with the social justice movements of our day. Changing the ways we teach, designing more open syllabi, asking different research questions beyond empires and great men are all good directions. We have made progress in these directions over the past several decades, but there is more to do. A more diverse membership will move us ahead by asking different questions from different viewpoints.

We have formed a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force to identify systemic barriers to greater inclusion and to study and recommend methods to achieve greater BIPOC membership and participation in ASOR. The Task Force reported to the Board of Trustees in May 2021, and the Board voted to enact the following recommendations: 1. Create a standing DEI Committee, which will sit on the CCC. This will guarantee the DEI concerns are part of monthly discussions among all standing committee chairs and integrated with ASOR's core operations; 2. Keep the

DEI Task Force in operation until December 31, 2021 to assemble the standing DEI committee and formulate its charge.

Meanwhile, we have joined a partnership with Humans Against Poor Scholarship to support a Black Scholars Matter Initiative to bring black high school students to our Annual Meeting in Chicago in 2021. We are also funding 5 Research Stipends for undergraduates or graduate students that identify as African American/Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color. We intend to raise money to continue these programs and expand these programs (see below section 6D).

3B. Present a Public Face More Representative of ASOR's Expanded Mission and Diverse Membership

In 1920 ASOR filed incorporation papers in Washington D.C. with the name American Schools of Oriental Research. This was a change from its original name of American School of Oriental Research and reflected plans to expand from the original single research school in Jerusalem. Today, ASOR is formally affiliated with research centers in Amman, Jerusalem, and Nicosia. Our members conduct research from the Western Mediterranean to Afghanistan and from the Caucasus to the Sudan. The name as framed in 1920 no longer reflects the breadth and diversity of our work. Moreover, the term Oriental is misleading at best and offensive at worst. In 2020, the Board of Trustees, following a poll of the full membership and a report from an ad hoc committee tasked with considering alternatives to ASOR's name, voted to change the name to the American Society of Overseas Research. In the coming years ASOR will develop tag lines and branding materials to better explicate the breadth of our activities. We will also revisit the mission statement and goals published on our website to make sure they are in accord with our current priorities.

3C. Expand our International Activities and Better Serve International Communities

From its beginning ASOR has been an international organization with headquarters in the United States spearheading research in Western Asia and the wider Mediterranean. At its founding in 1900 ASOR supported one overseas research center in Jerusalem, which was named the American School of Oriental Research, later the Jerusalem School and finally, in 1970, the W. F. Albright Institute for Archaeological Research (AIAR). Over the course of the 20th century ASOR founded research centers in Iraq (1923, the Baghdad School, now the Baghdad Committee), Amman (1970, ACOR, the American Center of Research, formerly the American Center of Oriental Research), and Nicosia (1978, CAARI, the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute). In the early 1990s these research centers became financially independent but remained affiliated with ASOR. They, along with 27 research centers worldwide are members of Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), with which ASOR maintains close relations.

ASOR's affiliated Overseas Research Centers are a proven conduit for enhancing our overseas activities. They have long provided critical in-country support for ASOR researchers. Of late, they have developed robust interactive outreach programs with their local communities. As independent entities centered outside North America the ORC's diversity efforts focus on local community outreach rather than on BIPOC issues. ASOR will work with them and their representatives toward increasing BIPOC inclusion in their fellowship and research programs.

ASOR will continue to assign high priority to maintaining and enhancing its relationships with the affiliated ORCs in Cyprus, Israel, and Jordan (CAARI, AIAR, and ACOR). These centers are critical to expanding and serving our overseas membership and to supporting the in-country work of our members. They are at the forefront of our fieldwork, overseas research, and training of graduate students. They also help recruit interested travelers to join and support ASOR. We will endeavor to increase the fellowships that fund study at the centers. We will continue to support their programs within the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), the US DOS and our institutional university members. We will seek to further normalize the use of the

centers for early career scholars during graduate school by encouraging the use of the Annual Meeting to facilitate contact and networking between early career scholars and the international centers and providing access where possible to center directors, fellows, and alumni. We will also explore the establishment of ASOR sponsored programming (annual lecture or symposium) at each center and explore with them other mutually beneficial programs on which to partner. Travel and overseas fieldwork have been curtailed by the 2020/2021 lockdowns and the Centers have suffered financially. Once travel restraints are lifted we will reconstitute officer and member tours of field projects and encourage members travel to the centers as can be accommodated by them.

ASOR also seeks to develop stronger relationships with ORCs located in other regions where ASOR members work: for example, the American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARII), the American Academy in Rome (AAR), the American Institute for Maghrib Studies (AIMS), the American Institute for Yemeni Studies (AIYS), the American Institute of Iranian Studies (AIrS), the American Research Center in Egypt (ARCE), the American Research Institute in Turkey (ARIT), the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus (ARISC), the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (ASCSA), and the Palestinian American Research Center (PARC). We will work with CAORC to facilitate relationships with these ORCs. We look to pair posting information about them on the ASOR website to alert ASOR members to the resources of these various centers, as well as informing the ORCs about each other's resources as they relate to ASOR.

3D. Enhance Efforts to Secure the Success of the Next Generation

Sustaining a healthy stream of incoming members and emerging scholars is essential to ASOR's survival, diversity, and success. The threats to programs dedicated to the study of Western Asia and the wider Mediterranean in contemporary institutions of higher education affect most profoundly and alarmingly the career prospects of scholars within these programs, especially the scholars of the next generation. ASOR is thus committed to doing all it can to advance the careers of these scholars. As funding for humanities research continues to dwindle ASOR is committed to finding funds to support essential student training in field research. Excavation scholarships are an important way ASOR reaches out to undergraduates and graduate students. ASOR will continue its engagement with those students by increasing excavation fellowship award amounts as necessary for inflation and by cultivating a fellowship "alumni" community. We will also facilitate career development within the US and Canada. For example, in addition to raising funding support to help early career scholars and students participate in ASOR's Annual Meeting (above), ASOR will look for ways to increase their involvement in the Annual Meeting as part of their training and development as academics. In particular, ASOR will explore ways of enhancing graduate students' and early career scholars' engagement in modes of research presentations (poster presentations, roundtable discussions, webinars) that are emerging alongside traditional paper presentations (above). We will also continue to seek to expand participation in our governing structures by widely advertising open positions on committees and accepting self-nominations.

ASOR will also endeavor to increase the number of early career scholars who serve as session chairs, perhaps pairing them with more established chairs to increase mentoring and networking opportunities. ASOR also stands ready to support its early career scholars at their home institutions by, for example, writing in support of junior faculty members' reappointment and tenure cases. At the same time, ASOR recognizes that faculty positions in institutions of higher education are no longer as likely a career option for scholars in Western Asian and wider Mediterranean studies. ASOR thus seeks opportunities to support the professional development of scholars who may not pursue, or who are no longer pursuing, a career as a faculty member in an institution of higher education. Building on our successful standing session on careers outside the academy (organized by Susan Ackerman and Emily Bonney) ASOR will continue to present programming on various career tracks at its Annual Meeting: for example, NGOs, government agencies, IT,

consulting, cultural resource management, museum work, and publishing and journalism. ASOR will also invest in strategic partnerships that benefit its early career scholars and membership as a whole by providing training and opportunities for enhanced credentials. For example, webinars on pedagogy and educational technology will continue to be developed in conjunction with the Early Career Scholars Committee, as well as training from partners such as the Council on Undergraduate Research and Forum on Education Abroad. ASOR will also explore using its various publications as venues for discussing careers outside the academy.

Finally, ASOR recognizes that the “next generation” includes not just current graduate students and recently minted Ph.D.’s, but undergraduates and K-12 students. We will reach out to these constituencies by partnering with organizations such as Archaeology in the Community (AITC), a Washington D.C. based organization, and adding experts on such activities to our staff.

Area No. 4: Publications

ASOR Mission Rubrics

- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues*
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse;*
- Upholding the highest academic standards in interdisciplinary research and teaching.*

Our Goals: Produce a high quality, widely-read spectrum of publications. Enhance ASOR’s monograph publishing program and develop new publishing venues appropriate to the 21st century.

Actions

4A. Expand the Monograph Publication Program

ASOR reaffirms its historic commitment to monograph publishing, as this investment in knowledge production and knowledge dissemination is an important service ASOR provides to its members and to our discipline. As part of this commitment and investment, ASOR will continue to publish three monograph series—the Annual of ASOR (AASOR), the Archaeological Reports Series (ARS), and the Journal of Cuneiform Studies Supplement Series—and will seek to resume publishing the ASOR Books Series. We recognize the need to clearly articulate the missions of ARS and the Annual, and identify new priorities in the monograph publication program.

In order to facilitate members’ publication efforts, ASOR will seek funding from private donations, membership fundraisers, and grants to subsidize subventions for members who publish in ASOR’s monograph series. The Board has recently agreed to use part of the accumulated gains from the Board-designated Opportunity Fund as a way to provide a base level of funding for these subventions.

4B. Exploit New Frontiers in Publishing, including Digital Publication

ASOR recognizes that digital publications will be a key element of ASOR’s publication strategy moving forward. In order to facilitate this, we plan to:

1. Enact and help facilitate others to follow the guidelines set out in the ASOR Digital Media Policies for ASOR Publications.
2. Enhance our monograph series through increasing their digital (e-book) presence as well

as their inclusion in aggregate library holdings. We will also explore ways to make our back catalogue of monographs available in digital format, whether as a money-making venture or open access.

3. Articulate an open access statement that respects the rights of authors, the value of the work of publishers, and acknowledges the systemic inequalities that lead to differential access to scholarly work.
4. Increase our digital presence. Work with our journal vendors to increasingly use digital support platforms to move material more suitable for an online presence there. Increase the interoperability between the digital Levantine Ceramics Project and other ASOR publications.

4C. Situate our Publications to Appeal to a Wider Audience by:

1. Increasing the archaeological content of *JCS*, without undermining *BASOR*.
2. Helping *Near Eastern Archaeology (NEA)* find a greater audience beyond ASOR's membership.
3. Increasing the publicity surrounding *ANE Today* in order to attract more subscribers and, concomitantly, more ASOR members.

4D. Address the *BASOR* and *JCS* Backlogs

Both *JCS* and *BASOR* have developed significant backlogs of submitted articles in recent years. This prompts authors to take excellent articles to other journals. We will explore the possibilities of expanding the number of pages or issues in both journals as well as considering a supplementary *BASOR* series.

4E. Increase the Diversity of our Editorial Boards and our Contributors

There is often a natural lag time between changes in membership and representation of those changes in publications and leadership. ASOR is attentive to this lag and has taken active steps to enlist a diverse range of board members and contributors for our journals. We have been successful in broadening our range but must remain proactive in order to maintain and improve our progress on these fronts.

Area 5: Public Outreach

ASOR Mission Rubrics

- Developing engaging programs of outreach for the general public;*
- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues.*

Our Goals: Expand our outreach efforts to, and engagement with, the general public.

Actions

5A. Strengthen Current and Future Outreach Efforts

Public service and outreach are central to ASOR's mission. Our Board of Trustees proudly includes trustees whose professional expertise lies elsewhere than Western Asia and wider Mediterranean but also play key roles in ASOR's leadership. In addition, all ASOR programs are open to the public, and our members regularly make themselves available to serve the public through lectures, advising, and other activities. Moreover, ASOR offers several online and print publications designed specifically to address the general public's interests in Western Asia and the wider Mediterranean world.

ASOR is committed to expanding its outreach efforts. In August of 2020 we launched a new webinar program tailored to the public. We have produced 25 webinars up through November 2021. All have been well attended with an average registration of 189 and a peak of 266, with the numbers growing steadily. Through sponsorships and fees these have generated between \$1,000-\$2,500 in support of further outreach efforts. These are proving to be an effective gateway program to introduce new audiences to ASOR. Since their inception our associate members have increased by almost 25%--from 335 to 442. We plan to continue and expand this successful program, which in synergy with Friends of ASOR is highly effective outreach tool. We will be exploring multi-day webinarathons.

We are also investigating ways to reach out to K-12 communities in the US, working with Archaeology in the Community. AITC promotes and facilitates the study and public understanding of archaeological heritage through informal educational programs, providing hands-on learning, professional development, and community events. We envision the James F. Strange Center serving as a venue for community events, which will bring ASOR into closer connection with the local communities. We also to plan to explore joint programs with the nearby Smithsonian Institution, where CAORC is headquartered.

Area 6: Supporting the Work of Our Members

ASOR Mission Rubrics

- Fostering original research, exploration, and archaeological fieldwork;*
- Encouraging scholarship in the region's languages, texts, traditions, and histories;*
- Disseminating research results and conclusions in a timely manner, through a robust publication program, annual meeting, and other venues;*
- Adhering to the highest ethical standards of scholarship and public discourse.*

Our Goals: Increase the fellowships, grants, and other forms of support available to individual ASOR members and to the faculty, students, and staff of institutional member schools. Foster cross generational and cross community mentorship opportunities.

Actions

6A. Assess and Modify Membership Benefits for the Twenty-First Century

ASOR thrives because of its dedicated individual and institutional members, whom ASOR strives to support by providing them with tangible benefits. Historically, these benefits have included subscriptions to ASOR journals. Now, given the ready access many ASOR members have to electronic resources such as JSTOR, and even more so in a world of Open Access, this benefit is no longer as attractive. As the value of the journal subscriptions has decreased, the research expenses, particularly for overseas fieldwork, have increased and at the same time federal funding for such projects is dwindling. ASOR must thus identify and provide new and different membership benefits to sustain and grow its individual and institutional membership base, including significant new fellowships and grants and more on-line resources as described in the sections below.

6B. Fund More Fieldwork and Fieldwork-Related Research Grants

ASOR has excelled in developing fellowship funds that support students engaging in archaeological fieldwork and related activities. Since the Shirlee Meyers/G. Ernest Wright Fellowships were first funded in 2007, ASOR members have generously donated funds for 8 more excavation participation programs, among the most recent are the Steinmetz Fellowships for

Active/Reserve Military or Veterans and the Stevan B. Dana Fellowships for Hazor. From 2007 to 2021, ASOR has awarded more than \$990,000 to 740 researchers and students with mini-grants for scholarly research, annual meeting travel, excavation projects, and dig scholarships through our grant programs. Beginning in 2022, the dramatic increase in named endowments will enable ASOR to award about \$150,000 per year, and we anticipate seeing that level of support grow. Our dig scholarship endowments now (in 2021) total more than \$1,350,000. Our endowments for excavation projects are now (in 2021) just over \$500,000. Excavation is expensive, and with reduced federal support in recent years, ASOR needs to raise more funds to support its members' field work, documentation, and site preservation. These funds can serve to facilitate key yet discrete activities in projects: for example, funds to purchase a special piece of equipment, to pay the fees for otherwise unfunded laboratory tests, or to cover the cost of hiring a specialist. Our goal for the next five years is to increase these endowments for excavation projects by at least 150% (to more than \$1,250,000).

ASOR also seeks to raise funds for grants to support archaeological fieldwork in other ways: for example, grants for subsidizing publication subventions, especially for ASOR monographs (above); grants that help subsidize pre-publication work; and grants demonstrating ASOR's commitment to the communities and countries in which ASOR members work by supporting field work projects that engage surrounding communities or otherwise enhance ASOR's engagement with local or national interests. Our most recent venture in this area is the creation of the ASOR Lawrence T. Geraty Community Archaeology Endowment, designed to heighten awareness of cultural heritage by engaging and facilitating partnerships with local communities in heritage protection and community archaeology. We have also launched the Shepard Urgent Action Grant program with annual contributions, and we aim to create an endowment for this program during the period of this strategic plan.

ASOR has been particularly successful recently in working with the US DOS to carry out educational cultural heritage projects in Libya. ASOR's increased commitment to cultural heritage protection and preservation also suggests the development of other grants to protect and preserve sites that are at risk (see above section 2).

6C. Create Other Fellowships and Grants that Support ASOR Members

ASOR seeks to continue to raise funds for fellowships and grants to support the work of its members in areas beyond fieldwork-related projects, such as (i) "travel to collections" grants (e.g., funding to conduct work in museum collections; fellowships to work in the ASOR archives); (ii) grants to support travel to and registration for the Annual Meeting, especially for junior scholars and international scholars, as well as for non-tenure-track scholars, independent scholars, and similar scholars who otherwise lack the funds to attend; and (iii) grants to support publication of non-fieldwork related scholarship (e.g., publications in the reinvigorated ASOR Books monograph series). These are programs we have begun but need to grow.

6D. Create Fellowships to Recruit and Nurture Members from BIPOC and other Underserved Communities

ASOR received a \$150,000 challenge gift in 2021 that will serve as the cornerstone of a targeted campaign to raise \$250,000 to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within our research community. ASOR plans to use \$200,000 from this campaign to establish a permanent endowment that will generate \$10,000 per year to support research scholarships, internships, and travel fellowships dedicated to BIPOC students. These fellowships will be a foundation for future efforts and will be a tangible sign of ASOR's commitment to long-term change.

6E. Develop In-House Resources in Support of Archaeological Fieldwork

To encourage the proper archiving of fieldwork records, and to meet the challenge of digital

archiving and data recording, ASOR will work to develop and promulgate standards for archiving documentary records in all forms. In order that these archives be of maximal use, and maximally accessible, ASOR will also develop a database documenting the location of fieldwork records, especially the records of ASOR-affiliated projects. ASOR has administrative and fieldwork archives that go back to its foundation in 1900. We thought we had found a home for them at the Harvard Semitic Museum, but now we must take them back. We will endeavor to safeguard them at the James F. Strange Center. In addition, ASOR needs to develop web resources to facilitate the work of fieldwork projects by, for example, providing a place for directors to list fieldwork projects that are looking for volunteers, or by providing directors with advice on best practices about running a field school and about the increasingly important issue of site curation (including long-term site preservation and public presentation). ASOR's website will also be expanded to provide links to the guidelines and regulations of various Departments of Antiquities that are available on the Internet. ASOR's web resources will also serve all ASOR members and the members of "Friends of ASOR" by functioning as a clearinghouse for information about archaeological fieldwork in the Near East and wider Mediterranean world.

This concludes our survey of the six key areas of ASOR's mission and our five year goals for them. There remains one perennial role that cannot be overestimated. This is to stand as a champion for our mission at all times. ASOR is acutely aware that in contemporary institutions of higher education, programs dedicated to humanistic studies, particularly outside of the US, find themselves increasingly under threat. The budgetary constraints and travel restrictions brought on by the 2020/2021 COVID Pandemic have exacerbated an already alarming decline in the support of humanistic disciplines. Now, more than ever, ASOR must serve as a strong advocate on behalf of academic colleagues whose departments face cuts by their institutions' administrations.

ASOR will also seek to promote the study of Western Asia and the Greater Mediterranean Basin by regularly and consistently engaging the national humanities community. For example, ASOR will work with the National Humanities Alliance to advocate on behalf of the field of our field and to assert the overall value of the humanities. ASOR will in addition increase its involvement in public advocacy in the federal and international arena: for example, by speaking out in support of (i) continued or increased NSF funding available to the social sciences (and so to archaeology); (ii) continued or increased funding for the ECA grants that help support ASOR's affiliated ORCs; and (iii) continued or increased NEH funding available for humanities research. ASOR also will speak out, as appropriate, about funding decisions that negatively affect our mission: for example, the recent NEH decision to cease funding overseas summer institutes and seminars. In undertaking these efforts, ASOR will seek to work together with other organizations that share these same goals: for example, scholarly organizations such as the AIA, SAA, MESA, AOS, and SBL and like-minded federations such as CAORC. ASOR will also seek to work with individual scholars whose interests intersect with those of ASOR: for example, ASOR will seek to engage cultural resource specialists in discussions about ASOR's work to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage.

Part II. The James F. Strange Center and Organizational Infrastructure to Support Programs

Background

The ASOR office has undergone extraordinary changes in the last four years, changes totally unforeseen in the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan. These are transformative to the way we work and demand rethinking both the mission of the office and how it can most efficiently and effectively serve the membership. These changes began in May 2017 when we abruptly lost our rent-free

office space at Boston University and had to downsize to two transitory offices in Boston. Over the next six months ASOR's Board made the bold dual decisions to relocate to the District of Columbia area and purchase our own headquarters. The decision to relocate was motivated by our desire that ASOR's operations be situated in a location better for public outreach and engagement, including engagement with governmental agencies and NGOs. The decision to purchase our own building was motivated by our desire that ASOR be independent of changes in institutional priorities and/or leadership at any given academic institution.

Two years later, ASOR purchased and moved into a building in Alexandria, VA, now known as the James F. Strange Center. Subsequent generous member donations allowed us to retire the building debt. Based on current pledges, we anticipate that by 2024, ASOR will have a \$500,000 board-designated building fund to support building expenses and basic maintenance. This fund will ensure that the Strange Center will not be a long-term drain on operational revenue.

Having made this move and commitment to building ownership, we must now consider how ASOR's office and the corresponding infrastructure can be used to do more than provide ASOR with "free rent"; specifically, how can ASOR best utilize the Strange Center to facilitate the sorts of community engagements and interactions with governmental agencies and other relevant agencies and organizations that we conceived of at the time we purchased the building?

The second change came about due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, less than one year after moving into the Strange Center, our staff was forced to work from home for an 18-month period. Although we carried out, and even expanded, our operations while working remotely, we concluded that the quality of our programs and activities is greater when the staff works collaboratively in person in the same physical space.

Now that we have returned to the Strange Center, we must develop new best practices and aspirations for building, staff, and remote infrastructure (sections 7A, 7B, and 7C below).

Actions

7A. Develop the Strange Center to best serve our various programs

Certainly, the central purpose for the ASOR office is to be the physical location where the administrative staff works, overseeing our membership services, fellowship programs, development, and cultural heritage programs. It additionally serves as a location for in-person leadership meetings and for the working committees staffed by more than 240 member volunteers. But ASOR also aspires to utilize our Washington, D.C. area home to support a broader outreach program and engagement with the public—both in the U.S. and abroad. To do so, ASOR should aspire to implement policies and procedures that will foster the most comprehensive and effective work. These include:

- *Configure the Strange Center as a multipurpose space designed to comfortably accommodate staff, outreach, and research programs.*
- *Maintain and upgrade office technology and systems, including (i) computer hardware and software (including cloud-based solutions where possible), (ii) databases and database integration, (iii) the website, and (iv) other technology-related processes and procedures identified over time with a view towards automating as many processes and systems as possible, empowering staff to work as efficiently as possible, and maximizing outreach, cultural heritage preservation, ASOR core programs, and fundraising capabilities.*

The actions we envision undertaking are:

1. The modest remodeling needed to create excellent office space for our staff to support our

- core programs.
2. More significant renovation of the first floor of the Strange Center to create an ADA compliant multi-purpose meeting and exhibition space for cultural heritage preservation, educational seminars, community outreach and engagement, and other presentations and gatherings. The renovations also should create workspace appropriate for future ASOR employees, so ASOR may engage in diverse hiring without consideration of disabilities. The space also could be used for community outreach events that foster celebration of cultural heritage from diaspora communities in the regions where ASOR supports research (e.g., the wider Mediterranean, North Africa, and the Middle East). The kitchen also should be renovated to integrate it into the proposed multi-purpose meeting space, so that ASOR may self-cater such events.
 3. Upgrade storage facilities as appropriate for ASOR's archives and other core records. Recognizing that the creation of a research center for archaeological archives is beyond the space and environmental control limitations of the Strange Center, we must create cost-effective and efficient, possibly off-site, storage solutions. An *ad hoc* Archives Committee is being formed to evaluate our options.
 4. Develop and implement a comprehensive facilities preventive repair and maintenance program, including low-cost and no-cost energy-efficiency and sustainability measures. Develop and implement building security and emergency plans.
 5. Create an Advisory Board comprised of local ASOR members in the Washington, D.C. area and faculty, administrators, and leaders from local education institutions and non-profits with whom ASOR might interact to mutual advantage.

7B. Staff Development at the Strange Center

ASOR currently has 7 full-time and 7 part-time employees. Nine employees work at least part time at the Strange Center and are supervised by an on-site Executive Director. In addition, we employ 9 off-site contractors—8 journal editors and an accounting service.

To recruit, retain, and nurture excellent staff we must endeavor to:

- *Value each employee by recognizing excellence, providing annual formal feedback, providing informal feedback on a regular basis, and providing and promoting regular opportunities for peer and external recognition and advancement.*
- *Foster an atmosphere of professionalism and constituent service by promoting staff training and modifying, properly equipping, and maintaining work areas and office technology to maximize efficiency and provide a safe, productive, and positive work environment.*

As noted in the background section above, during the Covid 19 pandemic, all staff have been working remotely since March of 2020. Although we have been able to maintain our core services and even expand in some areas, we believe the quality of our programs and activities will be higher when the staff works collaboratively in person. At the same time, we realize that these 18 months of remote work have changed work practices in ways we cannot fully comprehend until we see them. But we do not want to preclude the continued remote administration of specific programs (e.g., editing our academic journals and staging and managing the Annual Meeting). We also want to facilitate the interaction and collaboration with staff from our affiliated overseas research centers housed in the Strange Center.

Accordingly, once the staff returns to work at the Strange Center in the third quarter of 2021, we will, once again, engage in focused staff development by, *inter alia*:

1. Being aware of changing needs as our strategies are implemented, identifying new staff roles and changes in existing staff roles, training current staff, and adding temporary and/or new permanent personnel as needed to accomplish our missions.
2. Providing and promoting regular opportunities to succeed and for peer recognition.
3. Modifying, properly equipping, and maintaining work areas and office technology to maximize efficiency *and provide a safe, productive, professional, and positive work environment*.
4. Actively promoting staff training, licensing, and certifications.
5. Expanding staff capability and capacity.
6. Providing staff with the tools to communicate timely and productively with current and prospective donors, members, volunteers, the public, government and NGO employees, grant decisionmakers, other stakeholders, and themselves.
7. Continuing the annual performance reviews conducted by the Executive Director and overseen by the Personnel Committee (which collectively will also serve as the personnel ombudsmen).

7C. Remote Infrastructure

The move to remote member interactions necessitated by the COVID-19 global pandemic has only reinforced the need for ASOR to have excellent online meeting and data management systems. ASOR recognizes that online and web support systems will expand even further as we emerge from the global pandemic. Our membership has been forced to develop its capacity for online meetings and research, and, therefore, ASOR must look for ways to expand our support in this space within our budget constraints.

Because the costs for online systems can be large, our focus will be on practical solutions that support our members and core operations. We will give preference to cloud-based solutions that do not necessitate ASOR investing in hardware that will become outdated in a few years. We also will seek solutions that can be utilized with current staffing and supplemented by IT contractors.