

**AAR/WR Section Chairs Meeting**  
**22 March 2009**  
**Santa Clara University • Santa Clara, California**

Present: Norrie Palmer, Susan Maloney, Hester Oberman, Franz Metcalf, Jason Smick, Toby Johnson, Emily Bennett, Arisika Razak, Rebecca Moore, Paula McGee, Daniel Ramirez, Ann Wertman, Emily Silverman, Jennifer Veninga, Scott Lucas, Jon R. Stone, Jennifer Rycenga, Karen Crozier, Siroj Sorajjakool, Souad T. Ali, Marianne Delaporte, Sarah Robinson, David Rosenberg-Wohl, Bob Hurteau, Mutombo Nkulu-N'engha, Brooke Schedneck.

- I AAR/WR will meet at Arizona State University March 13-15, 2010. UC Riverside is a possible venue for 2011. The possibility of rotating AAR/WR meetings between three fixed venues was discussed, and considered a good idea. Arisika Razak noted AAR/WR's commitment to not meeting at locations that discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.
- II The AAR/WR's relationship to WECSOR was briefly discussed. The commitment to meet at the same time as the regional SBL and ASOR was reaffirmed.
- III Various concerns were raised:
  - a) Double-scheduling was a problem in planning the program for 2009. If the OP3 online system becomes available we will use it.
  - b) It was asked why participants are only allowed to present one paper at the meeting. Various answers provided included: access, diversity, venue size, logistics.
  - c) A discussion of Section Chair qualifications ensued. The Board of Directors had recommended the following criteria:

Terminal degree/doctoral candidate/competence in the field  
Scholarly, or other appropriate track record (as evidenced by C.V.)  
Participation in AAR/WR

Section Chairs are nominated to the AAR/WR Executive Board, which reviews and accepts nominations (per current bylaws).
  - d) Protocol for recruiting Section Chairs was discussed. Concern about the quality of academic offerings at AAR/WR was expressed, as was concern about the lack of participation of senior scholars when graduate students or others are chairing sections. The Mission Statement was read out loud to indicate the purpose of the organization:

**The Mission of the American Academy of Religion/Western Region is:**

To promote the academic study of religion in California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii and the Pacific Islands;

To mentor students in the profession of religious studies;

To create opportunities for research, dialogue, and engagement for religious studies scholars;

To foster awareness of the importance of religious studies for understanding contemporary issues.

Currently about one-half of Section Chairs are “senior scholars”. It was asked if we could obtain a list of all AAR members who reside in the Western Region in order to recruit chairs and participants. Regional Representatives should be actively contacting scholars in their regions.

- e) Better orientation of Section Chairs is needed. Information should be put on the AAR/WR website.
  - f) It was asked if abstracts of papers could be made available: either online or in the program booklet. This will be investigated.
  - g) A clear list of terms of office of the Section Chairs was requested.
  - h) The mission statement of each section should be included in the Call for Papers. This should be a two- or three-sentence statement of purpose (like that which appears with national AAR sections, groups, and consultations).
- IV Susan Maloney gave the RED (Regionally-Elected Director) Report. She noted changes occurring at the national AAR level, listing 1) the profession; 2) technology; and 3) the economy as national concerns. She encouraged people to propose wildcard sessions at the national meeting. She said that Cheryl Kirk Duggan is the new Chair of the AAR’s Publications Standing Committee. She also encouraged people to apply for the \$5000 grants available for regional projects from the national AAR.

Meeting adjourned 2:00 p.m.

Notes compiled by Paula McGee and Rebecca Moore, 17 April 2009.