

AAR/WR  
General Membership Meeting  
Monday, March 11, 2013, 1-2:00  
Notes

The 2013 AAR/WR General membership meeting was called to order at 1:05 by Souad Ali, AAR/WR President. 30 people were in attendance.

#### 1. Welcome

AAR/WR President Souad Ali welcomed everyone to the meeting, thanked them for their interest, and reviewed the recent presidential succession line, acknowledging the recent contributions to the region of Rebecca Moore, Franz Metcalf, and Susan Maloney.

#### 2. Report on items covered on agenda for AAR/WR Board Meeting on 3/9/13

Prof. Ali briefly reviewed the items that had been addressed at its meeting earlier on the weekend:

- Board positions to be filled
- Financial report and budget
- Future AAR/WR meeting locations and dates
- AAR/WR website
- Review of the policies and procedures document
- AAR/WR mission statement
- Unit Issues and Call for papers
- Conference Manager's reflections in first year
- AAR/WR members' publications on website project

Prof. Ali invited people in attendance to contact any AAR/WR Board Members with questions about these items. She also noted that some of these items are on the agenda for today's meeting.

#### 3. AAR/WR 2014 Conference

Prof. Ali announced that plans were underway for the 2014 conference, which will be hosted by Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, March 7-9, 2014.. She explained that the annual conference site rotates over a three year cycle, that in 2015 it would be in northern California, where it is expected SCU will be the host, and in 2016 it would return to Arizona, where it is expected ASU would be host.

#### 4. AAR/WR Board Positions

Prof. Ali explained that at its meeting the Board took action on some of the vacant positions on the Board. Given our interest in returning to ASU for the 2015 conference, Prof. Ali was appointed to a three year term as the Arizona/Nevada representative. The Board postponed action on the Northern California representative to provide an opportunity to for nominations, and opted to hold elections for one of the graduate student representative positions (next item) and two positions on the executive committee per our operating agreement: vice president and program chair, which term takes effect immediately

following the conference, and the vice-president elect, who would assume that position's responsibilities following the 2014 conference.

*Vice President Confirmation.* By a voice vote, the membership confirmed the vote taken last year to elect Emily Silverman Vice President and Program Chair Elect. Members voiced their gratitude to her for assuming this leadership responsibility. At their request Emily provided a preview of her thoughts about a theme for next year's conference: Retrieving the subjugated voices and marginalized voices in our fields or specialties within religious studies.

*Vice President Elect Election.* A slate of the three candidates who had agreed to be on the ballot after being nominated was circulated to the membership. The candidates were:

- Dyron Daugherty, Associate Professor, Religious Studies, Pepperdine University (California)
- Hester Oberman, Adjunct Professor, Religious Studies, University of Arizona
- Regina Pfeiffer, Assistant Professor, Religious Studies, Chaminade University (Hawaii)

A paper ballot was used for this election. Prof. Hester Oberman received the majority of the votes cast. Prof. Ali acknowledged the generosity of all three candidates for standing for election, and explained that Dr. Oberman's term of office would commence following the 2014 annual conference.

#### 5. Graduate Student Representative to the Board

The AAR/WR operating agreement stipulates that up to three graduate student representatives (from different geographical areas) can serve on the Board. Kristy Solominski (UC Santa Barbara) nominated Jodi Van Ann, a graduate student in religious studies from ASU, to serve as a graduate student representing the Arizona and Nevada region. The general membership voted unanimously to elect her to this position. Her two year term took effect immediately following the 2013 conference.

#### 6. Open Floor to Membership Discussion

After working through the formal agenda, Prof. Ali opened the remainder of the meeting to the general membership. The following items were raised and discussed.

Coca Cola Products. One participant recommended that the AAR/WR not have Coca Cola products at our events. That recommendation was referred to the executive committee of the board.

Graduate Student Professional Development. Kristi Solominski announced two items she recently developed: the graduate student Facebook page (Student Members of the AAR Western Region) and a graduate student resource site, Scholars in Progress (<http://scholarsinprogress.wordpress.com/>). All members were invited to check out either resource.

Website Revision. Conference Coordinator Sara Frykenberg explained that the Board had appointed an ad hoc committee (Franz Metcalf, Jonathan Lee and herself) and had charged it to investigate ways to re-design the region's website. Suggestions they will be exploring

include ways to make maintenance and revision less onerous for one person and increased functionality. Sara also acknowledged the fine work Tim Helton has done to design and maintain the current AAR/WR website. The members present at the meeting joined Prof. Ali in thinking Tim for his work on the current website, which will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

AAR/WR Journal Blog. Vice President/Program Chair Emily Silverstein explained her interest in creating a journal blog for individuals in the region to present summaries of their research. She believes it would be a good forum in which to demonstrate the edgy and exciting scholarship members are developing. She also suggested it would be easy to start with, for instance, unit chairs encouraging presenters from the current conference to post to the blog. In the discussion that followed members present suggested that the blog could be organized according to units, or be something like *Religion Dispatches* (but monthly vs. daily), that people could link it to their own pages, that it should reflect our west coast ethos, that it could relate to Dirk's interest in creating an online bibliography of what people in our region publish, that it would provide visibility for the regional and draw people to our website, and that it could deepen our conversations and encourage collaboration. Emily invited interested members to see her at end of meeting to exchange e-mails.

New Members. Prof.. Ali invited new members to introduce themselves, and three did: Irena G, who is interested in relocating to west cost for graduate studies; Kristy X, a graduate student at ASU, and Michael Crabb, also a graduate student at ASU

Regional Coordinator. At Prof. Ali's invitation, Dirk van der Host spoke about his experience and expectations for Regional Coordinator position. He invited people to contact him with issues, and noted he was still on a learning curve.

Outgoing Past President. At Prof. Ali's request for his perspective on the region, Franz Metcalf observed that we have increased registration at our conferences (but noted that some people presented without registering!) which is a good sign. He believes the AAR/WR is healthier now than when he started on the executive committee three years ago, and stated he was impressed by the creative online presence and engagement among graduate students. He indicated we are getting better organized and looks forward to working on the draft policy file in the coming months.

Veteran Leader: At Prof.. Ali's invitation, Susan Maloney, who just stepped down as regional coordinator after six years, thanked everyone for showing up to general membership meeting. From her perspective she believes we are in a good place: we have a history of institutional support for the conference that has been built by developing networks and relationships (but we should not take them for granted!), we have a strong executive committee in place, we are unique among the regions in that we have awards for students and for independent scholars, and we are adept at adapting to interests and needs (we are an accordion that allows us to expand or contract). She sees the need to open the

conference to individuals beyond religious studies academics, but she counseled we make sure we do so without losing or compromising academic rigor. She encouraged individual members to write to the institutions hosting our annual conferences, to thank them for support for AAR/WR (the names for ASU are in the program). Prof. Ali indicated that AAR National Director of Finance and Administration Deborah Minor would be writing thank you's to those individuals, as will the executive committee.

2014 Conference Plenary. Incoming president Boo Riley asked people to send to him suggestions for plenary speakers for the 2014 conference in Southern California

Online Voting. Franz Metcalf brought up for discussion the possibility of online voting in the region, observing that currently our operating agreement does not have provision for this. In the ensuing discussion, members noted that the AAR National does this, it seems like a great way to engage more people in the region, and that it could be pegged to our website re-design and other steps for a greater online presence. Some voiced concerns about the timeliness of some elections and the possibility that the 30 or so members who do vote at our general membership meetings might not vote on line later. It was suggested that we could restrict voting to people who were actually registered for the conference. It was observed that other items besides board position elections could be sent to the general membership for voting. It was also suggested we need to do more to educate the general membership about the Board and board responsibilities. The executive board will continue that discussion.