

At-Large Director

At-Large Directors serve a three-year term. At-Large Directors have no particular brief, but may, as needed, be tasked by the Board of Directors with various duties. They are charged to represent the needs and interests of the general AAR membership to the Board of Directors. At-Large Directors have a presence on the Finance, Program, and Planning Committees.

Justin McDaniel

Justin McDaniel (PhD from Harvard University's department of Sanskrit and Indian studies, 2003) teaches religious studies at the University of Pennsylvania. McDaniel's research foci include Lao, Thai, Pali, and Sanskrit literature, and Buddhist history.

His first book *Gathering Leaves and Lifting Words* (University of Washington Press, 2008) is on the history of Buddhist monastic education in Laos and Thailand. It won the Harry Benda Award for the best first book in Southeast Asian studies. His second book, *The Lovelorn Ghost and the Magical Monk* (Columbia University Press, 2011), is a study on material culture and ritual in Thai Buddhism. McDaniel's recent publications appear in the *Aséanie*, *Journal of Religion and Film*, *Modern Asia Studies*, and *Material Religion*, among others. He has also written articles on children and Buddhism, palm-leaf manuscript research, and liturgical studies.

McDaniel has received grants from the NEH, Mellon, Rockefeller, and Fulbright Foundations, and the Social Science Research Council. He is the coeditor of the *Buddhism Compass* and *Journal of Lao Studies* and is also the Chair of the Southeast Asian Studies Council of the Association of Asian Studies. McDaniel has won teaching and advising awards at Harvard University, Ohio University, and the University of California, Riverside.

Statement on the AAR

My relationship with the American Academy of Religion has been, can we say, rocky. Although I have been a member since 1996, I have missed several AAR conferences because of research trips or because, more recently, I have been somewhat disillusioned by the direction the AAR has taken with regards to my own field and area studies in general. As for my own field of Buddhist studies, because many historians and material culture folk spend their time going to area studies and Buddhist studies conferences, the AAR has been bereft of a diversity of panels over the past several years. I have heard similar rumblings from colleagues in Islamic, Hindu, and African religions. This is something that I hope will change. I will encourage links with other national and international associations like the Middle Eastern Studies Association, Association of Asian Studies, and the like. Moreover, unlike many of these area studies associations, the AAR has remained largely a North American organization and does not draw many scholars and students from Africa, Europe, Latin America, or Asia. Working closely with the African Association for the Study of Religions, the International Association of Buddhist Studies, and the European Association of Southeast Asian Studies, I hope to advertise the AAR's work more regularly with their members and encourage jointly-sponsored panels, more diverse roundtables, international book discussions, and even international book prize committees.

Besides these somewhat ambitious and broadly defined goals; specifically, I am concerned with the ways in which the AAR will encourage new members to join in the future. First, the AAR needs to make its Annual Meeting more affordable for students and junior faculty to participate. This means lowering the fees for students and junior scholars, offering travel grants, and partnering with hotel and conference centers that are affordable. I also want to encourage more participation with local universities and graduate student associations so that dormitory, guest housing, and shared apartments are made available for low costs to attendees. This agenda might suggest that I am encouraging more talks given by graduate students at the AAR. This is not the case. In fact, I believe that over the past few years, the AAR's Annual Meeting has become somewhat of a two-tier system with many panels dominated by graduate students and drawing small crowds and many "star-professor" panels that have become so large as to make discussion and debate difficult. I want to work to adjust the Program Committee's policy to give preference to panels that show a diversity of age, rank, and institutional background. I would also encourage a greater diversity of disciplines on panels so that art historians, anthropologists, ethnomusicologists, philologists, and economists could start listening to each other, instead of being confined to a somewhat restricted and outdated "Consultation," "Section," "Group," and "Seminar" system. Conferences should encourage us to listen to alternative voices and force us to ask new questions, not just meet up with old friends and see familiar faces staring back at us when we speak.

It is not all negative though! I am running for this position because I "grew up" as a student and work-in-progress-scholar with the AAR and care deeply about its future. I believe that it is still the best place to tackle the issues facing the scholarly and increasingly public study of religion. For example, one important role the AAR could play is supporting religious studies departments that are under threat at universities facing budget cuts and supporting public forums not connected to the Annual Meeting. To that end, I look forward to being a part of the AAR's growth and outreach to underrepresented groups and institutions.

Roberto Lint Sagarena

Roberto Lint Sagarena is associate professor of American studies at Middlebury College in Middlebury, Vermont. He earned his PhD and MA in religion from Princeton University as well as BAs in art history and philosophy of religion from the University of California, Santa Cruz. His current research and teaching interests are focused on understanding Latina/o religions as constitutive rather than marginal elements of religious life in America. Lint Sagarena is the recipient of teaching awards from Princeton University (1998) as well as the University of Southern California (2003).

Lint Sagarena has served the AAR in a number of capacities over the course of the last fifteen years, beginning as graduate student liaison of Princeton University's religion department to the AAR in 1996. He has since cochaired the Western Region's Latino/a Religions Group (2001–2004), served on the steering committee of the North American Religions Section (2002–2005), and currently serving as a member of the steering committee of a multiyear AAR Seminar on the study of Religion in the American West.

Statement on the AAR

I am grateful for this nomination and welcome this opportunity to contribute to the growth and well-being of our organization.

Directors-at-Large are responsible for representing the interests of AAR members to the Board of Directors. If elected to this position, I greatly look forward to working with colleagues to gain a clear understanding of members' concerns and needs. The prospect of gaining insight from our most senior scholars as well as becoming more cognizant of new issues faced by those beginning their careers — including our sizable base of graduate students — and working to effect change for the betterment of the organization are functions of this job that seem particularly attractive and rewarding to me.

The diversity in the approaches to the study of religion present in the work of members of the AAR, from the social-scientific to the theological to the truly interdisciplinary, presents challenges to the aim of adequate representation of its members. During the course of my career, I have collaborated with scholarly groups with a range of methodological approaches, from the Social Science Research Council's Comparative Religion and Immigration Working Group to the Lilly Endowment's History of American Christian Practice Project. I believe that this breadth of experience in methods and sensibilities in the study of religion would help me to serve the wide range of constituencies that make up the AAR.

Among the causes most important to me are the active promotion of equity in the profession, the mentorship of graduate students and the support of new avenues for the presentation and development of emerging scholarship. I believe that the work of the committees on the Status of Women, Racial and Ethnic Minorities, and LGBTIQ Persons in the Profession is central to the vitality of the AAR and the future of the study of religion. I also believe that as graduate student membership continues to grow there is a need for innovation in the means of the presentation of scholarship beyond the traditional paper/panel format. The expansion of the use of existing forums such as Consultations, Seminars and Roundtables can only enrich the way we learn from one another.

I feel prepared to take on the challenge of the position of Director-at-Large because of my previous work within the AAR and also because of other experiences I have had serving on the directorial and executive boards of research libraries and centers such as the Autry Museum of Western Heritage and the Center for Religion and Civic Culture. In closing, I would like to express that I am deeply committed to doing the work of making the AAR function as well as it can for as many of its members as possible.