BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Hilton Hotel
Baltimore, MD
Friday, November 22, 2013

Present: Elonda Clay, John Esposito, Jack Fitzmier, Warren Frisina, Melanie Harris, Susan Hill, David Kim, Linda Moody, Roberto Lint Sagarena, Jin Park, Thomas Tweed, Nellie Van Doorn Harder, Laurie Zoloth

Staff: Deborah Minor, Steve Herrick

Absent:

1. **Welcome and Call to order 4:15 – President John Esposito**

2. **Meeting Attendance Report – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier**

   AM meeting registration is projected to be 10,064 AAR/SBL attendees. AAR will have over 50% of its membership at the meeting.

3. **Executive Report – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier**

   *Meeting logistics*
   Things are looking good. There have been no major glitches. Space is tight. There may be some overbooking due to a surge of last minute registrations. The numbers for the AAR/SBL job center are good; there are over 306 exhibit booths sold.

4. **Finance Report – Director of Finance and Business Deborah Minor**

   *Balance Sheet*
   The AAR’s cash position is stronger than last year due in part to reductions in expenses (lower shuttle expenses at this meeting) and to increases in the AAR’s investment portfolio; 2014 AAR memberships are looking a bit better (perhaps because San Diego is a particularly popular meeting site).

   *Statement of activity*
   AAR’s revenues will be close to but a bit shy of budgeted amounts. Increases from recent uptick in memberships will be helpful. Revenues from AM registration fees may be below budget estimates.
Audit Committee
The audit is finished. We have it in draft form with no indication of any negative findings. The audit committee will be meeting to discuss the report shortly.

General Discussion
There was discussion of the overall costs of the AM relative to the revenues that it generates. It was suggested that it would be helpful if Board members were made aware of the role the AM plays in the AAR’s fiscal situation, especially the extent to which the meeting is profitable (or not) in any given year. It was agreed that this information could be discerned from the final audit that will be made available to Board members shortly.

5. Socially Responsible Investing – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier

The AAR’s portfolio is being moved to reflect the socially responsible investing commitments established by the Board. This involves the application of negative screens that eliminate from our portfolio things we won’t buy and positive screens identifying things we are particularly interested in supporting. We will compare before and after the change in order to measure performance. This is something that can be adjusted as we go along.

6. International Matters - Vice President Thomas Tweed

The AAR web page has been transformed to better reflect our international commitments. There is a guide for international members. The AAR’s collaborative grant program for international members is under way. At the AM there will be a session where folks will be talking about opportunities involving the International Association of the History of Religion and an afternoon reception for international members. More progress was made on this issue in a short period of time than on just about any other issue the AAR faces.

7. Proposal to shift the membership year, report – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier

A proposal was made at the previous meeting to consider shifting the membership year so that it aligned better with the fiscal year. After discussion with the staff and some discussion with other ACLS organizations, ED Fitzmier recommended leaving things as they are. A change would involve much software reprogramming without a clear sense for the benefits.
Motion: To keep membership calendar as it is. Seconded

Vote: Unanimous ayes;

Motion passes

8. Member profile inquiry – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier

In an effort to assess what is possible, the AAR initiated a survey of ACLS organizations regarding various types of questions (both demographic but also research related) that could be put to the membership in order to gain a more precise picture of who our members are and how we might better serve their needs. That data is being analyzed.

We currently assemble this information from demographic data gleaned when a member joins the AAR and from an old Academic Relations survey. Both of these instruments are old, outdated, and are not really designed to meet our current needs.

The goal is to collapse our instruments into a single source. A flow-chart is under development for creating such an instrument. The taxonomy may be built around the AAR program unit structure.

Once this is completed, we’ll undertake a major campaign to get the members to participate so we have a clearer profile of the AAR membership.

Discussion:
It was suggested that the employment services be included in the discussion of these fields.

Employment services committee has been having discussions on a revised list of categories. They are mid-stream on that. One of the concerns (perhaps unavoidable) is that a change will cause a loss of long-term data comparison. It’s also important to keep in mind that the categories used in employment services need to serve the employers as much as the members.

One of the goals of this effort is to be able to market aspects of the AAR’s programs and services a bit more precisely so as to encourage greater participation in the AM but also all of the other resources the AAR makes available to its members.

Questions regarding some of the demographic data need to be further discussed. Several of the committees would like to be able to identify
members who they are charged with serving. Those good intentions need to be balanced against the resistance of some members to share information which they may or may not feel comfortable putting into a database.

SBL has mounted a similar project and has managed to get 25% participation at this point. Their goal is 50%.

9. **Collaboration Software Report – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier**

The AAR is stepping away from the Biosphere project. Recently the MLA has mounted a collaborative software project that is based on CUNY project that might give us something of what we are looking for. They have a lot of members who signed up, but the active users are tiny. This leads us to the conclusion that these things serve best already existing strong communities, rather expecting them to be tools for creating communities.

Along these lines we are at work on developing specific spaces for existing communities: e.g. a Board corner, program units; committees; governance year book; past minutes; etc.

10. **Annual Business Meeting Agenda – Executive Director Jack Fitzmier**

   a. Call to order
   b. Approval of 2012 Annual Business Meeting Minutes
   c. Memorial minutes; request for other names
   d. Report on State of Academy ED
   e. President’s report
   f. Formal announcement of election results
   g. President-elect’s report
   h. New business

   It was suggested that we request that chairs alert the AAR to the passing of department members.

11. **Representational Committee Motions that were referred to the Executive Committee**

    The Executive Committee (with Melanie Harris, Member Advocate) met to discuss the motions from the Representational Working Groups having to do with the procedures for appointing new members and/or chairs to the AAR Board’s Working Groups. There were also proposals regarding the timing of the appointments.
The Executive Committee’s recommendations were that the proposals not be accepted in part because of conflicts with the by-laws. The timing of appointments needs to be coordinated with what the by-laws say about who has appointment powers and when. Regarding how a member is selected to serve on a Working Group, the by-laws indicate that the responsibility belongs to the president, who is required to consult with the Working Groups when making selections. The Executive Committee is recommending that we reiterate and make clearer the Board’s commitment to this consultation requirement. The Executive Committee was particularly concerned to preserve the Board’s right to intervene and revamp when it perceives there to be a need to do so.

In addition, the Executive Committee recommended that the dates and location of the AAR Board’s January meeting be adjusted so that there could be time for consultation with the leadership and members of the representational committees around these issues. Those arrangements have already been made.

There was also a meeting (11/22) of the presidential line (John Esposito, Laurie Zoloth, Thomas Tweed), Member Advocate, Melanie Harris and some of the leadership of the representational Working Groups to discuss their concerns. From that discussion it became clear that they remain concerned that some sort of structure be in place for handling a situation where a president refuses to consult with the Working Group as required by the by-laws.

From that meeting a proposal was suggested that there be a drafting of a document outlining best practices and general principles that define what consultation means. The goal is to collaboratively draft this document and meet in January to hammer out the details. It should be circulated before the meeting.

**Motion: To Table the Executive Committee’s Recommendations regarding the proposals made by the Representational Working Groups regarding the timing and process of appointments to Working Groups. Seconded.**

*Vote: Aye 12; 1 Abstention*

**Motion passes.**

12. **Meeting Adjourned**
Meeting Motions/Action

Motion: To keep membership calendar as it is. Seconded

Vote: Unanimous ayes;

Motion passes

Motion: To Table the Executive Committee’s Recommendations regarding the proposals made by the Representational Working Groups regarding the timing and process of appointments to Working Groups. Seconded

Vote: Aye 12; 1 Abstention

Motion passes.