2008 Annual Meeting News

AAR President Emilie Townes discusses her thoughts on her journey and her goals for the Academy as its new president. See her interview on page 9.

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2008 Member Calendar

Dates are subject to change. Check www.aarweb.org for the latest information.

March
Religious Studies News March issue. Spotlight on Theological Education.
March 6. Humanities Advocacy Day, an event organized by the National Humanities Alliance and co-sponsored by the AAR and other 20 organizations to promote support for the National Endowment for the Humanities. For more information, see www.nhblanc.org.
March 7–9. Southeast regional meeting, Atlanta, GA.
March 14–16. Southwest regional meeting, Dallas, TX.
March 15. Publications Committee meeting, New York, NY.
March 27–28. Mid-Atlantic regional meeting, New Brunswick, NJ.
March 28–29. Rocky Mountains–Great Plains regional meeting, Denver, CO.
March 28–29. Upper Midwest regional meeting, St. Paul, MN.
March 29–30. Governance Task Force meeting, Atlanta, GA.
March 29–31. Western regional meeting, Pasadena, CA.
For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/regions.asp.

April
Annual Meeting registration materials mailed.
April 1. Notification of acceptance of Annual Meeting paper proposals by program unit chairs.
April 4–5. Midwest regional meeting, River Forest, IL.
April 11. Regionally Elected Directors meeting, Atlanta, GA.
April 11. Executive Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.
April 12–13. Spring Board of Directors meeting, Atlanta, GA.
April 21. Registration for the Annual Meeting Job Center opens.
April 25–26. History of Religions Jury meeting, Atlanta, GA.
For more information on regional meetings, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/regions.asp.

May
May 1. Nominations (including self-nominations) for committee appointments requested.
May 1. Annual Meeting Additional Meeting requests due for priority consideration.
May 2–4. Pacific Northwest regional meeting, Newburgh, OR.
May 2–3. Eastern International regional meeting, Montreal, Quebec.
May 15. Change of address due for priority receipt of the Annual Meeting Program Planner. Program Planners will be mailed to members in late May.
For more Annual Meeting information, see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting/Current_Meeting.asp.

June
June 15. Membership renewal deadline for 2008 Annual Meeting participants.
June 15. Submission deadline for the October issue of Religious Studies News. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Publications/RSN.

July
Annual Meeting program goes online.
July 1. New fiscal year begins.
July 31. Deadline for participants to request audiovisual equipment at the Annual Meeting.

August
August 1. Research Grant applications due. For more information, see www.aarweb.org/Programs/Grant.
August 1. Regional development grant applications due to regionally elected directors.
August 15. Membership renewal period for 2009 begins.

September
September 5. Program Committee meeting, New Haven, CT.
September 6. Executive Committee meeting, New Haven, CT.
September 22–October 20. AAR officer election period. Candidate profiles will be published in the October RSN.

October
Religious Studies News October issue. Spotlight on Teaching Fall issue.
October 13. Annual Meeting Job Center pre-registration closes.

November
November 1. Research Grant Awards announced.
November 1–3. Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL. The AAR Annual Meeting, the world’s largest gathering of scholars of religion, anticipates some 5,000 registrants, 200 publishers, and 125 hiring departments.
November 3. Annual Business Meeting at the Annual Meeting. See the Program Planner for day and time.
November 14. New program unit proposals due.

December
December 12–13. Program Committee meeting, Atlanta, GA.

And keep in mind throughout the year...
Regional organizations have various deadlines throughout the fall for the Calls for Papers. See www.aarweb.org/Meetings/regions.asp.

In the Field: News of events and opportunities for scholars of religion. In the Field is a members-only publication that accepts brief announcements, including calls for papers, grant news, conference announcements, and other opportunities appropriate for scholars of religion. Submit text online at www.aarweb.org/Publications/In_the_Field/submit.asp.

Job Postings: A members-only publication, Job Postings lists job announcements in areas of interest to members. Issues are available online from the first through the last day of the month. Submit announcements online, and review policies and pricing, at www.aarweb.org/jump/jobpostings.

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Religious Studies News

Religious Studies News is the newspaper of record for the field especially designed to serve the professional needs of persons involved in teaching and scholarship in religion (broadly construed to include religious studies, theology, and sacred texts). Published quarterly by the American Academy of Religion, RSN is received by some 11,000 individuals by libraries at colleges and universities across North America and abroad. Religious Studies News communicates the important events of the field and related areas. It provides a forum for members and others to examine critical issues in education, pedagogy (especially through the biannual Spotlight on Teaching), theological education (through the annual Spotlight on Theological Education), research, publishing, and the public understanding of religion. It also publishes news about awards and programs of the AAR and other organizations, including employment services and registration information for the AAR Annual Meeting.

For writing and advertising guidelines, please see www.aarweb.org/Publications/rsn.asp.
Dear Readers:

Beginning with the January issue of RSN, there has been a change to the editorial leadership of the Academy’s quarterly newspaper. I will now be the executive editor and Stephanie Gray will be the editor. Stephanie joined the executive office in 2005 as our office manager. Her exceptional organizational skills and her MTS from Boston University will help her with these new responsibilities. For me this is a return to the newspaper that I edited from 2002 to 2005. This editorial change was precipitated by a realignment of the executive office staff last fall, which will be discussed in Jack Fitzmier’s article.

One of the ways in which the Academy’s president communicates with the membership is through the annual “Conversation with the President” article in RSN. This month we are happy to have Emile Townes’s thoughts on her journey and her goals for the Academy as its new president.

The Focus section, “The Work of the Academy,” includes two exciting topics: the results of our Member Survey regarding the Annual Meeting, and the announcement of our receipt of a planning grant from the Henity Luce Foundation. The purpose of the survey was to provide a forum for members to express their opinions about several features of the upcoming independent Annual Meeting. The Luce planning grant will allow us to begin preparation for summer seminars on comparative theology.

This issue also includes the second Spotlight on Theological Education, published under the supervision of the Theological Education Steering Committee. Editor Larry Golomon (Alban Institute) has assembled 12 impressive articles around the theme “Teaching Critical Thinking and Praxis.”

Attendance at the Annual Meetings of the AAR and the SBL in San Diego was over 10,000. We surveyed you to see how satisfied you were with the meeting and the results show a very high level of satisfaction. In this issue you will begin to see information about the upcoming Annual Meeting in Chicago, November 1–3, 2008.

Also in this issue are some impressive figures for the number of employers and candidates who were assisted by the Employment Information Services Center.

The work of the Academy cannot be accomplished without the help of our 11,000 members. In this issue we have recognized our outgoing Annual Meeting Program Unit members, and new and outgoing committee members.

Another way in which you serve the Academy is through your membership, which represents a means of your generous contributions to the Academy Fund. Margaret Jenkins, our new director of development, is proud to list all those who contributed to the Fund last year.

As always, if you have suggestions regarding the newsletter, please do contact me at cgifford@aarweb.org.

Carey J. Gifford
Executive Editor

FROM THE EDITOR

2008 ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

MEMBERSHIP FORM

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION

2008 Calendar Year

A calendar year is January 1–December 31.

You may also establish your membership online at www.aarweb.org/membership.

Complete/update your contact information.

Name: ____________________________

Address: __________________________

City: __________ State/Province: ________

Postal Code: ________ Country: ________

Institution/Organization: __________________________

Department/School: __________________________

I am a new member. [ ]

ID Number (for renewals): _______________________

Office Phone: __________________________

Home Phone: __________________________

Cell Phone: __________________________

E-mail: __________________________

I am the department chair. [ ]

METHOD OF PAYMENT

Credit Card Number __________________________

Exp. Date (mm/yy) ___ ___ / ___ ___

[ ] American Express [ ] Visa [ ] Mastercard [ ] Discover

CARD TYPE: __________________________

CREDIT CARD NUMBER: __________________________

SIGNATURE: __________________________

Return via postal mail: American Academy of Religion

825 Houston Mill Road NE Suite 300

Atlanta, GA 30329-4205

Membership Inquiries? Call 1-404-727-3049 or e-mail membership@aarweb.org. Visit us on our website at www.aarweb.org.

DONATE TO THE ACADEMY FUND

Please consider a gift to the Academy Fund. We depend on your support to continue to provide a high level of programs and services.

Amount: $250 $150 $100 $50 $25 $10

All gifts to the Academy Fund are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

PAYMENT DUE

Circle the appropriate dues category in the chart to the left and enter the amount owed in the space provided below.

Non-U.S. residents must include an additional $10 for postage.

Calendar Year (Jan. 1–Dec. 31) 2008

Membership Dues $ __________

Academy Fund Donation $ __________

TOTAL DUE $ __________

Q U E S T I O N S ?

Contact us at membership@aarweb.org or via phone at 404-727-3049.

MANAGE YOUR AAR MEMBERSHIP

Don’t miss out on the latest in AAR news and happenings! Visit our website to join or renew your membership.

Did you know that you can take care of many membership activities using the My Account feature from the “Members” tab on the AAR website?

You can:

– Update your contact information
– Generate membership fees receipts
– Check on Annual Meeting registration status
– Set your privacy settings
– and much more!

Log in at this link to do so: www.aarweb.org/Members/My Account/
Annual Meeting 2008: Chicago

Jazz it up in Chicago this November at the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting. Chicago is world renowned for its culture and architecture. The Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel and Palmer House Hilton Hotel are the headquarters. As the host of the first independent AAR meeting in more than 35 years, the location represents a homecoming; Chicago was home to some of the earliest meetings of the newly minted American Academy of Religion in the 1960s. Chicago’s vibrant cityscape of the arts, architecture, cuisine, shopping, and more provide the perfect backdrop for the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting.

Registration and housing opens Monday, April 21, 2008, at 9:00 am EDT!

Mark your calendars!

FAX: 330-963-0319
WEB: www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting
MAIL: AAR Annual Meeting
Registration & Housing
c/o Experient Registration and Housing Bureau
2451 Edison Boulevard
Twinsburg, OH 44087

Questions:
TEL: 1-800-575-7185 (U.S. & Canada)
+1-330-425-9330 (outside U.S. & Canada)
E-MAIL: aarrg@experient-inc.com

Membership

Don’t forget to renew your membership dues before you register or else you won’t be able to get the lower member registration rates. If you are not certain about your current 2008 membership status, please see www.aarweb.org/members or call 404-727-3049.

Getting Around

Sessions will be held at the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel and Palmer House Hilton Hotel. The hotels are five city blocks apart. Limited shuttle service will run between the hotels. Chicago has excellent public transportation to get to other areas of the city.

Check online at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting for more travel information including maps and travel discount opportunities!

Additional Meetings

Requests for Additional Meeting space are being accepted through the new online Additional Meeting system at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. All requests are handled on a space and time-slot available basis. The Additional Meetings program, held in conjunction with the AAR Annual Meeting, is an important service to AAR members. Additional Meetings must have an AAR member listed as the primary contact. All Additional Meeting participants are expected to register for the Annual Meeting. Be sure to read the instructions carefully before completing and submitting your space request. The deadline for priority scheduling is May 1, 2008. For more information about the Additional Meetings, please see www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting.

AAR Annual Meeting Job Center

The 2008 AAR Annual Meeting Job Center will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel. Candidates and employers who wish to participate should visit the AAR website, www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. Registration opens on April 21, 2008, along with Annual Meeting registration and housing.

Childcare

AAR is proud to provide childcare service at the Annual Meeting for the convenience of our members. Childcare is available at an hourly or daily rate. It will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel.

Disability Accessibility

AAR members with disabilities or who may have difficulty getting around the meeting are encouraged to note this during registration and housing. AAR will make every reasonable attempt to accommodate you, whether by arranging special services such as sign language interpreters, assigning accessible hotel room space, or through the AAR’s taxi reimbursement policy. More information can be found at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting.

Find A Friend

Please note the box on the registration form that gives permission for your name, institution, and hotel (if any) to be posted on a list of attendees available online at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting and onsite on the Find A Friend board. If you do not check the box, your information will not be listed.

International Attendees

It is necessary for those entering the United States to clear customs and immigration. International visitors, including those coming from Canada and Mexico, must present a passport in order to enter the United States. Please note that Chicago O’Hare Airport is participating in a test program that requires all international visitors to be fingerprinted upon arrival. Non-U.S. citizens should inquire about possible visa requirements from their own country. Official letters of invitation to the Annual Meetings to support visa applications are available. E-mail annualmeeting@aarweb.org with your name, address, and the full contact information of the consulate of your country.

AAR Annual Meeting Online Services

At www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting you can:

• Register for the Annual Meeting
• Reserve your hotel room
• Find a roommate
• Request Additional Meeting space
• Register for the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center
• View the complete AAR program
• Discover more about Chicago including tours, museums, houses of worship, restaurants, and much more!
Introducing the Program Planner

KEEP AN EYE on your mailbox in early June for the all-new Annual Meeting Program Planner! The Annual Meeting Program Planner features:

- Program Highlights — full descriptions of special speakers and sessions.
- A thematic listing of all AAR and Additional Meetings sessions by date and time.
- A program participant index.
- Information on new and forthcoming publications from the leading publishers in the field.

The Annual Meeting Program Planner will let you get a look at the program earlier than ever — months earlier than the September mailing in previous years! It will be mailed to all 2007 and 2008 AAR members. Please remember that receipt of the Program Planner is separate from Annual Meeting registration.

For full session details including session descriptions, room listings, individual paper titles, and abstracts, check the online Annual Meeting Program Book at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting any time after July 1. The online Program Book allows you to receive the most complete and up-to-date information in a searchable format right up to the meeting.

At the Annual Meeting, you will be able to pick up the familiar printed Annual Meeting Program Book. The Annual Meeting Program Book will be the comprehensive program guide with the complete session details, room locations, and more.

It is our hope that these innovations will make navigating the Annual Meeting program easier than ever. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Annual Meeting Team at annualmeeting@aarweb.org.

Annual Meeting 2008

Important Dates

April 21
Registration and Housing open for the 2008 Annual Meeting. You must be registered to secure housing!

AAR Annual Meeting Job Center registration opens. Register for the meeting and then register for the Job Center!

June 15
All AAR Annual Meeting participants must be current members and registered for the Annual Meeting or else their names will be dropped from the program.

July 1
Online Program Book is available at www.aarweb.org/Meetings/Annual_Meeting. The online Program Book will list the full session description and room locations for all Annual Meeting sessions.

September 16
Second-tier premeeting registration rates go into effect.

October 13
Annual Meeting Job Center preregistration deadline. CVs due for inclusion in binders.

October 15
Special housing rates end (continue to contact Experient for housing throughout the meeting).

October 25
Peregrination refund request deadline. Contact Experient for refunds (see premeeting registration form for details). All further registrations received after this date will be processed and the materials will be available in Chicago at the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel.

November 1-3
AAR Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL.

Where to stay in Chicago

AFTER A LONG DAY of attending sessions at the Annual Meeting, it is good to have a haven to relax and recharge for the next day. AAR has negotiated special conference rates at a number of luxurious and convenient hotels for the convenience of meeting attendees. Hotel room rates do not include the 15.4 percent hotel room tax. Please note that the single/double/triple/quadruple room designation denotes the number of room occupants, not the number of beds. A triple room means three people are sharing two double beds unless a rollaway bed is requested at an extra charge.

Headquarters Hotel
Palmer House Hilton
17 East Monroe Street
Ideally located in the heart of the Chicago Loop, the Palmer House Hilton offers modern conveniences combined with over one hundred years of elegance. For the demanding traveler, the Palmer House Hilton provides a fitness center and indoor pool. Although standard in name, the interior design and appointments of the standard bedroom are equal to what other hotels refer to as deluxe. Each room has Hilton’s new Serenity Dreams bed providing a plush-top mattress to give plenty of support and luxury. Fine European-style, 250 thread-count linens adorn the beds. It is easy to set the alarm clock with pre-set radio stations and MP3 connectivity. High-speed Internet access is available in all rooms. $149/$175/$195/$200

Essex Inn
800 South Michigan Avenue
The Essex Inn’s 254 guest rooms and suites offer all the comforts of home. Many of them offer spectacular views of the lakefront and of the sparkling city below. Rooms are tastefully decorated with an Art Deco flair and framed art posters, many of them from the Art Institute’s finest reproductions. Accommodations come with some extra touches like a personal free shuttle to the Magnificent Mile, free coffee in the room, fitness center with state-of-the-art equipment, free wireless Internet connection, and more. $156/$156/$166/$176

New Program Units

AAR’S PROGRAM Committee approved the following new program units for the 2008 Annual Meeting:

- Cognitive Science of Religion Consultation
- Comparative Philosophy and Religion Seminar
- Liberation Theologies Consultation
- Martin Luther and Global Lutheran Traditions
- Music and Religion Consultation
- Religion and Humanism Consultation
- Religion Education in Public Schools: International Perspectives Consultation
- Religion in Southeast Asia Consultation
- Religion in the American West Seminar
- Religion, Food, and Eating Seminar
- Sex, Gender, and Sexuality in Premodern Christianity Consultation
- Sikh Studies Consultation
- Theology and the Political Consultation
- Transformative Scholarship and Pedagogy Consultation
- Transhumanism and Religion Consultation

March 2008 RSN • 5
Exposure Taps Restaurant
1315 South Wabash Avenue
312-662-1082
Exposure features a lineup of sharable hot and cold plates, plus a raw bar roster. Menu highlights include Moroccan Lamb Lollipops with feta cheese, green beans, and olives; pork ribs with peach barbecue sauce, crispy onions, and slaw; and crab-stuffed jumbo shrimp with Israeli couscous and shallot cream sauce. $$
Fornetto and Meï’s Kitchen
1108 South Michigan Avenue
312-294-2488
Fornetto is set up food court-style with a variety of stations like rotisserie, pastas, panini, Asian, and wood-fired thin crust pizza. Staffers give you a “credit” card; move from station to station, pay at the end, and staffs will bring the food to your table. The decor is as global as the menu; each station is themed to match the cuisine. There is a showy floor-to-ceiling walk-in wine tower; grab a glass at the 40-foot wine bar or take a bottle to go. $$
Giordano’s
130 East Randolph Street
312-616-1200
Way back when we had the dizzying array of options like wood-fired, organic, and gourmet pizzas, there were the hefty stuffed pizzas at Giordano’s (which opened in the early 1970s). The belly-busting pies come loaded with the usual suspects (like sausage or Canadian bacon). Here, you’re looking for upscale items like rapini or truffles, you’re out of luck. If extreme carb-loading isn’t in the forecast, go for a thin crust; otherwise, you can opt for choices like lasagna, baked mostaccioli, or an Italian beef sandwich. $$–$$$
Ma & I
1234 South Michigan Avenue
312-663-1254
South Loop Thai spot featuring Thai classics such as satay, crab Rangoon, curry dishes (red, green, massaman), and noodle choices like pad Thai and pad lar. House specialties include “rumbing ocean,” seafood stir-fried with Thai chili paste, and “millennium duck,” boneless duck sauteed in a red wine sauce. $$
Max’s Take Out
20 East Adams Street
312-553-0170
Max’s is the quintessential Loop hole in the wall. It’s a narrow room with just a row of stools along one wall; in back, a sweltering kitchen churns out fast food. Breakfast is popular, with egg combos and even French toast for just a couple of bucks. $
Nick’s Fishmarket Grill
51 South Clark Street
312-621-0200
The owners of Nick’s Fishmarket remodeled the upstairs bar into this more laid-back spot. The Grill offers a more casual (and affordable) menu than the upscale, seafood-heavy Fishmarket, with choices like a burger with blue cheese, tequila chicken flatbread, and pecan-crusted tilapia. The Grill offers daily special drinks and a “bar bites” menu of eats after 5 pm. $$–$$$
Oasis Cafe
17 South Wabash Avenue
312-558-1058
Oasis features daily specials such as the veggie combo, a platter of hummus, baba ghanoush, falafel, and stuffed grape leaves or tabbouleh. Daily luncheon specials include Moroccan couscous on Fridays. The house-made baklava is the specialty dessert.$$
Oyys
888 South Michigan Avenue
312-922-1127
Oyys, or “delicious,” sports a relaxed, contemporary decor (designed by Chicago architect Douglas Garofalo). A creative menu of sushi and Japanese cuisine. Almost 50 varieties of sushi and maki are available as well as tempura and entrees like sautéed scallop with garlic ginger sauce. $$
Park Grill
11 North Michigan Avenue
312-521-PARK (7275)
Park Grill received “Best New Restaurant” in Chicago Magazine and “Top Newcomer” in Zagat’s 2004 Restaurant Guide. The menu features contemporary American cuisine infused with distinctive Chicago flavors and seasonal ingredients, offering something for the whole family. $$
Patty Burger
72 East Adams Street
312-987-0900
Patty Burger features hand-formed Angus beef burgers with toppings like lettuce and secret sauce; add-ons include bacon, onion, and avocado. Burgers take less than four minutes to prepare and are priced under $4 for a single. $$
Pizano’s Pizza and Pasta
61 East Madison Street
312-236-1777
Deep dish pizza with flaky crust and thin crust varieties. Entrees include sandwiches, homemade pastas, and Italian vegetable specials. $
Potbelly Sandwich Works
55 East Jackson Boulevard
312-683-1234
Specializing in made-to-order sandwiches, Potbelly exudes a colorful charm. A dark-wood décor, vintage knickknacks, and street signs add to the ambiance. It’s a bit corny, but the roomy booths and comfortable chairs keep the cozy factor dominant. Italian-style and vegetarian subs are the best bets. $
Russian Tea Time
77 East Adams Street
312-360-0800
Not just a tea house as the name suggests, Russian Tea Time is a full-service restaurante, whose slightly Americanized Russian dishes have been well received by Chicagoans, especially the preshow preconcert crowd. $$$
Yolk
1120 South Michigan Avenue
312-789-9655
This South Loop breakfast and lunch spot, which is close to the Museum Campus, features all-day breakfast choices such as banana-nut French toast and a Santa Fe frittata with bacon, avocado, chilies, onions, grilled potatoes, and a trio of cheeses. Lunch selections include a Dubin pot roast sandwich (with mushroom, Cabernet sauce and Swiss) and a balsamic chicken wrap. $$
Zapata
1307 South Wabash Avenue
312-435-1307
The menu at this South Loop Mexican spot includes low-key offerings like hand made tamales and tacos, plus more upscale fare like grilled twin lobster tails in guajillo cream salsa and a Negro Modelo-marinated filet mignon. $$$

For more Chicago visitor information, guidebooks, and maps, contact the Chicago Convention and Visitor’s Bureau or see their website at www.meetinchicago.com.

Price Guide (for average entree):
$ = up to $10
$ $ = $11–$20
$ $$ = $21–$30
$ $$$ = $31 and over

Atwood Cafe
1 West Washington Street
312-568-1900
Atwood Cafe serves all-American comfort foods and cafe cuisine prepared in a traditional style. Specialties include pot pie with a flaky buttermilk crust and a maple-glazed grilled pork chop. $$
Billy Goat Tavern
430 North Michigan Avenue
312-222-1525
Ever hear of the “Curse of the Billy Goat,” also known as the Cubs Curse? Do you recall the Saturday Night Live sketch in which a short order cook would yell out to incoming patrons: “Cheezeborger! Cheezeborger! No fries, cheeps! No Pepsi, Coke!” All of the above have one thing in common: the World Famous Billy Goat Tavern, a Chicago legend since 1934. $-

China Grill
230 North Michigan Avenue
312-345-1000
China Grill provides a culinary adventure in a spectacular setting. Asian flavors and techniques are an influence; the menu is labeled as world cuisine. Portions are generous and meant to be shared. $$$

Custom House
500 South Dearborn Street
312-523-0200
The frequently changing menu may include appetizer choices like roasted quail, charred sashimi-style sirlon, and marinated shrimp. Entrees may include diver sea scallops, beef short ribs, and bone-in filet of beef. Lunch features a mix of fancy salads, hearty main courses like prime sirloin, organic chicken, steak sandwich, risotto, an artisinal cheese selection, and more. $$

Emerald Loop Bar & Grill
216 North Wabash Avenue
312-263-0200
Serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, and late-night menus featuring bar and grill favorites as well as Irish specialties. Carvery at lunch, TV’s, and lively bar at night. $-

Exchequer Restaurant and Pub
226 South Wabash Avenue
312-939-5633
The atmosphere is casual and you’re surrounded by more than 500 pieces of Chicago memorabilia to view. Four-star ribs and pizza are a must. Enjoy sports on one of our many satellite TVs. $$

Oasis Cafe
17 South Wabash Avenue
312-558-1058
Oasis features daily specials such as the veggie combo, a platter of hummus, baba ghanoush, falafel, and stuffed grape leaves or tabbouleh. Daily luncheon specials include Moroccan couscous on Fridays. The house-made baklava is the specialty dessert. $$

Zapata
1307 South Wabash Avenue
312-435-1307
The menu at this South Loop Mexican spot includes low-key offerings like hand made tamales and tacos, plus more upscale fare like grilled twin lobster tails in guajillo cream salsa and a Negro Modelo-marinated filet mignon. $$$

Buddy Guy’s Legends
754 South Wabash Avenue
312-427-0333
Although its large size may be less welcoming than many of the city’s older clubs, it offers amenities that are a factor of that size: a tasty menu (shrimp Creole, jambalaya, barbecued ribs) and a great collection of blues memorabilia on the walls. Live blues is presented seven nights a week — generally local acts during the week and national touring acts on Friday and Saturday nights.

Kasey’s Tavern
701 South Dearborn Street
312-939-5910
Overall it’s your typical neighborhood pub, with Bulls, Bears, and baseball on television, friendly bartenders, and cushy places to sit. But there’s history here and the place is warmer and more inviting than other bars in the area. “It’s a real old neighborhood saloon,” says Bill White, the owner. “Real old” meaning since 1889.

Tantram
1023 South State Street
312-939-9160
Tantram is a sophisticated cocktail lounge in the South Loop. Fans of the place say they keep coming back for the A+ chocolate martini and the eclectic julebox with songs ranging from Van Morrison to Morphine. Martinis are the rage here, but the mahogany bar is also stocked with imported beers, scotches, and wines. Try the house drink: A Tantram Martini made with Stoli Orange, Triple Sec, and a splash of orange juice.

Villains Bar & Grill
649 South Clark Street
312-356-3992
You may know him as The King, but at this South Loop spot, he’s known as the No. 1 rock n’ roll villain. In fact, black-and-white prints of Warhol’s Elvis with a gun are repeated along the 47-foot bar; black and gold wallpaper with jewel-toned accents and a texturized rich recycled cardboard “veave” dress the other walls. Super villain-inspired martinis and B-movie nights make this a hip neighborhood hang for 20- and 30-somethings looking for a laid-back, irreverent scene.

(continued on next page)
On April 1, 2008, the AAR will open its new AAR Career Services where members can find job postings, upload CVs, plan for interviewing at the annual meeting, and find timely expert opinions to help in the increasingly competitive academic job market.

The new service will replace the current Openings and EIS Center Services that AAR members have come to count on for locating future employment or their next faculty member. Members and departments will feel comfortable with the streamlined new services: AAR Job Posting will replace Openings and the AAR Annual Meeting Job Center will replace the EIS Center.

Within the AAR Career Services, Job Postings will include easier advertisement submission processes and enhancements to organization and content. “I think our members will find it easier to post a job on the new website,” said Jack Fitzmier, AAR executive director. “Our staff has worked hard to improve the process.”

Also within the Career Services will be the new AAR Annual Meeting Job Center. It will operate much the same as the joint EIS Center did. The Job Center will be offered every year at the Annual Meeting and is designed to ease the communication process between the candidates looking for jobs in the field of religion and employers who have jobs to offer. To accomplish this, we offer services such as advertisement listings, candidates’ credentials both online and in hardcopy, an interview facility, and a message center through which employers and candidates communicate.

The 2008 Job Center will be located in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel, a headquarters hotel of the Annual Meeting. From 7–9 pm, Friday night, October 31, we will be open with the exception of the interview hall. Come review CVs or ad positions and use the message center. We will be fully operational all day Saturday, Sunday, and Monday, November 1–3.

To take advantage of the earlier Annual Meeting dates this year (November 1–3), Job Center preregistration opens on April 21, 2008, and closes on October 13, 2008. Candidate CVs are also due October 13.

(continued from previous page)

Weather Mark Tavern
1503 South Michigan Avenue
312-588-0230

Set sail for a night of food and drink at this South Loop spot decked out in a nautical theme. Real sails hang floor to ceiling to create semiprivate seating areas of couches and cocktail tables. Go tropical and sip from a large selection of rums and tequilas, and sample fare from a menu of upscale bar food with a Southwestern flair.

Chicago Cultural Center
78 East Washington Street
312-744-6630

Chicago’s acclaimed landmark home of the arts. Daily programs and exhibitions covering a wide range of the performing, visual, and literary arts are presented by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. See the world’s largest Tiffany stained-glass dome. Open Monday–Thursday 10 AM–7 PM; Friday 10 AM–6 PM; Saturday 10 AM–5 PM; and Sunday 11 AM–5 PM. Free admission; weekly updated event listings dial F-I-N-E-A-R-T (312-946-3278) or log onto www.cityofchicago.org/CulturalCenter.

DuSable Museum of African American History
740 East 6th Place
773-947-0600

Celebrating 45 years of sharing history, DuSable Museum is the nation’s first and oldest independent museum dedicated to the collection, preservation, and study of the history and culture of African and African American of African descent. Exhibits, concerts, films, children’s events, and literary discussions are just a few of the institution’s various programs offered. Open Tuesday–Saturday 10 AM–5 PM.

Field Museum
1400 South Lake Shore Drive
312-685-7600

Discover Sue, the largest and most complete T. rex ever found! At the Field Museum, you can get a bug’s-eye view in Underground Adventure, descend into an Egyptian tomb, watch a glowing lava flow, be dazzled in our Halls of Gems and Jades, come eye–to-eye with the man-eating lions of Tsavo, and walk among dinosaurs in our new, renovated dinosaur hall Evolving Planet. Open daily 9 AM–5 PM, last admission at 4 PM. Adults $12, seniors and students $7, children (3–11) $7. Some exhibits require an additional ticket.

McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum
445 North Michigan Avenue
312-222-4860

Dedicated to America’s freedoms and focusing on First Amendment rights, the McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum inspires generations to understand, value, and protect freedom through interactive experiences. Open Wednesday–Monday 10 AM–6 PM. Closed Tuesday. Free Admission.

Notebaert Nature Museum
2430 North Cannon Drive
773-755-5100

Located in Lincoln Park, the Nature Museum engages visitors, especially urban dwellers, in new ways to connect with and preserve the natural world through a unique indoor/outdoor experience. Open weekdays 9 AM–6:30 PM, and weekends 10 AM–5 PM. Cost: $9 adults, $7 seniors, and children under 12 free. Free on Thursdays. Chicago residents always save $1 off general admission.

Shedd Aquarium
1200 South Lake Shore Drive
312-922-3315

The aquarium offers more than 22,000 aquatic animals from around the world. See all Shedd has to offer with the All Access Pass, which includes the original aquarium building, Wild Reef, Amazon Rising, and the Oceanarium. Open weekdays 9 AM–5 PM; weekends 9 AM–6 PM; and some holidays, 9 AM–8:30 PM. Adults $23, seniors and children (3–11) $16. Group rates are available.

Sptron Museum/Sptron Institute of Jewish Studies
610 South Michigan Avenue
312-322-1700

Sptron Institute of Jewish Studies includes Sptron Museum, the research facilities of the Asher Library and the Chicago Jewish Archives. Highlights include a unique display of over 1,000 objects from Sptron Museum’s world-class collection, a series of special changing exhibitions, and site-specific installations of work by leading international artists. Open Sunday–Wednesday 10 AM–6 PM; Thursday 10 AM–5 PM. Sptron is closed Saturday for the Jewish Sabbath, and public and Jewish holidays. Museum Admission $7, students and seniors $5. Sptron Museum members and children under 5 free. Free museum admission for everyone Tuesday from 10 AM–12 PM and every Thursday from 3 PM–7 PM.

SHOPPING

Chicago’s Magnificent Mile is a world-renowned shopping district. Shoppers can enjoy magnificent department stores and boutiques comprising a diverse mix of American and international style. With over 460 retail stores, there is something about this new service, and always encourage feedback on how to make it better.

900 Shops
900 North Michigan Avenue
312-915-3916

Anchoring the chic north end of Michigan Avenue, The 900 Shops features six levels of shopping, including Bloomingdale’s, MaxMara, Giorgi, Couch, Marina Rinaldi, Ethel’s Chocolate Lounge, Preggers, The Silk Trading Co., and 60 other exclusive retailers. Open Monday–Saturday 10 AM–7 PM; and Sunday 12 PM–6 PM.

Chicago Place
700 North Michigan Avenue
312-266-7710

North Michigan Avenue’s most unique shopping experience! Over 50 shops and restaurants featuring Saks Fifth Avenue, Chiaroscuro, design Toscan, Talbots, and much more! Open Monday–Friday 10 AM–7 PM; Saturday 10 AM–6 PM; and Sunday 12 PM–5 PM.

Water Tower Place
835 North Michigan Avenue
312-449-3100

Water Tower Place is Chicago’s premier shopping destination. Its strolling eight-level atrium features more than 100 of your favorite stores, spas, and restaurants, plus a mix of distinctive specialty shops and boutiques. It offers a unique, high-energy, urban shopping experience you simply won’t find anywhere else in the city. Open Monday–Saturday 10 AM–6 PM; and Sunday 12 AM–6 PM. Visit their website for more information and visitor incentives at www.shopwatertower.com.

JUMP! Careers: The AAR’s Career Services

JUMP! Careers: The AAR’s Career Services is created to help the job hunt process, notices of work-shops from the Academic Relations Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Theological Education Steering Committee, and others, and articles discussing career issues — from leaving graduate school to retirement. “I think you will find the Career Services a ‘must stop’ location on our website,” Fitzmier said. “We are excited about this new service, and always encourage feedback on how to make it better.”
Taking Religion(s) Seriously: What Students Need to Know

Friday, October 31, 2008, Chicago, IL

That all students learn to think seriously about the ways religion(s) impacts public life and their role as citizens. This may be a common goal of religion courses offered at all sorts of institutions; however, this objective is not always articulated and may be submerged in more specialized concerns. In this workshop we explore what this goal entails and then invite chairs to consider how the curriculum they oversee addresses (or could address) it; how the mission and culture of their institution shapes this objective; and how it might contribute to assessment of their program’s effectiveness.

Legal issues, conflicts, and lifecycles will be addressed for individual, department, and administration concerns. Exchange of experience and ideas will be central to the day’s work.

**PRELIMINARY PROGRAM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-9:15</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:15-9:45</td>
<td>Educating students for public life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-10:15</td>
<td>Break-out session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15-11</td>
<td>Panel discussion: How does this interact with the mission and culture of your institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-12</td>
<td>Break-out session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-1:15</td>
<td>LUNCH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:15-2</td>
<td>Assessment of your institution: Addressing the question — How should this be assessed and how do you assess it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3:30</td>
<td>Plenary session on objectives and assessments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The workshop will be of benefit to a range of participants: faculty, administrators, and graduate students. The goal is to bring a diverse group of AAR members together in a lively and open discussion.

TO REGISTER

Complete the information below, arrange payment, and send via fax or surface mail. You can also register online as a part of the Annual Meeting registration process: www.aarweb.org/meeting/annual_meeting/current_meeting

**PAYMENT INFORMATION**

- **Check:** (payable to “AAR Annual Meeting,” memo “Leadership Workshop”)
- **Credit Card (Check one):** Visa □ Mastercard □ American Express □ Discover

**Credit Card Number Expiration Date**

**Cardholder Signature**

**Name on Card (Please Print)**

For more information, contact Kyle Cole, Director of Professional Programs, at kcole@aarweb.org, or by phone at 404-727-1489.

The Leadership Workshop is arranged by the Academic Relations Committee of the American Academy of Religion, chaired by Fred Glennon.
Emilie M. Townes, an American Baptist clergywoman, is a native of Durham, North Carolina. She holds a DMin from the University of Chicago Divinity School and a PhD in Religion in Society and Personality from Northwestern University. Townes is the first Andrea W. Mellor Professor of African American Religion and Theology at Yale University Divinity School, and in the fall of 2005 she was elected to the presidency of the American Academy of Religion. She is currently serving as President, the first African American woman to do so. In July 2008, she will become the first African American and first woman to serve as Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in the Divinity School. She is the former Carolyn Williams Beaird Professor of Christian Ethics at Union Theological Seminary. Editor of two collections of essays, A Troubling in My Soul: Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering and Embracing the Spirit: Womanist Perspectives on Hope, Salvation, and Transformation, she has also authored Womanist Ethics, Womanist Hope. In a Blaze of Glory; Womanist Spirituality as Social Witness; and Breaking the Fine Rain of Death: African American Health Issues and a Womanist Ethic of Care. Her most recent book, Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil, was released in November 2006. She continues her research on women and health in the African diaspora with attention to Brazil and the United States. She is a founding member of the Initiative on Religion and Politics at Yale that seeks to bring a progressive religious voice to the education of seminarians, spark lively debate on the interplay of religion and politics in the university, and speak to the pressing social issues of the day. She also is the founder of the Middle Passage Conversations on Black Religion in the African Diaspora Initiative at Yale.

RSN: How did your parents and extended family influence your early career and education?

Townes: Both of my parents were college professors and spent the latter years of their careers as administrators. Dad was a department chair and Mom was, over the years, department chair, dean of the graduate school, and dean of the college (at one point, she was both dean) and they instilled in both my sister and me a love of books and a love for learning. Both of them were “firsts” in their families to go to college and to go on and earn doctorates. Mom was the oldest of her five siblings and grew up in West Southern Pines, North Carolina. She was known as a bookworm growing up, and this inspired no small amount of community of black folks. She excelled throughout grade school and high school and won the scholarship to North Carolina Central College at Durham for Negroes (now North Carolina Central University), where she began as a first-year student and 40 years later retired as dean of the college. In Dad’s case, he was the baby of his family of seven siblings and orphaned at a fairly young age. Growing up in the family of one of the neighbors, he realized that one of the ways he might begin talking to the Black folks in Pennsylvania, was through the military and through education. He served in World War II and used the GI Bill to go to college. Not stopping there, he went on to get his doctorate and began his teaching career at Wiley College and ultimately settled in at North Carolina Central College. It’s at Central where my parents met and where I grew up, where the learning was revered and expected. Although never pushy, they were clear with both my sister and me that no less than our best was expected in our studies and that our best was enough.

My maternal grandmother was, I think, the one who started this education ball rolling. Although she never got past the eighth grade, she instilled in all her children the importance of getting an education. For her, the Holy Grail was to complete high school — and everyone did whether they wanted to or not! When Mom was away for a year completing her master’s at the University of Chicago (she was the first black woman to earn a doctorate in molecular biology there), I spent the year with my grandmother. I spent that year in the same grade school that my mother attended and was the oldest black child there. My great-grandmother of that close-knit southern black community encouraging all of us to do well in school. Most of those folks were like my grandmother — not a good bit of book learning, but a world of common sense and a deep belief in the necessity of the next generations getting a good education.

Years later, I would walk from my grade school in 1957, when I was a first grader, up to the big building where I sat outside of Mom’s classroom while she lectured. I loved to hear her lecture — such precision in speech, such love of the subject matter, such command of it. I didn’t consciously think of teaching as a vocation then, but years later I had to admit that teaching was in my genes and that all those years I spent outside of Mom’s classroom listening to her lecture and care about what and how her students learned had their effect.

I think the simplest way to describe the effect my family has had on me is that they taught me to demand nothing less than my best.

RSN: At what point did you decide you wanted to become a scholar of religion?

Townes: This was a two-step process for me. I had avoided what I call the family business, teaching, for years. I wanted to be my own person and find a different path than what was considered good for me. I dove my parents’ door, and ended up at the University of Chicago trying to become a scholar. My advisor was Prof. William P. Lane III, who was referred to me by my grandmother as someone I should meet and who opened the possibility of exploring the ways and means I could have a career in teaching, and in the academy. By the time I graduated, I had met my first mentor in the academy, and Rosemary Keller and together we developed a course on black women in the church. When I opened my mouth to greet the students and began talking with them about what we would be doing throughout the semester, I had the strongest sense of call I’ve ever had in my life. This was both a joy and a struggle, and I knew because I knew that I had to go back to school to earn a PhD — something I was not keen on doing, as I had gone straight through from kindergarten to graduate school at the age of 18. I gave it a break and over the years, I wanted to get away from that grind. Such was not to be!

It was through my teaching that I realized I wanted to become a scholar of religion. They go hand in hand for me, as I can’t be a good teacher if I am not constantly challenging myself as a scholar to explore, to understand, to remain inquisitive and never satisfied. It is the same thing that makes me a teacher. I have learned from wonderful teachers (and those who have not been so wonderful) that a scholar’s true merit is tested in the classroom. They are the ones who show you that there are enclosures. If I can’t translate my work to a variety of audiences, then there is much more work for me to do to understand what I am thinking about and exploring.

RSN: What has compelled you to research, publish, and lecture in the area of Christian social ethics?

Townes: I am that young black girl Alice Walker talks about in her first definition of “womanist” — wanting to know more than what was considered good for me. I dove my parents’ door, and found a different path than the one that was set before me by what was considered good form e. I drove my parents crazy at times with all the questions I had and wanted to understand. I think this kind of inquisitiveness pointed me in the direction of Christian social ethics. I am fascinated by its structures and social science na and how they are created and maintained — something that is a strong feature found in social ethics. And for me, what is particularly fascinating is how we, as humankind, participate in them or not. How do we flout inequalities and how we build systems of justice-making.

For me, justice is an important concept that I want to see embodied in our lives. Not only do I think this is important as a scholar, but I believe this is as a religious person who finds her home in both Christianity and the Afro-Brasilian religion of Candomblé. From both, I have learned the importance of seeking balance and living a “good” life. I try to take these lessons and more into my research, lecturing, and publishing. All center on the lives of black folk in the United States by probing the worlds of black women to see who we unfold into our communities and the larger society. Social ethics, as a discipline, helps me get to this, as I think this is the way my brain works most naturally, creatively, and productively.

RSN: Can you tell us about your current academic life at Yale Divinity School, especially your work on religion and politics?

Townes: Well, that’s a long story. I was once an associate dean for academic affairs in July 2008. I have eight areas that I’m invested in, growing the New Middle Passage Conversations on Black Religion in the African Diaspora Initiative here at Yale. We will launch the initiative this spring, with a national symposium that will feature eight conference panels of over 40 black scholars from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Brazil. The conference is free and open to all — we are only limited by space!

RSN: What is your greatest joy in teaching?

Townes: Being a part of a student’s growth. Watching students gain confidence in their ideas and insights and expressing them with rigour and precision rather than as ad hominem statements. I find that students grow a part of a student’s growth. For me, teaching is also about the moral formation of my students (as well as myself) and being a part of that process is also being a part of the student’s growth. For me, teaching is also about the moral formation of my students (as well as myself) and being a part of that process is also being a part of the student’s growth. For me, teaching is also about the moral formation of my students (as well as myself) and being a part of that process is also being a part of the student’s growth. For me, teaching is also about the moral formation of my students (as well as myself) and being a part of that process is also being a part of the student’s growth.

RSN: What are your goals as the Academy’s president in 2008?

Townes: My primary goal is to deal with the issues and challenges we face in having an independent meeting and move a way toward a unified meeting. We will find a compromise in which the good outlined in 2003 and the problems we face in 2008 can find a good resolution. Part of this will be addressed in the task forces begun by Jeffrey Stout last year to look at our governance and to consider the environmental footprint we leave at our Annual Meeting. But the board must sort through the Annual Meeting survey results (which include 629 often-detailed comments) and look at location, structure, book exhibits, EIS, receptions, meeting with scholarly societies, scholarly interactions, and how we relate to the SBL. Of particular interest to me is the impact the independent meeting decision has on colleagues at institutions that have few financial resources; student members; groups that have never sent their representatives to the AAR and the SBL that used the additional meeting time to meet because they would not be able to do so on their own; and scholars of color who often have early commitments in both the AAR and the SBL. The AAR is a very big tent and our membership has diverse interests — trying to find a way to address the majority of these while fostering scholarly rigor and justice are my chief goals in 2008.

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A Conversation with AAR President Emilie Townes
Independent Annual Meeting Survey

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY of Religion invited members from 2005, 2006, and 2007 (even if their memberships had lapsed during one or two of those years) to take the Independent Annual Meeting survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide a forum for members to express their opinions about several features of the upcoming independent Annual Meetings. The survey was not intended as a referendum or as a prelude to a return to traditional AAR-SBL joint meetings. The AAR Executive Office contacted members four times about the survey.

• Every AAR member received a postcard, via USPS, explaining the survey and inviting them to take it.

• Every AAR member received a letter, via e-mail, from Jeffrey Stout, AAR President, and Emilie Townes, Vice President, explaining why the AAR was doing a survey and inviting them to take it. The e-mail contained a hot link to the survey on the AAR website.

• Each member received the October AAR E-bulletin, which contained a reminder about the opportunity to take the survey. The E-bulletin also contained a hot link to the survey on the AAR website.

• The October edition of Religious Studies News, sent to every AAR member, contained a reminder about the opportunity to take the survey and the included letter from Jeffrey Stout and Emilie Townes.

The Executive Office invited several leadership groups to encourage their AAR colleagues to take the survey. These included:

• All AAR volunteer leaders (Board Members, Program Unit Chairs, and Standing Committee members). Several Regionally Elected Directors sent e-mails to their regional members encouraging them to take the survey.

• Departmental Chairs whose names are included in the AAR Departments database.

• AAR members who serve as Presidents and Deans of schools who are members of the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada.

The AAR Executive Office also sent a letter, via USPS, to over 500 persons who work with Annual Meeting exhibitors — publishers, acquisition editors, and publishing house staff members — inviting them to take the survey. Many of these persons are not AAR members, so the Executive Office made arrangements for them to receive a special login ID number that would allow them to participate in the survey.

In all, 15,367 members and exhibitors were invited and enabled to take the survey. The questions posed on the survey were presented to respondents in random order to prevent order bias. The survey was available online from September 21, 2007, through October 15, 2007, and 2,706 persons participated, answering some or all of the questions. This represents a response rate of 17.61 percent.

The survey itself contained two major sections: one captured demographic information about respondents and the other posed questions about the Annual Meeting. In addition, at three places in the survey we invited respondents to make comments; we did not place a limit on how much text respondents could type into the comment boxes. Respondents made an unusually high number of comments, and some of the comments were quite lengthy. Question 12 (about the 2011 meeting) drew 1,454 comments (from 53.73 percent of the respondents); 1,170 comments (from 43.24 percent of the respondents) were recorded after Question 13 (about attendance at next year’s Annual Meeting); and 629 comments (23.24 percent of the respondents) were recorded at the end of the survey. Our Board is continuing to review and assess these comments, some of which contain personal identifying information. We will make the comments section of the survey available after the Board has had a chance to review it in its entirety and to make sure that no respondent’s personal comments, intended to be made anonymously, are made public.

The results of the survey follow.

Demographic Questions*

Demographic 1: Please identify your AAR affiliation.

Demographic 2: Please identify your institutional home.

Demographic 3: Are you currently a member of the Society of Biblical Literature?

* Note: Graph scales vary (continued on next page)
Questions about the Annual Meeting*

Question 1: How important is it for you to attend Annual Meetings where the book exhibition includes displays, publications, and professional staff from both biblical studies and religious studies publishers?

Question 2: When you are deciding whether to attend the AAR Annual Meeting, how important a factor is the cost (to you) of attendance?

Question 3: Based on what you know about job candidates in your field, how important is it for the AAR and the SBL to offer a common center for interviews at a single convention site each year?

Question 4: Given your institution’s academic calendar, how important is it for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday?

Question 5: How important is it to you for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting in the same city on the same days as the SBL?

Question 6: How important is it for you to be able to attend receptions, additional meetings, or workshops at an Annual Meeting that includes both AAR and SBL members?

Question 7: How important is it for you to attend an AAR Annual Meeting that is scheduled concurrently with scholarly organizations other than the SBL (e.g., Middle Eastern Studies Association, Society of Christian Ethics, Association for Jewish Studies, etc.)?

Question 8: Based on what you know about faculty conducting searches for your institution, how important is it for the AAR and the SBL to offer a common center for interviews at a single convention site each year?

Question 9: How important is it for you to attend Annual Meetings where you can share scholarly dialogue, in and out of formal sessions, with both AAR and SBL members?

* Note: Graph scales vary

(continued from page 11)
Question 10: AAR Annual Meetings have been held in ten different cities over the last ten years. Some members have suggested that we rotate our Annual Meetings through a smaller, fixed set of four or five cities. Would you prefer to meet in many cities around the country, or would you prefer to meet in a fixed set of four or five cities?

Question 11: In your opinion, which three of the following are most important to you as you consider attending an Annual Meeting of the AAR? (Identify the three items most important to you).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Attend the AAR Annual Meeting?</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Selections</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend scholarly presentations (papers, panels, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>18.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend a large and comprehensive book exhibition</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,185</td>
<td>15.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to make scholarly presentations (papers, panels, etc.)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>13.97%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with AAR members in one’s specialized field</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>13.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend or participate in SBL sessions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>8.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with AAR members outside one’s specialized field</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>6.89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to be interviewed for a job</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>420</td>
<td>5.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with SBL members</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>4.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with acquisitions editors</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>309</td>
<td>4.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to interview job candidates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>3.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to participate in receptions involving your alma mater</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>3.36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with members of scholarly societies other than the SBL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7,660</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Question 12: In 2011, the AAR plans to meet at the same time that the SBL meets in San Francisco. The two organizations will meet in different facilities, and will not co-publish a program book. After 2011, how often would you like to see Annual Meetings conducted on roughly this model (i.e., independently administered, but in the same city and on the same weekend as the SBL’s meeting)?

**Collapsed Responses by Percentage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Attend the AAR Annual Meeting?</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>% of Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend scholarly presentations</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td>17.64%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend a large and comprehensive book exhibition</td>
<td>41.89%</td>
<td>17.07%</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to make scholarly presentations</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td>17.34%</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with AAR members in one’s specialized field</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td>17.64%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend or participate in SBL sessions</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to meet with members of scholarly societies other than the SBL</td>
<td>41.07%</td>
<td>17.64%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
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</table>

Question 13: Do you intend to attend the 2008 AAR Annual Meeting in Chicago (held November 1st through November 3rd), the first Annual Meeting held independently of the SBL?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why Attend the AAR Annual Meeting?</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>% of Selections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend scholarly presentations</td>
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<td>41.07%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The opportunity to attend a large and comprehensive book exhibition</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question 4: Given your institution’s academic calendar, how important is it for the AAR to hold its Annual Meeting the weekend before the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Not Important</th>
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<th>Important</th>
<th>% of Selections</th>
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<td>17.64%</td>
<td>41.30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Graph scales vary*
II. AAR Regional Identification

All AAR members, by virtue of where they work, are members of one of ten regions. The 2007 Regional Census of all AAR members is compared to the regional identity of all survey respondents below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>2007 Regional Census</th>
<th>IAM Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Southeast</td>
<td>16.62%</td>
<td>16.54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>16.38%</td>
<td>15.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>12.52%</td>
<td>12.47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>12.23%</td>
<td>14.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England-Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>9.20%</td>
<td>8.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (non-U.S., non-Canada)</td>
<td>8.69%</td>
<td>6.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern International</td>
<td>6.82%</td>
<td>6.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest</td>
<td>6.29%</td>
<td>6.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Midwest</td>
<td>5.32%</td>
<td>7.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Northwest</td>
<td>3.39%</td>
<td>3.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocky Mountain–Great Plains</td>
<td>2.55%</td>
<td>2.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: Relative to the 2007 Regional Census, those who took the survey are highly representative of the overall AAR membership.

III. Member “Activity” Relative to the Annual Meeting

The following chart compares how many Annual Meetings, of the last five, the 2005, 2006, and 2007 members attended, as compared with how many the IAM survey respondents attended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How many Annual Meetings of the last 5?</th>
<th>2005, 2006, and 2007 Members</th>
<th>IAM Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>37.00%</td>
<td>15.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.30%</td>
<td>15.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.30%</td>
<td>14.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8.90%</td>
<td>14.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.80%</td>
<td>17.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.60%</td>
<td>22.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99.9%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: IAM survey respondents are very active relative to the general membership when it comes to Annual Meeting attendance. A much higher percentage of the respondents have attended the Annual Meeting regularly than has the general membership.

IV. Member “Activity” Relative to Membership

We have tracked the number of years, in the last three, that respondents have been members of AAR and have measured this against all members from 2005, 2006, and 2007. The following chart shows this data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>2005, 2006, and 2007 Members</th>
<th>IAM Survey Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 of 3</td>
<td>47.30%</td>
<td>77.58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 of 3</td>
<td>22.50%</td>
<td>12.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 of 3</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
<td>7.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 of 3</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>2.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion: IAM respondents are more likely than most members to keep their AAR membership current.

V. Member Research and Teaching Interests

Respondents were asked to identify and rank up to three religious traditions on which they focus their teaching and research. The list of traditions we used in the survey was taken from another instrument we have, the Research Interest Survey (RIS). The RIS has been taken by over 8,500 AAR members in the last three years. One difference between the RIS and the demographic we used in the survey is that on the RIS, respondents are able to pick more than three religious traditions, whereas on the IAM survey, they are limited to three traditions. As it turns out, those who took the RIS chose, on average, 3.4 religious traditions, whereas IAM respondents chose, on average, 2.8 religions. Another difference is that the RIS includes four categories of Christianity (Christian, Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox) whereas the IAM survey has only three (Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox).

The chart below shows a comparison of the RIS and IAM surveys. It includes all the choices persons made and treats them equally (i.e., if a respondent checked Islam once, it counts as one, regardless of whether it was her first, second, or third choice). It collapses all the subcategories of Christianity into a single category (Christian). The chart is arranged from highest number of choices to lowest number of choices.

**Note: Graph scales vary**

Joint Membership Data: 19.97 percent of survey respondents identified themselves as Joint members. In September 2007, 8.46 percent of all current AAR members were Joint members.

**Conclusion:** Relative to the shape of the overall membership, a smaller percentage of Student Members took the survey, a greater percentage of Regular Members took the survey, and a greater percentage of Joint Members took the survey.

Conclusion: The IAM respondents identify their areas of study in a manner very similar to the RIS respondents. A slightly higher percentage of those who study Christian, Ancient Greco–Roman, Judaic, African–American, Ancient Near Eastern, and Islamic traditions took the IAM survey; a slightly lower percentage of those who study Zoroastrian, Sikh, African, Native American, Jainist, Gnostic, Confucian, Indigenous, and Taoist traditions took the IAM survey.

At its November 2007 meeting, after an initial review of these results of the Independent Annual Meetings survey, the AAR Board of Directors voted to devote part of its April 2008 meeting to a discussion of future Annual Meetings. The Board and the Executive Office will inform members of any developments that may occur in light of this discussion.

March 2008 RIS • 13
Religious Studies News

Academy Plans for Summer Seminars on Religious Pluralism and Comparative Theology

A Report from the Theologies of Religious Pluralism Planning Committee and the Theological Education Steering Committee

Editor’s Note: RSN recently interviewed John J. Thamathan regarding the results of work on behalf of the Academy’s Theological Programs Initiative.

The core goal of these seminars will be to help faculty participants to formulate a working answer to the question, ‘What significance does my neighbor’s tradition have for my own?’

Thamathan: Well, we took our mark from Rambachan’s argument that we must generate a religiously diverse group to think about religious diversity. That will be a basic consideration. Second, we agreed that these summer seminars cannot amount to remedial coursework in world religions. No doubt faculty participants will learn a great deal about traditions other than their own, but by way of focused learning and reflection on theories of religious pluralism and comparative theology.

The core goal of these seminars will be to help faculty participants to formulate a working answer to the question, ‘What significance does my neighbor’s tradition have for my own?’ At the end of the summer seminar, faculty participants will have worked out the basic elements of their own TRP and have substantive familiarity with current literature in TRP and comparative theology. We also hope to equip faculty participants to incorporate their learning into restructuring their courses. How might the basic course in theology include a unit on TRP and comparative theology? How might a course in Hebrew Bible, New Testament, or pastoral care take up questions of religious diversity?

As far as content goes, we begin with the assumption that religious traditions have long histories of speaking about other communities and traditions. So, part of our work will be to unearth and to articulate those histories. The subsequent question is this: What should our traditions say about our religious neighbors? What can we say about our neighbors in the presence and hearing of those neighbors?

RSN: Is there a normative theology of religious pluralism that your group will commend to faculty seminar participants?

Thamathan: Not at all. I doubt that the members of this religiously and theologically diverse group could come to any such consensus! Our task is to introduce seminar participants to the best current scholarship in these contested fields and to assist seminar participants in formulating their own positions. The only constraint on all who are present — on instructors and learners — is that we must articulate and defend our convictions in the presence of persons from traditions other than our own.

RSN: But won’t the very fact that the group is religiously diverse tilt the conversation in the direction of a pluralistic theology of religions of the sort advocated by John Hick or Paul Knitter?

Thamathan: Not necessarily. Let’s admit that the presence of persons from traditions other than one’s own, especially among academic conversation partners, is likely to generate a spirit of hospitality, but that need not mean that we are compelled to agree with each other.

Indeed, there is no agreement within any given tradition on these issues. Just as there are Christian exclusivists, inclusivists, and pluralists, there are also Buddhist inclusivists and exclusivists. We cannot ignore our neighbors but we need not agree with them. Indeed, our willingness to engage in informed conversation and context is Christian. Hence, TESC has an obligation to attend carefully to the needs of AAR members whose scholarly, teaching, and professional lives are lived out in seminaries and divinity schools. But I hasten to add that nothing that the AAR does is targeted exclusively for persons interested in the single religious tradition. Theology within the AAR takes a multiplicity of configurations and even names. Although some Buddhist scholars have demonstrated relative comfort with the term “theology” — as is evidenced in the 1999 edited collection by Roger Jackson and John Makransky entitled Buddhism Theology: Critical Reflections by Contemporary Buddhist Scholars (RoutledgeCurzon) — AAR groups tend to talk about “constructive-critical” work instead. The AAR explicitly “welcomes all disciplined reflection on religion — both from within and outside of communities of belief and practice” (emphasis added). Naturally, these communities are not just Christian. So, the term “theology,” within the AAR and hence also for the TESC, cannot be understood as a narrowly Christian term.

Even on the graduate front, theological education encompasses the various university divinity schools which have long been and continue to be populated by persons from a variety of traditions. Some seminaries also are becoming multi-religious, both on the faculty side as well as among students. Hartford Seminary and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Chicago are examples that come readily to mind. Of course, graduate theological education also includes the various Jewish seminaries. I expect that in this decade, we will also see the rise of Buddhist, Muslim, and more broadly, graduate and undergraduate theology and religious studies departments also include Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, and others who would characterize their work as “constructive-critical” if not “theological.”

RSN: And this religious diversity is central to the work of the TESC and the TRPPC?

Thamathan: Yes, the work of the TRPPC is to plan summer seminars for faculty on TRP and comparative theology. While religious diversity has been a fact of life in American higher education since the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, few scholars in theological education are trained in TRP and comparative theology. The trouble is that clergy and religious leaders from across traditions — who are by necessity generalists — have to deal routinely with questions about how to officiate at interreligious weddings or fulfill chancery obligations that require engagement with persons across traditions. Life in an ever more pluralistic nation makes reflection about the nature and meaning of religious diversity a mandatory component in the life of religious professionals. Speaking in Christian terms, we would hardly consider a student training for ordination well-prepared if she were unable to work up a good sermon; likewise, it is hard to see how we could call a minister well-prepared for her vocation if she finds herself unable to articulate her congregational understanding about how to respond to widespread resistance in her town when Muslims seek to purchase an unused church building.

The question of religious diversity also bears on every area within theological education and is not just a matter to be left to the theologians. Church historians have long known that encounters with religious diversity are a reality in all historical periods, but that knowledge has not sufficiently trickled down to students. The reality of religious diversity is especially pressing for pastoral caregivers and chaplains in hospital and military settings, but seminary training remains largely monolithic.

RSN: So, the summer seminars are not meant for those who are already experts in TRP or comparative theology?

Thamathan: Right. The TESC and the TRPPC believe that most academic institutions — whether we are speaking of graduate seminars or undergraduate religious studies departments — cannot afford to dedicate faculty lines to specialist scholars in these areas. Meanwhile, non-specialists are keenly feeling the need to get up to speed on the relevant literature and incorporate theological reflection about religious diversity into their teaching and research.

RSN: You keep referring to theological reflection about religious diversity, but isn’t such reflection exclusively a Christian preoccupation?

Thamathan: Not at all. As Anant Rambachan observed during our planning meeting, religious traditions have always spoken about other traditions and communities. What is new, Rambachan insists, is that such speaking does and indeed must now happen in the presence of these others. On the research front, we are seeing the emergence of new work that goes beyond attending to Christian approaches to religious diversity. Kristin Kiblinger’s The Myth of Religious Superiority (Ashgate, 2005) is a monograph that comes readily to mind. Paul Knitter’s edited volume, The Myth of Religious Superiority (Orbis, 2004) includes Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims approaches to religious diversity. Likewise, David Ray Griffiths’ edited collection, Deep Religious Pluralism (WJK, 2005) also includes a variety of religious perspectives.

RSN: Is the work of the TRPPC finished?

Thamathan:Hardly! Although our work as a planning group is largely complete, all members of TRPPC, Peter Ochs included, have agreed to serve as part of the teaching team for the first run of our summer seminars, providing of course, that we receive funding.

RSN: So what will these summer seminars look like? What are your basic instructional goals?

(continued on page 15)
Realignment of the AAR Executive Staff

Jack Fitzmier, American Academy of Religion

ONE RECENT FOCUS of organizational leadership is the alignment of resources — particularly of staff resources. Over the last year I have done a good deal of thinking about how the Executive Staff of the American Academy of Religion is organized. Is it properly aligned? That is, have we accurately identified our needs and do we have the right staff members in place to meet those needs? In most cases, I answered that question in the affirmative. But it was also clear that in other spots, the Executive Staff has gaps and lacunae. After a good deal of thought and discussion with our senior staff and the Executive Committee of the Board, we have done a modest realignment of the Atlanta staff. Fortunately, this has occurred without the need to let anyone go or to add additional staff. We have fine-tuned job descriptions, put backup personnel in place in critical offices, and added some functions that were missing. Here is a listing of our major areas and the staff that work in each one:

Executive: Jack Fitzmier

Finance and Administration: Deborah Marshall, Controller; Toby Director, Deanna Lord

Development: Margaret Jenkins

Publications: Carey J. Gifford, Stephanie Gray

Professional Programs: Kyle Cole, Jessica Snider

External Relations: Steve Herrick, Susan Snider

Membership Development: Myesha Jenkins

Information Technology: Joe DeRose

While this does not represent a radical restructuring, there are some new features. We have given sharper focus to two areas — Publications, which is headed up by Carey J. Gifford, and Professional Programs, which is headed up by Kyle Cole. We have also added a function that was somewhat nascent, but is increasingly important to the success of the AAR — that of Marketing. Aislinn Jones has added this to her portfolio, and has been able to do so, in part, because we brought Robert Puckett, her assistant, onto the staff in a full time capacity. Third, and most important, we have created an altogether new role — that of Membership Development. Myesha Jenkins has agreed to take on this challenge. She will help us think about who our members are, why they join the AAR, and what their professional and scholarly needs are. The changes, as well as a series of other more modest staffing shifts, are intended to help our Executive Staff to continue its tradition of excellence in serving you, our members. If you have any questions about the realignment, please contact Jack Fitzmier, AAR Executive Director, at 404-727-3049.

Focus: AAR Executive? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism

Deanna Lord

Realignment of the AAR Executive Staff

(continued from page 14)

debate with persons from other traditions is itself a sign that we take them seriously enough (continued from page 14). Our work would be incomplete without bringing Muslim and Buddhist perspectives at the very least. We have always been in contact with and shaped by traditions other than our own but now are training to be Christian leaders and seeking to integrate their multiple religious commitments. For such students, questions of TRP and comparative theology are absolutely critical. Unfortunately, Mark observes that many theological institutions have little at the heart of their curricula to help students take up these questions.

Jeanine Hill Fletcher has recently published a groundbreaking book entitled Monopoly on Salvation? A Feminist Approach to Religious Pluralism (2005), arguing that questions of TRP away from an exclusive focus on questions of soteriology to questions of pneumatology. These assumptions are problematic not least because they take for granted that soteriological differences come in play only when one crosses the boundary between one religion and another. The obvious problem is that the traditions we call ‘religions’ are by no means internally consistent on soteriological matters. The more subtle but equally consequential problem is this: Just where are the boundaries between ‘religions’ to be found? The reality of ‘multiple religious participation’ makes conventional talk about ‘religions’ in the plural rather problematic.

As readers also know that there has been an explosion of important scholarship, much of it coming from postcolonial quarters, that renders problematic the very idea of ‘religion.’ I am thinking especially about the work of Talal Asad and S. N. Balagangadharan in anthropology but also the impressive work of scholars like Timothy Fitzgerald, Richard King, Russell McCutcheon, and others. A conclusion to be drawn from their work is that critical scholarship cannot take the category ‘religion’ and its contrast term ‘the secular’ for granted. Theology of religious pluralism, has and large, done just that. My sense is that it is high time for TRP and comparative theology to consider what this scholarship has to say about our enterprise. And another. The obvious problem is that the traditions we call ‘religions’ are by no means internally consistent on soteriological matters. The more subtle but equally consequential problem is this: Just where are the boundaries between ‘religions’ to be found? The reality of ‘multiple religious participation’ makes conventional talk about ‘religions’ in the plural rather problematic.

When looking for what when selecting seminar participants? Will there be applications for seminar participants will there be applications for seminar participants? Will there be applications for seminar participants? We very much hope that some of these presentations will find their way to publication. Our Annual Meeting will help us to identify unanswered questions and special problems that AAR participants want us to treat in greater depth in our second week together. The TRP is convinced that meeting over two summers and at the Annual Meeting, will generate a sense of community and collaboration that the conference alone could not accomplish. If funding is forthcoming, we hope to have the first meeting of our summer seminar in May 2009.

March 2008 RSN
**Call for Committee Nominations**

Each year members of the American Academy of Religion are invited to nominate persons to fill open positions on AAR Standing Committees, Task Forces, and Juries. This year there are openings on the following groups:

- *Academic Relations Committee*
- *Book Award Juries*
- *Career Services Advisory Committee*
- *History of Religions Jury*
- *International Connections Committee*
- *Nominations Committee*
- *Public Understanding of Religion Committee*
- *Publications Committee*
- *Research Grant Jury*
- *Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in the Profession Committee*
- *Status of Women in the Profession Committee*
- *Teaching and Learning Committee*
- *Theological Education Steering Committee*

Nominations for positions on these groups must be made in writing, and must include:
1) a description of the nominee’s academic and professional interests; 2) a summary of the nominee’s activity in the AAR; 3) a statement describing the nominee’s interest or promise for a particular assignment; and 4) a current copy of the nominee’s curriculum vita. Members may nominate themselves. All nominees must be members in good standing of the AAR. Nominations must be received by May 1, 2008, and may be e-mailed, faxed, or posted to:

Jack Fitzmier  
Executive Director  
American Academy of Religion  
Suite 300  
825 Houston Mill Road NE  
Atlanta, GA 30329 USA  
Fax: 404-727-7959  
nominations@aarweb.org

Emilie Townes, President of the AAR, will review nominations and make selections during August and September 2008. Nominees will be notified of their status soon thereafter. If you have questions about particular assignments, please feel free to contact the AAR’s Executive Staff, Board members, or Committee/Task Force chairs. Committee descriptions and rosters are available on the web at www.aarweb.org/about_AAR/committees.
Update on Government Relations Program

The AAR CONTINUED to support and expand its government relations program in 2007. During the year, the AAR advocated for increased federal funding for the humanities and coordinated almost a dozen meetings for FBI and prison chaplaincy program officials to meet with scholars on a variety of issues related to religious beliefs and practices.

In March 2007, the AAR and 36 other scholarly associations co-sponsored Humanities Advocacy Day, an annual event in Washington, D.C., organized by the National Humanities Alliance. AAR board members Frederick Denny and Stacy Patty, member Scott Collins-Jones, and staffers Steve Herrick and Shelly Roberts met with congressional staff from Colorado, Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Texas to advocate for increased funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities. NEH is the largest funder of humanities programs in the United States. At the time of the AAR copy deadline, the AAR is supporting funding of the $160 million approved by the House Appropriations Committee for fiscal year 2008, which is an increase of $19 million above the fiscal year 2007 NEH appropriation.

In November, the AAR arranged four meetings between scholars and three FBI officials. Each meeting covered a different topic: Islam and charity; religion and political violence; Islam and the West; and, as the 30th anniversary approaches, looking back on Jonestown. This is the 10th consecutive year the AAR has facilitated such meetings. Scholars volunteering time to participate in the sessions were Amir Hussain, John Kelsay, Ruth Mas, Rebecca Moore, David Rapoport, Tamara Sonn, John Volf, and Catherine Westinger.

Also in November, for the fourth straight year, the AAR arranged meetings between directors of prison chaplaincy programs and religion scholars. Patrick McCollum, an AAR member and prison chaplain from California, helped plan the agenda and co-chaired the meetings. Topics discussed in the seven meetings were Wicca and Neopaganism; legislation affecting religion in prison; Kabbalah; Native-American Traditions; Scienology; Afro-Caribbean traditions; and Islam. States represented by the prison chaplaincy directors included Colorado, Connecticut, Indiana, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. Two officials from the Federal Bureau of Prisons and one from the American Correctional Chaplains Association were also in attendance. The following scholars volunteered their time to participate in these informative sessions: Mary Ann Clark, Noël Enkine, Eugene Gallagher, Pinchas Giller, Wendy Griffin, Marcia Hermansen, Aminah Beverly McCloud, Barbara McGraw, Michael McNally, Sarah Pike, Ines Talamanetz, and Michael York.

The Association of Religion Data Archives

www.theARDA.com

Authoritative Information Made Accessible

Educators...Explore Our New Learning Center:
- Downloadable Exercises
- Glossary of Religion
- Compare Yourself Survey
- Community Profile

Other ARDA Resources:
- National Profiles
- Membership Reports and Maps
- QuickStats & QuickLists
- American Denominations
- Data Archive
In the Public Interest

**Going Public on Religion: Paradise or Pitfall?**

Colleen McDannell, University of Utah


WHEN THE San Diego Union-Tribune reported on the November AAR meeting, writer Sandi Doolbee couldn’t pass up the chance to mention the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster. Did her November 17th article promote or ridicule the academic study of religion? Noted religion scholar Robert A. Orsi (Northwestern University), Stephen Prothero (Boston University), and Diane Winston (University of Southern California) all featured at a Special Topics Forum sponsored by the Public Understanding of Religion Committee — had some answers. Each laid out distinct ways that we should understand our roles as public intellectuals.

While Robert Orsi voiced great respect for his colleagues who talk to the media, he does not. For Orsi, the “true public” for scholars of religion is our students and our colleagues. By doing what we do best — teaching and researching — we make a sophisticated and nuanced manner a surprisingly wide public, students talk to their families and friends (what we might think of as an extended field of others who will be affected by what we teach). “The ghosts in the classrooms” and in this way spread our insights wider than we think. When students go home for Thanksgiving break, for instance, they might bring the last fact they learned about radical Islam or Vatican II to the dinner table. In similar ways, our colleagues extend far beyond the walls of our departments because professional contacts have become increasingly international and multidisciplinary. By focusing our attentions on what we have been trained to do, we avoid the temptation to engage in a celebrity culture that rarely asks demanding questions and prefers its religion to be trivial, entertaining, and irrelevant.

A critic of media, Orsi reminded the audience that news reporters failed to challenge the government’s assertions about Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction.” Unfortunately, this is because reporters merely restate what they already “know.” When scholars of religion try to convey the complexity of an event, reporters simplify their ideas into sound bites and select quotes that affirm what they already have in mind. Orsi went on to say that regarding the media, he did not have much control. In this sense, the news media does not come to us to be educated about our areas of expertise. The hard, disciplined language of scholarship is needed to say complicated and significant things about religion in contexts in which we have more control.

Orsi concluded by raising a larger question: Why are we so all hungry to get into the news? Stephen Prothero provided one possible answer: to feed the masses. Although Americans are the most religious people in the Western world, we are also the most ignorant on the subject of religion. This ignorance has serious civic and international repercussions. All of us should find a way to teach not just our students and colleagues, but the general public. This public ranges from our neighbors who go to the local church to the international readers of the New York Times. As public intellectuals, our moderate voices work to drown out the extreme ones who often command attention by sheer force of will. As scholars, we need to model a different way of talking about religion.

For Prothero, “writing is a passion” and so he enjoys communicating to a general audience. To follow Prothero’s model, writing in clear and accessible prose should be promoted by doctoral programs and encouraged among our colleagues. While his first university press book perhaps had a stunning 500 readers, his more commercial books were reviewed in all the major newspapers, resulted in talk show appearances, and thus reached larger audiences.

“Going public,” however, has its challenges. Neither reporters nor the public are comfortable with “worphrasing the God of Bracketing.” They want to know who you are and where you stand. For this reason, personal questions about religious affiliation cannot and should not be avoided when speaking to a broader public. For Prothero, revealing rather than concealing allowed him to come alive and to speak in a voice more fully his own.

At the same time, he quickly learned that “going public” means giving up control. A news show asked him to give his “religion literacy quiz” to some high school students to see how they would fare. The student’s teacher, however, found the test too hard and the prepared students in advance. When the students responded with uncharacteristically insightful answers, the aston- ished news reporter kept filming until more typical “dumb” answers were given. Essentially the responses were subsequently broadcast. Irate parents then e-mailed Prothero, blaming the whole affair on him.

Unlike Orsi, Prothero believes it is worth the risk to have our knowledge “produced” in ways that may be blatantly false or painfully simplistic. “Going public” means gaining new audiences and learning new ways of talking about ideas that matter. It means learning how to speak with compassion about religion to every person in language they can understand.

Diane Winston, a self-confessed “recovering journalist,” admitted to committing all of the sins that Orsi and Prothero attributed to the media. For her, the overarching question was “So what?” What if so many reporters only discuss the paper on the Church of the Flying Spaghetti Monster? For Winston, the stakes are too high to get frustrated about the current state of jour- nalism. Like Prothero, Winston believes that as scholars we need to improve the level of educa- tion about religion in whatever ways we can.

Winston reminded the audience that journalists, of whatever media, have limitations that they cannot control. They often practice self-censorship, knowing what stories or ideas will or will not get by their own editors. Current journalism standards push reporters to produce stories that are “balanced” rather than true. They under- stand all stories as having two sides and they look to find speakers to support one side or the other. This conflict narrative form has taken over as the model for reporting and so scholars need to work hard at breaking down this binary orientation. One way of doing this is to cultivate your local reporter. Reporters can be a real friend too. It is their very curiosity about how the world works that motivated them to join the profession in the first place. As scholars, we need to patiently educate not every reporter who calls us or not get by their own editors.

Winston also suggested “doing it yourself,” especially in the area of new media (Internet sites, blogging, podcasts) that are replacing the mainstream media of newspapers and magazines. The democratic nature of the new media allows for scholars to become reporters. Blogging opens the flood of information by encouraging individuals to shape public discourse as they see fit. Looking for stories of religion constructed with more sensitivity and nuance? Check out the Internet. One example Winston provided is the newly launched newinitiative.org. Journalism programs from Columbia, Berkeley, University of Southern California, and Northwestern University also post in-depth stories about religion.

While expressing generally positive feelings toward “going public on religion,” the audience raised several important issues. University administrators might be excited to find their facul- ty members on television or reviewed in the New York Times, but tenure committees are less impressed. Departments rarely have standards in place for promoting new forms of public scholar- ship. Where does blogging fit into standard pro- fessional evaluation criteria? Does giving a talk at a local mosque fall under the category of service or teaching? If scholarship is our craft, how do we make our prolonged conversation with stu- dents and colleagues more significant?

For application information and eligibility requirements, see www.aarweb.org/grants.

**2007–2008 RESEARCH GRANT WINNERS**

**COLLABORATIVE**

Adle Reinhartz, University of Ottawa
Heart (Thaupan) and Soul: How Movies Mediate Meaning, Calvin Seminary, University of Ottawa

**INDIVIDUAL**

Julia Babiak, University of Redlands
Making a Homelands: Race, Religion, and the Meaning of Africa in the Nineteenth-Century African Methodist Episcopal Church

S. Lee Flemming, Jr., Benedictine-Monastic Contemplative Ordinariate
The Spiritual Life of St. Thomas Aquinas

William P. Haman, University of Tennessee, Chattanooga
Suicide Bombers Become Godfathers: Women, Apostatization, and Sacred Violence in South Asia

Sevon Hee, Florida International University
Sacred High City, Sacred Low City: A Tale of Religious Sites in Two Tokyo Neighborhoods

Jennifer G. Jones, Truman State University
Temptation: A Madman? Women in the convicting of the Earth

Creg Johnson, University of Colorado at Boulder
Religion in the Moment: Contemporary Lives of Indigenous Traditions

**AAAR Grant Winners**

Kerry Martin Skora, Hiram College
From Guru to Shaykh: Bawa Muhaiyyaddeen and the Making of Transnational "Sufi" Family

Leda Pudal, Duke University
Annotating Paradoxes: Oral Narrative and Religion in Colonial India

Miranda Earle Shaw, University of Richmond
Buddhist Goddesses of Tibet and Nepal: Final Phase of Folkwork

Matthew Voss, Hiram College
Recollecting Missing Thronos Rupchoschu Position: The History and Contemporary Lived Experience of a Seventeenth-Century Mindulam, Monastery and Its Landscape in Central Bhutan

Manuel A. Vazquez, Universidad de Valencia
Performing Identities and Spaces among Brazilian and Congolese Immigrants in London and Atlanta: The Case of Two Transnational Religious Networks
The Student Liaison Group (SLG) is composed of AAR graduate student members who are appointed or elected by their department to serve. Currently, the Student Liaison Group is open to students enrolled in a PhD program. Student liaisons are a resource for students who need information about AAR’s programs and services. They also report on the needs and activities of students to the student director and participate in efforts to expand student involvement in the Academy. If you would like more information about how your PhD program can be represented, contact Myesha D. Jenkins at mjjenkins@aarweb.org. The next appointment period is August 2008.

1. Baylor University, Cameron Jorgenson
2. Boston College, Bdie Bidlack
3. Catholic University of America, Jay Carney
4. Chicago Theological Seminary, Adam Kontso
5. Columbia University, Daniel Vaca
6. Concordia University, Laurie Lamothe Scholes
7. University of Dayton, Coleman Fannin
8. Drew University, Krista Hughes
9. Duke University, Suanna L. Drake
10. Emory University, Matthew Belsey Baley
11. Florida State University, Kathleen Hladky
12. University of Florida, Eleanor Finnegan
13. Fuller Theological Seminary, Matt Hamsher
14. Graduate Theological Union, Erin Brigham
15. Harvard University, Linford Fisher
16. Iliff School of Theology, Stephanie Yuhas
17. Loyola University, Chicago, Andrea Hollingworth
18. McGill University, Lei Kuan Lai
19. McMaster University, Sherry Smith
20. University of Missouri, Kansas City, Day Lane
21. University of Oxford, Brian Frank Curry
22. Pacifica Graduate Institute, Joe Good
23. Princeton University, Jimmy Yu
24. Southern Methodist University, Mary C. Moorman
25. Union Theological Seminary, New York, K. Christine Pae
26. Union Theological Seminary & Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Tammie Marie Grimm
27. University of Toronto, Rebekka King
28. University of Virginia, Timothy P. McConnell
29. University of Waterloo, Mandy Furney
30. Wheaton College, Michael D. White

Getting Stuck Overseas? Reflections on Graduate Studies Abroad

J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Fordham University

The news that I had been accepted into Oxford University’s graduate program in theology was greeted by my professors at Georgetown with a blend of delight and skepticism. “It looks like a compelling offer,” I was told on several occasions, “but don’t take it; you’ll only end up getting stuck permanently in Britain.” It seemed that everyone had a story of another American who had pursued doctoral studies abroad and then found it impossible to secure a position back home.

In the end, I took the plunge and headed across the pond. What I discovered was an academic system whose methods and priorities diverged sharply from those I had been accustomed to in the United States. It is only now, with four years of hindsight, that I have been able to see how the many peculiarities of life and study in Oxford have shaped my habits as a thinker and teacher. Those peculiarities are clearly not suited to everyone. But for those who embark upon the experience with a sense of what is in store for them and a willingness to invest time in sustaining relationships with colleagues and institutions on both sides of the Atlantic, graduate studies abroad can be highly rewarding.

The most obvious difference between an Oxford (indeed, a British) graduate program and an American one has to do with independence. Broadly speaking, British doctorates are research-based; there is no mandatory coursework, there are no comprehensive exams, and the degree is awarded exclusively on the merits of the dissertation. Even so-called “taught” graduate courses may involve no more than two or three hours of contact time per week. The result is that graduate students have an unparalleled degree of freedom; they can read widely, attend lectures and seminars in fields outside their own, and develop their ideas at their own pace. But this freedom also entails responsibilities: without comprehensive exams, students must themselves ensure that they have sufficient breadth as well as depth of knowledge; without constant deadlines, they must quickly master self-discipline.

Crucial to this process is the relationship between a student and his or her supervisor. If having a supportive adviser and committee is important to American doctoral students, it is the sine qua non of graduate studies in Oxford. Since the supervisor is the individual with whom a student will have almost exclusive contact, the importance of choosing him or her cannot be underestimated. I have benefited immensely from a supervisor who has consistently shown interest in my development as a historian of late medieval Christianity and as a scholar more generally, who has gone out of his way to argue on my behalf, and who has made it clear that the flourishing of his graduate students ranks high among his priorities. My time in Britain would have been significantly poorer without this support, and I would encourage students thinking about applying for a British graduate degree to identify a potential supervisor and to get a sense of what a working relationship with him or her might be like before signing on the dotted line.

The intellectual independence I have enjoyed and the close relationship I have developed with my advisor have been at the heart of my Oxford experience. I have also gained from being in close proximity to archives of primary sources and to a community of scholars of late medieval and early modern England likely unequaled outside the United Kingdom. These and other circumstances have made my decision to come to Oxford the right one for me, but it is not necessarily right for everyone. Some will prefer a broader program of study; others will benefit from the more structured approach of North American universities.

But for those who do choose to pursue their graduate work overseas, and who wish ultimately to return to the United States, a word of warning. I have often found myself tempted to lose touch with North American academia, and I am grateful that a number of mentors reminded me to forge connections and attend conferences on both sides of the Atlantic, to stay involved with the AAR and other professional organizations, and to seek out teaching opportunities, where possible, in both systems. Indeed, there are more than pragmatic gains to be realized, not least because the opportunity to learn and to teach in both the highly individualized British tradition and its broader-based American counterpart can lead to the cross-pollination of ideas and practices within academic specialities and with regard to pedagogy.

So should American applicants to graduate school be worried about “getting stuck” overseas? Some may well decide to remain abroad of their own volition. But with some careful choices during the application process and some careful planning afterward, no one need be permanently disadvantaged by the presence of a long-term student visa in a passport.

In the Next Issue of Spotlight on Teaching: Signifying (on) Scriptures: Reorienting Teaching and Research

Guest Editor: Vincent L. Wimbush
A Pivotal Decade in the Life and Work of I. B. Horner

Grace G. Burford, Prescott College

Grace G. Burford is (the only) Professor of Religious Studies at Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona, where she teaches in the Cultural and Regional Studies Program about the connections among religion, modernization and globalization, social change, gender and sexuality issues, peace studies, science, and environmentalism. She also offers courses on Buddhism and on the varieties of religious experience. Her research for her first book, Desire, Death, and Goodness: The Conflict of Ultimate Values in Theravāda Buddhism, utilized a lot of the work on Pāli texts done by I. B. Horner and the Pāli Text Society. She is currently researching the life and work of Horner, a twentieth-century British scholar of Buddhism.

For most of the twentieth century, British scholar Isaline B. Horner (1896–1981) devoted her considerable intelligence, time, energy, leadership, and finances to establishing an understanding of Buddhism in the West based on careful study of the texts that constitute the scriptures, written in the Pāli language, of Theravāda Buddhism. Her work on Pāli texts — both directly, as an editor, translator, and interpreter of these texts, and indirectly, as a significant contributor to and long-term leader of the Pāli Text Society (PTS) — still influences the scholarly and popular understanding of Theravāda Buddhism in Western and Asian countries today. In addition to her contributions to study of Theravāda texts in the West, Horner’s groundbreaking first book, Women under Primitive Buddhism (1930), stood for over 40 years as the only book-length work on the subject of women and Buddhism. It remains influential both in scholarly circles and for female practitioners of Buddhism.

A few years ago, impressed by Horner’s accomplishments and intrigued by some information I happened upon about her personal life, I began an in-depth study of her life and work, with the aim of writing a biography of her. I began my research by making several trips to Cambridge, England, to visit the archives of Horner’s papers at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of Cambridge University. I continued this research during the summer of 2006 and for the help of an AAR research grant. Earlier in the year the Lesbian and Feminist Issues in Religion Group had accepted my proposal to present a paper at the 2006 AAR Annual Meeting on the topic of how Horner came to write Women under Primitive Buddhism. So during that research trip I gathered together the information I had already obtained about Horner’s early life, and then focused my attention on discovering as much as I could about what Horner did during the decade of the 1920s.

Horner’s upbringing and education prepared her for a life of international travel, language study, and a focus on women. Raised in a moneyed middle-class family at a time when women were beginning to break into higher education, Horner attended (1914–17) one of the two newly established women’s colleges at Cambridge University, Newnham College.

What would, indeed, become a life of travel, study, and focus on women began to blossom for Horner in the 1920s. In 1920, the principal of Newnham suggested that Horner accompany the principal’s sister, D. J. Stephen, to India to establish a Christian college for women. Stephen leapt at the opportunity, although she firmly rejected Christianity herself. During her two years (1921–23) in India, Horner exhibited a keen intellectual interest in religion and included in her letters home detailed descriptions of the exotic Hindu activities she witnessed. But she reserved her personal enthusiasm and approval for the Buddhism she had encountered briefly in Ceylon on the way to India. Upon her return to Cambridge, Horner continued her discussions of religion in her correspondence with D. J. Stephen. In 1923 Horner became the librarian at Newnham College, a position she would hold until she left Cambridge in 1936. In 1925 Horner contacted then-PTS president Caroline Rhys Davids and expressed an interest in learning more about Buddhism. It was Rhys Davids — herself a dedicated feminist — who suggested the topic of women and Buddhism to Horner. For the latter half of the 1920s Horner immersed herself in the study that would result in the publication of Women under Primitive Buddhism. In the summer of 1926 Horner began her most significant personal relationship, with fellow Newnham scholar Elsie Butler.

Thus, in this one decade, Horner made her first trip to Asia, developed an interest in Theravāda Buddhism, established a friendship with D. J. Stephen (with whom she engaged in extensive correspondence on matters related to religion), undertook the study of Pāli language and Theravāda Buddhism, began her working relationship with Caroline Rhys Davids (who would serve as Horner’s most significant mentor in the study of Pāli language and texts until Rhys Davids’s death in 1941), and fell in love with Elsie Butler (Horner and Butler remained together until Butler’s death in 1959). All of these developments fed into Horner’s lifelong interest in women in Buddhism, and established patterns that would play out for the rest of her life.

I am grateful to the American Academy of Religion both for the research grant that contributed to my work on this project during the summer of 2006 and for the ongoing professional community it provides. Both are particularly helpful to those of us who work in primarily undergraduate teaching positions at small colleges. I extend my thanks to include the members of the Lesbian and Feminist Issues in Religion Group of the AAR, whose interest in the life and work of I. B. Horner inspires me to continue this research.

Her work on Pāli texts . . . still influences the scholarly and popular understanding of Theravāda Buddhism in Western and Asian countries today.

**Editor’s Note:**

Grace G. Burford received an AAR Individual Research Grant in 2005, which she used to conduct the research outlined here.
2007 AM Registration and Satisfaction Survey

An overwhelming 94.5 percent of survey respondents thought the 2007 Annual Meeting was a satisfactory or very satisfactory experience. Satisfaction with this year’s sessions was high; 93 percent of survey respondents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with the quality. The opportunity to network with other colleagues also received high marks; 95 percent reported satisfaction. Respondents rated the San Diego Annual Meeting location very favorably, giving positive feedback about its exhibit facilities (92 percent), hotel facilities (74 percent), and meeting room space (92 percent). The Annual Meeting attracted attendees from around the world; 56 nationalities were represented. Canadians made up the largest international group with 390 attendees, followed by the United Kingdom (283), Germany (87), the Netherlands (67), Australia (53), and Israel (45). California was the best-represented state in 2007 with 1,969 attendees, followed by Illinois (519), New York (492), Texas (424), Massachusetts (411), and Pennsylvania (380). AAR’s 2007 international focus was on China, and the Annual Meeting hosted 36 attendees from China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, including 11 AAR travel subsidy recipients. Consequently, the 2008 internationa focus on South Asia and South Asian scholarship should encourage participants from that region.

Once again, Annual Meeting registration and housing was handled by Experient. Satisfaction with the registration and housing process was very high: 96 percent of respondents rated the process positively. The peak hotel night was Saturday, November 17, with over 4,900 hotel rooms in use. Overall more than 19,800 room nights were occupied during the meeting.

The comments from survey respondents were generally positive. The most frequent complaint was about the long walks between the Convention Center, the Marriott Marquis, and the Grand Hyatt. Because the American Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences meeting overlapped with the AAR and SBL move-in day on November 15, we were unable to secure the exhibit halls on the west wing of the Convention Center, closer to the headquarters hotels. This left us with Halls F and G on the east wing of the building. Because the meeting rooms were larger and more plentiful in the east wing (above the exhibit hall), we decided to utilize them instead of the west wing meeting space. The AAR will address this issue in Chicago by holding the vast majority of its sessions in the Chicago Hilton Towers Hotel, with additional meetings and some overflow in the Palmer House Hilton Hotel. The shuttle loop will run between the two hotels on a regular basis.

The Annual Meeting Satisfaction Survey is sent via e-mail to all AAR members (over 12,400) at the conclusion of each meeting and is offered online at the AAR website. The number of responses this year was 1,157, which represents about 9.5 percent of the membership. Respondents did not answer each question, so the values were measured from the number of respondents who did. The survey is voluntary and open to all members. The executive office staff would like to thank everyone who participated in the post-Annual Meeting survey. It continues to be valuable to the Annual Meeting process, for it provides the AAR’s Program Committee, Board of Directors, and executive office staff with an important measure of member satisfaction. We value this opportunity to hear your comments and suggestions on how we can continue to meet your needs and to offer an excellent meeting.
Prior to the start of the meeting, the Associated Press published a story about one AAR panel in particular, the Religion and Popular Culture Group’s “Evolutionary Controversy and a Side of Pasta: The Flying Spaghetti Monster and the Subversive Function of Religious Parody.” The story was picked up by CNN and more than 125 other national and international news outlets. Several panelists were featured in the article.

The AAR hosted its fourth annual reception for journalists prior to Saturday evening’s awards ceremony. At the reception, two winners of the 2007 AAR Awards for Best In-Depth Reporting were honored for their outstanding contributions to religion newswriting.

**With Gratitude!**

The AAR would like to thank the following co-sponsors of these Chinese scholars at the 2007 Annual Meeting. To co-sponsor a South Asian scholar this year, contact Kyle Cole, Director of Professional Programs, at kcole@aarweb.org.

- Princeton University and Harvard University – Chunwen Hao, Capital Normal University
- Lafayette College – Yen-zen Tsai, National Chengchi University
- College of New Jersey – Zhihua Yao, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Columbia University and the University of Chicago – Xin Yu, Fudan University
- Humboldt State University and Indiana University, Bloomington – Weichi Zhou, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

**AAR would like to thank the following outgoing Program Unit Chairs whose terms ended in 2007.**

- Donald L. Boisvert, Concordia University (Gay Men’s Issues in Religion Group)
- Rosemary Carbine, College of the Holy Cross (Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Group)
- Thomas A. Carlson, University of California, Santa Barbara (Philosophy of Religion Section)
- Kip Eldia, Emmanuel School of Religion (African Religions Group)
- Steven Engel, Mount Royal College & Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (Critical Theory and Discourses on Religion Group)
- Jennifer L. Geddes, University of Virginia (Arts, Literature, and Religion Section)
- John Goulden, Sweet Briar College (Korean Religions Group)
- Garrett Green, Connecticut College (Nineteenth-Century Theology Group)
- Rosalind Gwynne, University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Contemporary Islam Consultation)
- Amir Hussain, Loyola Marymount University (Religion, Film, and Visual Culture Group)
- Richard Jaffe, Duke University (Cultural History and the Study of Religion Group)
- Rob James, University of Richmond and Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Tillich: Issues in Theology, Religion, and Culture Group)
- Anne Joh, Phillips Theological Seminary (Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Group)
- Jay E. Johnson, Pacific School of Religion (Gay Men’s Issues in Religion Group)
- Mark J. Justad, Vanderbilt University (Men’s Studies in Religion Group)
- Tazim Kassam, Syracuse University (Religion in South Asia Section)
- Catherine Keller, Drew University (Bible, Theology, and Postmodernity Group)
- Jung Ha Kim, Georgia State University (Women and Religion Section)
- David Lamberth, Harvard University (Pragmatism and Empiricism in American Religious Thought Group)
- David James Livingston, Mercyhurst College (Men’s Studies in Religion Group)
- Nelson Maldonado-Torres, University of California, Berkeley (Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean Group)
- Richard C. Martin, Emory University (Contemporary Islam Consultation)
- Jane Dumen McAluliffe, Georgetown University (Qur’an Group)
- K. Steve McCormick, Nazarene Theological Seminary (Wesleyan Studies Group)
- Michael McNally, Carleton College (Native Traditions in the Americas Group)
- Bonnie Miller–McLemore, Vanderbilt University (Practical Theology Group)
- Moses N. Moore, Arizona State University (Afro-American Religious History Group)
- Thomas W. Ogletree, Yale University (Biblical/Contextual Ethics Consultation)
- Su Yon Pak, Union Theological Seminary (Asian North American Religion, Culture, and Society Group)
- Parimal Patil, Harvard University (Religion in South Asia Section)
- Greg Peterson, South Dakota State University (Science, Technology, and Religion Group)
- Barbara Ptikin, Stanford University (Childhood Studies and Religion Consultation)
- S. Brent Plate, Texas Christian University (Arts, Literature, and Religion Section)
- Selva Raj, Albion College (Comparative Studies in Religion Section)
- Jeanette Reedy Solano, California State University, Fullerton (Religion in Latin America and the Caribbean Group)
- Cynthia Rigby, Austin Theological Seminary (Christian Systematic Theology Section)
- Donna Seamone, Acadia University (Ritual Studies Group)
- Teresa M. Shaw, Claremont Graduate University (History of Christianity Section)
- Robert J. Sherman, Bangor Theological Seminary (Reformed Theology and History Group)
- Glen Stassen, Fuller Theological Seminary (Biblical/Contextual Ethics Consultation)
- Oren Stier, Florida International University (Religion, Holocaust, and Genocide Group)
- Ines M. Talamanza, University of California, Santa Barbara (Indigenous Religious Traditions Group)
- Tracy Tietmeier, Loyola Marymount University (Comparative Theology Group)
Candidate Registration Trend Continues at EIS Center

The 2007 Employment Information Services Center (EIS) saw a total of 669 candidates and 152 employers, continuing a trend from the previous year. In 2006 EIS saw a dramatic 46 percent rise in candidate registrations, and 2007 registrations were only slightly less (which is expected at a West Coast meeting). These figures indicate that the number of job seekers has increased greatly while the number of available jobs is increasing only moderately. The ratio of registered jobs to registered candidates in 2007 was 1:4.4.

The EIS Center was jointly hosted by the AAR and the SBL at the San Diego Annual Meeting. The center is designed to ease the communication process between candidates for academic positions and employers seeking to fill available positions. EIS features job postings, candidate credentials for review, a message center, and an interview facility.

Each year, EIS gathers data about job positions and candidates registered for the center. Each position and candidate is required to choose a primary classification from among a provided list. They may also select additional classifications (candidates are limited to a total of three). The “primary” columns at right indicate the number of times each classification was chosen as a primary choice (see chart on page 25). When drawing conclusions from this data, it is important to think of the motivations that guide employers’ and candidates’ choices. Employers tend to choose more broad classifications that correspond to the classes needing to be taught. They are likely willing to consider candidates from an array of specializations, as long as each person can teach the general courses. In contrast, a candidate’s primary choice is usually his or her area of research; they can teach more broadly. Take Introduction to Religion as an example. One need not specialize in this area to teach such a course. So despite the fact that the classification had a 1:1 primary ratio in 2007, candidates who chose this classification did not have a 100 percent chance of getting a job.

Another example is Asian Religions. From looking at the number of times this classification was chosen as primary in 2007, it might seem that each candidate in that field had a 75 percent chance of getting a job. However, many candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their specialty have the ability to teach Asian religions. So employers seeking an Asian religions teacher are not limited only to those candidates who consider it to be their specialty. This is where the “all” columns come into play. These columns indicate the total number of times a classification was chosen as either primary or “additional.” These columns often give better indication of the ratio of positions to candidates within a particular subfield. Take the example from above. Many of the candidates who chose Hinduism or Buddhism as their primary classification likely chose Asian Religions as an additional choice. Therefore, the position-to-candidate ratio of 19:37 (or 1:2) is a better indicator of how many candidates might have sought a particular position. Still, because of the different motivations guiding choices, and because many of the classifications are interrelated, the candidate to job ratios shown at right cannot give a clear indication of a candidate’s chances of getting a job. Rather, they serve mainly to identify trends in position openings and candidate specializations.

The AAR has been compiling EIS registration data since 1990. Such data is available upon request from Jessica Davenport at jdavenport@aarweb.org.

EIS Center Registration 2005–2007

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See additional 2005–2007 registration data in the chart at right.

AAR Career Services

Visit the AAR’s new Career Services webpage at www.aarweb.org/jump/careers for these services:

- Job Postings
- Annual Meeting Job Center
- Candidate CVs
- Workshop Information
- Employment Statistics
- Articles Discussing Career Issues

Also see the article on page 7 for information about the 2008 Job Center.
## 2007 Annual Meeting News

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To get a more accurate picture of employment trends in the field, the AAR and the SBL have expanded our data collection efforts. Employment Information Services (EIS) created a web-based, anonymous survey to track hirings by specialization and to collect demographic information on job candidates.

In spring 2007, surveys were sent to all candidates who had registered for the 2006 EIS Center and to all employers who had advertised a position in Openings in 2006. Presented here are highlights of the data received. Complete results, including new data on the PhD-granting institutions of candidates who received a position offer, can be found at www.aarweb.org/jump/eis. This ongoing project will provide longitudinal data.

Employer Survey Data

Out of 567 employer solicitations, 201 responses were received (35 percent response rate). Eighty-six percent of those who responded filled the position which they had advertised in Openings. Of the 172 positions filled, 80 percent of the employers report interviewing the appointee at the EIS Center. The majority of the positions filled were at the assistant professor level (61 percent), followed by associate professor (15 percent), full professor (9 percent), lecturer (6 percent), instructor (5 percent) and visiting (5 percent), with 3 percent of the positions ranked as "other." Sixty-three percent of the positions were tenure-track, 18 percent were tenured, 17 percent were nontenure-track, and less than 2 percent were either limited or adjunct. None were reported as a joint appointment. Sixty-five percent of the appointees were male; 35 percent were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the appointees was as follows: 75 percent Caucasian or Euro-American, 6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 4 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 2 percent multiracial, and 12 percent reported "other." Of those candidates who did not receive or accept a new position, 57 percent planned to continue in the same employment status, the top four of which were: graduate student (40 percent), part-time/adjunct faculty (40 percent), full-time/nontenure-track faculty (21 percent), and teaching assistant (4 percent) (Candidates could select more than one response). Seventy-two percent held a PhD student (40 percent), part-time/adjunct faculty (40 percent), full-time/nontenure-track faculty (21 percent), and teaching assistant (4 percent) (Candidates could select more than one response). Eighteen percent did not know at the time of the survey what they would do the following academic year.

Candidate Demographics

Sixty-two percent of the candidates who registered for the 2006 EIS Center were male; 38 percent were female. Regarding race/ethnicity, 86 percent of the registrants reported their race/ethnicity as Caucasian or Euro-American, 4.5 percent African-American or black, 4 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 2 percent multiracial, 2 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 0.5 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native, and 1 percent chose "other." In terms of citizenship, 85 percent were United States citizens, 6 percent were noncitizen residents of the United States, 5 percent were citizens of Canada, and 4 percent reported their citizenship as "other." Of the 102 candidates who accepted an offer, 42 percent will work in a church-related college, 22 percent will work in a public college/university, 9 percent will work in a free-standing seminary, and 4 percent will work in a university-related divinity school. Seventy-one percent will work as full-time/tenure-track faculty, 20 percent as full-time/non-tenure-track faculty, 3 percent as part-time/adjunct faculty, 1 percent as visiting (3 percent), with 3 percent of the positions ranked as "other." Sixty-five percent of the appointees were male; 35 percent were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the appointees was as follows: 75 percent Caucasian or Euro-American, 6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 4 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 2 percent multiracial, and 12 percent reported "other." Of those candidates who did not receive or accept a new position, 57 percent planned to continue in the same employment status, the top four of which were: graduate student (40 percent), part-time/adjunct faculty (40 percent), full-time/nontenure-track faculty (21 percent), and teaching assistant (4 percent) (Candidates could select more than one response). Eighteen percent did not know at the time of the survey what they would do the following academic year.

Position Data

Of the 102 candidates who accepted an offer, 42 percent will work in a private college/university, 23 percent will work in a church-related college, 22 percent will work in a public college/university, 9 percent will work in a free-standing seminary, and 4 percent will work in a university-related divinity school. Seventy-one percent will work as full-time/tenure-track faculty, 20 percent as full-time/non-tenure-track faculty, 3 percent as part-time/adjunct faculty, 1 percent as visiting (3 percent), with 3 percent of the positions ranked as "other." Sixty-five percent of the appointees were male; 35 percent were female. The racial/ethnic distribution of the appointees was as follows: 75 percent Caucasian or Euro-American, 6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, 4 percent Latino/a or Hispanic, 2 percent multiracial, and 12 percent reported "other." Of those candidates who did not receive or accept a new position, 57 percent planned to continue in the same employment status, the top four of which were: graduate student (40 percent), part-time/adjunct faculty (40 percent), full-time/nontenure-track faculty (21 percent), and teaching assistant (4 percent) (Candidates could select more than one response). Eighteen percent did not know at the time of the survey what they would do the following academic year.

Job Search Experience

Most responding candidates (90 percent) reported that interviewers did not ask questions or broach topics of an inappropriate nature. Of those who did encounter such questions/topics, the three most common were in regards to marital status, partner’s career, partner’s willingness to relocate, and religious beliefs. Sixty-nine percent reported that the interviewer directly asked an inappropriate question. Forty-three percent stated the interviewer indirectly broached an inappropriate topic. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents answered the question truthfully, while 22 percent changed the topic in order to avoid the question. Forty-seven percent are not sure whether their response was to their advantage or disadvantage. Thirty-seven percent believe their answer was to their disadvantage and 16 percent believe it was to their advantage.

2006–2007 Employment Survey Highlights

Candidate Survey Data

Out of 746 candidate solicitations, 263 responses were received (45.25 percent response rate). When asked to indicate employment status during the search, 46 percent reported being a graduate student, 35 percent reported part-time/adjunct faculty, and 21 percent reported full-time/nontenure-track faculty (Candidates could select more than one response). Seventy-two percent held a PhD or planned to have completed theirs by August 2007, while 15 percent would be ABD going into fall 2007.

Job Offers

Of the 263 candidates who responded, 42 percent received one or more job offers. Of those, 77 percent received one offer, 16 percent received two offers, 4 percent received three offers, and 3 percent received more than three offers.

Salary of appointment

Figure 2: Data on candidates who received one or more job offers

Figure 3: Salary of appointment

Figure 4: Highest degree offered at new institution

Figure 5: Age distribution of registered candidates

2006–2007 Employment Survey Highlights
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