

**ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**FIRST COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Saturday, August 10, 2013**  
**6:30-9:00 p.m.**  
**Doubletree Metropolitan, New York, New York**

Present: Fred Kniss (as President), Christopher Ellison (as President-elect), Roger Finke (as Past President), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Scott Schieman (as outgoing editor), Gerardo Marti (as incoming editor), and Voting Council members Jerry Park (2013), Jerome Baggett (2014), Kelly Chong (2014), Kevin Dougherty (2015), Rebecca Kim (2015), and Prema Kurien (2015). Also in attendance was Patricia Thomas, Executive Editor of the Humanities Journals of Oxford University Press.

Absent: Melissa Wilde (as incoming President-Elect), Council members Sally Gallagher (2013), Richard Wood (2013), and Amy Adamczyk (2014).

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by President Fred Kniss, who asked those present to review the minutes of the ASR Council Meetings that took place in 2012 (one of which was on August 19, 2012, in Denver, Colorado, and the other of which was on November 10, 2012, in Phoenix, Arizona). Fred announced that the minutes from Aug. 19, 2012, had already been approved by an email vote soon after the informal meeting in Phoenix in November, but asked for review and approval of the minutes from the meeting on November 10, 2012. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Roger Finke, the Past President of ASR, then presented his report as chair of the Nominations Committee, which was an announcement of the winners of the ASR elections in 2013. The winners of the election were Melissa Wilde as President Elect, and the following individuals to service as members of Council: Michael Emerson, Evelyn Bush, and Christopher Bader.

Fred Kniss then presented his President's Report, which announced the new members of ASR Standing Committees. (Readers of these minutes may refer to the 2013 Council Packet on the ASR website for a complete listing of these appointments.)

James Cavendish then summarized his Executive Officer's Report. He described how much of what he had set out to accomplish during his initial year as Executive Officer had been achieved. These things included the negotiation of hotel contracts, the upgrading of the website, and the use of various tools (e.g., the Constant Contact software, PayPal, etc.) to increase the efficiency and professionalism of the Association's communications and transactions. (Readers of these minutes may refer to the 2013 Council packet for a full listing of items included in Cavendish's report.)

Kelly Chong, the 2013 Program Chair, then presented her Program Chair report. She stated that because of the large number of pre-organized sessions for the 2013 Annual Meeting, including the special Presidential Panel to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association, the Program Committee decided not to organize any "professionalization" sessions for meeting. One issue raised in Chong's report was the possibility of providing a small stipend to the Program Chair for the work of organizing the program. It was decided that Council would return to this discussion during the Second Council Meeting, during which they would discuss the budget.

Kelly Chong's Program Chair Report was followed by a presentation of reports from the Publications Committee, the Editor, and the Publisher. While a full description of the contents of these reports is available in the 2013 Council Packet, which is available on the ASR website, one particular issue that became a topic of discussion among Council members was the fact that ASR would not be receiving the same high level of royalties from Oxford University Press in 2013 (or probably any future year) that it had in 2012. As Patricia Thomas, Executive Editor at Oxford University Press, explained, the high royalties that ASR enjoyed during 2012 were the byproduct of the one-time sale of the digital archives of the journal to libraries, and once these archives are purchased, libraries do not need to purchase them again. So, the \$107,724 in royalties that ASR enjoyed as revenue in 2012 would likely diminish to approximately \$50 or \$55k in 2013. Council acknowledged the implications that this would have on the proposed budget and suggested that we return to this conversation at the Second Council Meeting on Tuesday, August 13, 2013.

The reports about ASR's publications were followed by reports about ASR's awards, including (in the sequence in which they were presented) the Fichter Research Grant Committee report, the International Liaison Committee Report, and the McNamara Committee Report. All of these reports suggested ways in which the descriptions of these awards as they appear on the ASR website could be enhanced, and James Cavendish stated that he would be happy to implement the recommended changes.

James Cavendish and Gerardo Marti then presented the Membership Committee Report, which reported trend in ASR membership over time and contrasted those trends with those of comparable organizations devoted to the social scientific study of religion. Everyone acknowledged the need to conduct some type of survey of sociologists of religion in general, or of members of ASR in particular, in order to ensure that ASR is meeting the expectations and needs of its constituents.

Although the only formal vote that took place at this First Council Meeting was the approval of the minutes, it was acknowledged that several motions would likely be made at the Second Council Meeting which would require the vote of Council.

Fred Kniss thanked everyone for their service to ASR and their contributions to a successful meeting and adjourned the meeting at 9:20 p.m.

## **ASR GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES**

**Monday, August 12, 2013**

**7:00-8:00 a.m.**

**Doubletree Metropolitan, New York, New York**

Present: Fred Kniss (as President), Christopher Ellison (as President-Elect), Melissa Wilde (as incoming President-Elect), and James Cavendish (as Executive Officer).

Several members of the Association attended, including two members who brought agenda items – Tony Blasi and Roberto Cipriani.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 a.m. by President Fred Kniss, who welcomed the ASR members who came to the meeting. Together, Fred Kniss, Christopher Ellison, Melissa Wilde, and James Cavendish summarized the business of the Association that had been reported at the First Council Meeting on August 10, 2013. (Readers of these minutes can refer to the minutes of that meeting to see the highlights.)

Two members of the Association, Tony Blasi and Roberto Cipriani brought issues to the Business Meeting that they thought the Officers and the Council would want to discuss at a future Council Meeting.

The issue brought by Tony Blasi was a proposal for ASR (or one of its members) to assume the task he has been performing since 1976 of assembling and maintaining the ASR Bibliographic Database in the sociology of religion, which is presently an online resource available through the Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA). Tony, who has volunteered his time over many years to maintain and update the bibliography, is now facing some health issues and wants to find a successor to serve as the Bibliographic Database Editor. The problem is that prospective editors might want a stipend and currently neither ARDA nor ASR has resources to devote to this. Tony proposed requiring non-ASR members who want access to the Bibliographic Database to pay a subscription and then those subscription fees could pay the editor to maintain the database. However, ARDA cannot do this because ARDA's agreement with the Lilly Foundation, which supports ARDA, prevents ARDA from collecting money through its website. James Cavendish requested that Tony present a written proposal to him which he could then take to Council at some point in the future.

The issue brought by Roberto Cipriani was in respect to decisions made by the editor to “desk reject” manuscripts before sending them out for full, peer review. Roberto was upset that a theoretical article that he wrote was not sent out for review simply because it wasn't an empirical article. Roberto stated that he believed anyone who is a member of ASR and submits a manuscript to the journal is entitled to a full, peer review. Fred Kniss and James Cavendish responded by saying that this is not the case, that the editor has the discretion to make decisions about whether to send a manuscript out for peer review.

No other issues were brought to the General Business Meeting, so Fred Kniss passed the torch of the presidency to Christopher Ellison and the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 a.m.

**ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, August 13, 2013**  
**7:15 – 8:30 a.m.**  
**Doubletree Metropolitan, New York, New York**

Present: Christopher Ellison (as incoming President), Fred Kniss (as outgoing or Past President), Melissa Wilde (as incoming President-Elect), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Scott Schieman (as outgoing editor), Gerardo Marti (as incoming editor), Voting Council members Kelly Chong (2014), Kevin Dougherty (2015), Rebecca Kim (2015), Prema Kurien (2015), Christopher Bader (2016), and Evelyn Bush (2016).

Absent: Council members Amy Adamczyk (2014), Jerome Baggett (2014), and Michael Emerson (newly elected).

The meeting was called to order at 7:20 a.m. by incoming President Christopher Ellison, who welcomed the new members of the Council and chaired the meeting. Outgoing President Fred Kniss briefly summarized what was discussed at the First Council Meeting on Saturday, August 10. He spoke briefly about the past year and reviewed the details of the committee reports that were distributed and presented at the First Council Meeting.

Christopher Ellison then led a discussion about the Annual Meeting in New York, noting how the meetings went very well. He thanked the Program Committee, especially the Program Chair, Kelly Chong, for their work in making the meeting a success. Members of Council agreed that it was nice to present the McNamara Student Paper Award during the opening night reception.

Melissa Wilde suggested that the Program Chair avoid having 5 papers in the same session because 5-paper sessions can seem very long and it doesn't allow adequate time for discussion and Q&A. Chris Ellison then suggested that in an effort to increase the quality of papers presented at the meetings, and to make it easier for the Program Chair to evaluate the quality of the submissions, it would be good to require that applicants submit abstracts of at least 300-400 words. Council discussed this recommendation and voted unanimously to approve it. Jim Cavendish said that he would incorporate this new requirement in the Call for Papers and the website's online submission portal.

President Chris Ellison then presented to Council a number of recommendations that stemmed from the Standing Committee reports that had been presented at the First Council Meeting on Saturday, August 10. Among these were the following:

- The International Liason Committee's recommendations that: (a) ASR dispense more money (i.e., as much as \$1000) to a fewer number of international scholars; (b) these awards be made on a competitive basis based on the quality of applications that include a CV, a paper of 10 or more pages (double-spaced), and evidence that the applicant could actually afford to come to the meeting if the grant were given; and (c) these applications would be due on March 1. Council discussed these recommendations and voted unanimously to approve them.
- The McNamara Committee's recommendation that Council approve the proposed revision to the language of the website and the duties of the McNamara Committee as reflected on pages 25-26 of the Council packet. Council discussed this and voted unanimously to support this revision.

- The Membership Committee's recommendations that Council support: (a) an initiative to conduct a membership survey; and (b) an initiative to increase interest among scholars in joining ASR by having an annual award competitions for best article and/or best book as well as an annual "Lifetime Achievement Award." In discussing the first of these recommendations, some Council members and incoming President-Elect Melissa Wilde thought that it would be good to survey not only existing ASR members but also any contacts that ASR has had (e.g., past members, authors of articles submitted to the journal, etc.). However, it was acknowledged that the practical realities of obtaining a comprehensive list of sociologists of religion would be difficult, and that the Membership Committee would have to be guided by what was practical. In discussing the second of these recommendations, those members of Council who had worked on "The Distinguished Book" award committees for other associations noted that reviewing a large number of scholarly books each year can be a monumental task. Recognizing this, and after considerable discussion, Council voted in favor of pursuing the establishment of an annual Distinguished Article Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award, but to hold off on establishing a Distinguished Book Award. President Christopher Ellison stated that he would begin this work by establishing ad-hoc committees for each of these award competitions and offered to personally fund the initial Distinguished Article Awards. Jim Cavendish and Fred Kniss stated that if these award competitions are to become institutionalized, we will need to craft amendments to the By-Laws that would create Standing Committees to oversee each of these competitions.

Christopher Ellison then presented to Council the possibility of creating an ad hoc committee to review the ASR Constitution and propose amendments either to the Constitution or the by-laws that would make them more suited to the current operations and goals of the Association. There was general agreement that such an ad-hoc committee would be useful and that, among other things, it could craft language for the creation of Standing Committees for each of the new award competitions.

Christopher Ellison then turned the discussion to the proposed budget. Jim Cavendish stated that it would be difficult at this early stage to approve the proposed budget because Patricia Thomas, an Executive Editor at Oxford University Press, stated that ASR should not count on receiving the same high amount in royalties at the end of 2013 that it had received at the end of 2012. Council agreed that before making the final decision to approve the budget we would wait to see what types of royalties ASR receives from OUP toward the end of 2013 and then vote by email.

There were a few specific budget items, however, that Christopher Ellison and Jim Cavendish wanted the Council to consider and approve at the meeting. Among them were:

- To raise the manuscript submission fee for those who are not ASR members from \$25 to \$35 as a way of encouraging membership (membership is also \$35 and members can submit manuscripts for free).
- Jim Cavendish's proposal to hire a graduate student at USF who specializes in the sociology of religion to help with the tasks of responding to members' emails, processing new memberships and membership renewals, etc. He suggested a stipend of \$2,500.

- The Program Committee's proposal that ASR pay the Program Chair a stipend of \$2,500, which could be used as a stipend for him/herself and/or to hire an assistant to complete all of the tasks associated with developing the program.

Council voted unanimously in favor of the first proposal (i.e., raising the manuscript submission fee) and the second proposal (i.e., the hiring of a graduate student to serve as an administrative assistant for \$2,500). With respect to the third proposal, however, a couple members of Council, including Fred Kniss, suggested that because the idea of a voluntary association is to contribute by way of service, and because the Program Chair is already compensated in the form of covering transportation costs to the meeting and providing a room at the conference hotel, that the \$2,500 be used only if the Program Chair needs to hire an assistant to carry out some of the tasks associated with his/her role. Those still present at the meeting agreed with this plan, but acknowledged that the job of Program Chair can be quite labor intensive.

There being no other business, Christopher Ellison adjourned the meeting at 8:45 a.m.

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### **Developments after the Council Meeting on August 13, 2013.**

Because Council decided at the Council Meeting (detailed above) to wait until after it received an estimate from Oxford University Press about the amount of royalties ASR would receive from the journal before voting on the proposed budget for 2014, *the following actions took place in December of 2013:*

- 1) In early December, 2013, the Executive Officers of ASR learned from OUP that ASR should not expect any royalties from OUP beyond the minimum \$50k that is guaranteed in our contract with OUP. This means that ASR would receive almost \$50k less from OUP this year compared to last year. In light of this and the fact that ASR ran a deficit budget in 2013, the Executive Officers and Kevin Dougherty, the Chair of the Development Committee, recommended that we search for additional ways to increase revenues and trim expenses in 2014 before voting on the 2014 proposed budget. These recommendations were detailed in a letter sent to Council on Wednesday, December, 11, 2013, in which Council was asked to vote on three specific recommendations. Among the recommendations to increase revenues were the following:
  - a) For ASR to entertain selling our mailing list to publishers who seek to reach scholars of religion, just as SSSR does.
  - b) For ASR to raise the meeting registration fee for constituent/general members from \$60 to \$70, but to leave the student registration fee at \$25. (SSSR's meeting registration fee is currently \$90.)

The Executive Officers also recommended, as a cost-savings measure in 2014, to reduce the amount provided for the Fichter Grants in 2014 from \$24,000 to \$12,000, which was the level of these awards before 2012, the year when ASR enjoyed an artificially high royalty payment from OUP.

- 2) By the end of December, Jim Cavendish received votes on the above three recommendations from the following Council members: Evelyn Bush, Jerome Baggett, Rebecca Kim, Prema Kurien, Christopher Ellison, Melissa Wilde, Michael Emerson, Amy Adamczyk, Kevin Dougherty, and Fred Kniss. Council unanimously supported the first two recommendations (a & b above), and all but one voted to support the last recommendation (a decrease in the Fichter Award).

*On February 10, 2014*, Jim Cavendish sent the following email to the Council to update them on business and request their votes:

Dear ASR Council Members:

I'm writing to update you on a few different business items, to share with you the details of the Annual Meeting in San Francisco in August, and to ask you to consider and vote on the inclusion of two proposed Amendments to ASR's By-Laws on this year's election ballot.

First, the business items.

- 1) One of the upcoming issues of our journal will be a special 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary issue, which will contain a number of invited essays. In order to make room for these essays and to not create a backlog on forthcoming articles, Gerardo Marti and the Executive Officers have decided to print one additional article in each issue of Volume 75. At the Council meeting in August, we can discuss whether we would like this inclusion of one extra article per issue to be an ongoing practice based on its costs and benefits.
- 2) In the very near future, we will be adding one additional benefit to ASR members inside the Members Only area of the ASR website – namely, a link to an Oxford University Press webpage where our members can purchase OUP titles at a 20% discount.
- 3) Back in December, the Council voted to limit the Furfey Grants this year to \$12k instead of \$24k because of the \$50k+ reduction in royalties from OUP between 2012 and 2013. Subsequent to that vote, I had a phone conversation and correspondence with a financial advisor who, upon inspecting ASR's financial situation and investment portfolio, advised that ASR would be safe to withdraw and spend up to 4% of our investments on an annual basis to support our mission. He also suggested that before we begin doing so, ASR adopt a formal "Investment and Spending Policy" (much like SSSR's), which formalizes this practice. Upon receiving this advice, the Executive Officers decided that this would be the best course of action. The Development Committee is at work on an "Investment and Spending Policy." They will circulate their proposal before the Council meeting in August so that we can discuss/amend and approve that policy at the meeting.

Second, the details of the Annual Meeting. Council will hold its **first meeting on Wednesday afternoon, August 13, at either 4 or 5 p.m.** In the past, we started the meeting at 5 p.m., but given the number of items we want to discuss, I think we should all plan to be available as early as 4 p.m. that day. Council will hold its **second meeting on Saturday morning, August 16, at around 7:00 a.m.**, just before the beginning of the ASA Religion Section sessions. It is an expectation that all continuing members of Council attend both meetings, and those whose term of service will be ending in August are expected to attend at least the first Council meeting.

If you have not already done so, please book your hotel reservations now (or very soon) so you can enjoy the lower ASR rates. Last year, some waited until just weeks before the conference and ended up paying an exorbitant amount because our room block had already filled.

Finally, as you might recall from last year's meeting, Council discussed and approved a recommendation that ASR present to its members a proposal to add two additional annual awards – a Distinguished Article Award and a Lifetime Achievement Award.

Although we plan to initiate the Distinguished Article Award this year, in order for these two awards to be institutionalized on an ongoing basis, ASR's members need to vote to support this initiative – and, by extension,

support the creation of two additional Standing Committees whose task would be to evaluate submissions and applications for these awards.

Please vote to either accept or reject the inclusion on this year's election ballot of the following two proposed amendments to ASR's By-Laws, which will create these two Standing Committees.

Amendment 1: For the creation of "A Distinguished Article Award Committee to encourage, recognize, and support outstanding scholarship in the sociology of religion by giving an annual certificate of honor and monetary grant to a member who has written an exceptional peer-reviewed article in the sociology of religion."

Amendment 2: For the creation of "A Lifetime Achievement Award Committee to recognize a member for his/her outstanding lifetime contributions in the sociology of religion by giving an annual certificate of honor and monetary grant."

If these Amendments are approved by Council (by email vote), they will be put before the membership in this year's election. Then, if two-thirds or more of those voting in the election support the Amendments, they will be added to By-Law I, Sec. 2, of the existing By-Laws (which can be viewed at <http://www.sociologyofreligion.com/about/constitution-and-by-laws/>).

Please send me your vote by replying to this email by Friday, February 14.

*By the middle of February, 2014*, Jim Cavendish received votes from the following Council members: Rebecca Kim, Prema Kurien, Michael Emerson, Chris Bader, Kelly Chong, Evelyn Bush, Amy Adamczyk, Kevin Dougherty, Jerome Baggett, Melissa Wilde, Chris Ellison, and Fred Kniss. All voted in favor of including these proposed Amendments on this year's election ballot.

Respectfully submitted,

James Cavendish  
Executive Officer