

ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
FIRST COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday, August 13, 2014
4:00-8:15 p.m.
JW Marriott Hotel, San Francisco, California

Present: Christopher Ellison (as President), Melissa Wilde (as President-Elect), Fred Kniss (as Past President), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Jeremy Uecker (as Program Chair), Gerardo Marti (as editor), and Voting Council members Amy Adamczyk (2014), Jerome Baggett (2014), Kevin Dougherty (2015), Rebecca Kim (2015), Prema Kurien (2015), Christopher Bader (2016), Evelyn Bush (2016), and Michael Emerson (2016). Also in attendance were representatives of the following Standing Committees: Kathleen Jenkins (McNamara Award Committee), Gabriel Acevedo (Membership Committee), and Paula Nesbitt (Membership Committee). Patricia Thomas, Executive Editor of the Humanities Journals of Oxford University Press, was also in attendance.

Absent: Council member Kelly Chung (2014)

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by President Christopher Ellison, who asked those present to review the minutes of the ASR Council Meetings that took place in 2013. All voted in favor of approving the minutes.

Fred Kniss, the Past President of ASR, then presented his report as chair of the Nominations Committee, in which he announced the winners of the ASR elections in 2014. The winners of the election were Lori Beaman as President Elect, and Richard Flory, Giuseppe Giordan, and Milagros Peña, as new members of Council. The 2014 election ballot also included two constitutional amendments, both of which passed by overwhelming majorities. Amendment 1, which created a new Distinguished Article Award and a corresponding standing committee, was adopted, 81-2. Amendment 2, which created a Lifetime Achievement Award and a corresponding standing committee, was adopted, 80-3.

Christopher Ellison then presented his President's Report, which announced the new members of ASR Standing Committees, including the two newly created committees. (Readers of these minutes may refer to the 2014 Council Packet on the ASR website for a complete listing of these appointments.)

Jim Cavendish then summarized his Executive Officer's Report, which can be read in the 2014 Council Packet available on the ASR website. He described the accomplishments of the Executive Office over the preceding year, including updates and additions to the website, planning the Annual Meeting, working with the Development Committee in composing an Investment Policy, and perhaps most importantly, working with the Membership Committee in composing and launching the 2014 ASR Membership Survey. At the end of his report, Jim called for discussion about a restructuring of the EO position, stating that such restructuring would be necessary for him to consider serving beyond the 4-year term (2012-2016) which he had agreed to. Christopher Ellison then suggested the creation of an ad hoc committee, which would be composed of Chris Ellison, Melissa Wilde, and Fred Kniss to review the possible ways of reorganizing the Executive Office in the near future.

Kevin Dougherty, the chair of the Development Committee, presented his committee's report, which included a recommendation for the adoption of a new "Investment and Spending Policy," which can be read in the 2014 Council Packet available on the ASR website. Kevin noted that the adoption of this policy expanded the duties of the Development Committee to "periodically review with its financial advisors the mutual fund families in which it invests" and make recommendations to the Executive Officer and Council regarding any changes "in the percent of monies available to the Executive Council for allocation to projects of ASR."

Jeremy Uecker, the 2014 Program Chair, then presented his Program Chair report. He noted that we had approximately 15 fewer sessions compared to the previous two years, with the largest decline being in the number of proposed paper sessions. Unlike 2013, 2014's program had 3 professional development sessions. He also mentioned that there were a few changes made in the format of the program. Most notably, he shortened most sessions from 110 minutes to 90 minutes in order to create a more fluid conference and to make room for coffee breaks and lunch breaks on both days. He also scheduled the ASR Business Meeting during the lunch break on Thursday rather than early in the morning.

Jeremy reported that it was quite difficult to recruit participants for the Author-Meets-Critics sessions and panels because of the lack of an overlap between the ASR meeting and the ASA meeting in 2014, with many scholars citing their inability to pay for five or six nights of lodging in San Francisco. (Current ASR policy is for the ASR Annual Meeting to take place over the two days immediately preceding the day of the ASA Religion Section sessions, so when the ASA Religion Section meets on the first day of ASA, there will be no overlap between ASR and ASA.) This will likely be a challenge again in Philadelphia in 2018 when the ASA Religion Section will again meet on the first day of the ASA meeting. Jeremy recommended that when this situation occurs in the future, efforts should be made to overlap the ASR meeting with ASA in some way.

The Program Chair's Report was followed by presentations from Gerardo Marti, the Editor, and Trish Thomas, the Publisher, on the state of the journal. While a full description of the contents of these reports is available in the 2014 Council Packet, one particular highlight was Gerardo's announcement that there would be a special 75th anniversary issue of the journal in which various scholars were invited to reflect upon a key question: "Why should sociologists care about the study of religion, and how does the study of religion enrich the discipline as a whole." Gerardo also asked Council to consider whether the journal may benefit from an overall increase in the page budget, which would allow for slightly longer articles or make room to publish more articles per year. He said that for the time being he would use resources from his Editor's budget to cover the cost of additional pages. Gerardo reported that he's taking a number of steps to improve the impact factor of the journal, and asked ASR to consider taking a number of additional actions to improve it, such as distributing a Table of Contents to ASR members by email, notifying ASR members of Advance Access articles by email, and encouraging authors to distribute their research to colleagues more widely. Although it was agreed that sending too many mass emails to our members would not be wise (because some people are likely to unsubscribe when they think they're getting too much email), Council was supportive of disseminating electronically clickable Table of Contents to our subscribers much like the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology* do.

Gabriel Acevedo then presented an abridged version of the Membership Committee Report, which was based largely on the results of the 2014 ASR Membership Survey. He invited

everyone to attend the ASR Business Meeting where a full presentation of the survey results would be made by him and Jim Cavendish.

The Membership Committee report was followed by reports about ASR's awards, including (in the sequence in which they were presented) the International Liaison Committee report, the Fichter Research Grant Committee report, the McNamara Committee report, and the Distinguished Article Award Committee report.

Prema Kurien, the chair of the International Liaison Committee in 2014, reported that since the committee received only 2 applications by the March 1st deadline, the committee ended up extending the deadline to April 15. Furthermore, because the amount of the awards was limited, and the international scholars who had applied needed substantially more funding in order to make their travel feasible, it turned out that the committee did not make any awards to international scholars this year. In order for these grants to provide an adequate incentive for the participation of international scholars, Prema said that her committee recommends that ASR:

- 1) Cut down the length requirements of the paper to an extended abstract of 1000-1500 words.
- 2) Have a later deadline than March 1st (perhaps April 1 or April 15).
- 3) Discuss whether we should reimburse at least some of the travel costs for international scholars coming from further away and from the Global South. This of course means that we will be able to fund fewer people.

Council discussed and approved the first and second of these recommendations, and raised the upper cap for travel grants to international scholars to \$1,000 each to address the third recommendation. It was proposed that ASR award as many as 4 grants of \$1,000 each to international scholars (totaling \$4,000) and use the remaining \$2,000 to provide awards to graduate student applicants. Council agreed to take up this proposal at the Second Council Meeting. All of the other criteria for the evaluating the Gallagher applications, and the policies for distributing the funds (i.e., primarily through reimbursement of costs for staying in the conference hotel), will remain intact.

Council then reviewed the report of the Fichter Grant Committee. In that report, the committee recommended that a fourth person be chosen to serve on the committee to ensure the smooth working of the committee in cases when one of the members has to withdraw, either because they decided to apply for the grant or because of personal or family issues. Council supported this idea. Melissa Wilde then recommended that ASR strive to build up its investment accounts so that it could possibly award dissertation improvement grants and/or a dissertation writing year fellowship. She stated that since other professional academic associations in religion, such as SSSR, target their large grants program to scholars who already have a Ph.D., it seemed reasonable for ASR to consider focusing its grant program on graduate students. Although Council seemed positive about this proposal, nothing was decided.

Christopher Ellison thanked everyone for their service to ASR and their contributions to a successful meeting and adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

ASR GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, August 14, 2014
11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m.

Present: Christopher Ellison (as President), Melissa Wilde (as President-Elect), Fred Kniss (as Past President), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Gabriel Acevedo (as Chair of the Membership Committee), and several other members of Council, of the Standing Committees, and approximately 40 members.

The meeting was called to order at 11:45 a.m. by Jim Cavendish, who welcomed everyone, summarized briefly the highlights of the reports that were presented at the First Council Meeting, and the presented the results of the 2014 ASR Membership Survey. (Readers of these minutes can refer to the 2014 Council Packet or the 2014 ASR Membership Survey Report available on the ASR website to see the highlights.)

A robust discussion of the Membership Survey results followed, with several members asking questions and providing comments. The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

ASR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, August 16, 2014
7:00 – 8:15 a.m.
JW Marriott Hotel, San Francisco, California

Present: Melissa Wilde (as incoming President), Christopher Ellison (as outgoing or Past President), James Cavendish (as Executive Officer), Gerardo Marti (as editor), Voting Council members Kevin Dougherty (2015), Rebecca Kim (2015), Prema Kurien (2015), Christopher Bader (2016), Evelyn Bush (2016), Michael Emerson (2016), Richard Flory (2017), Guisepe Giordan (2017), and Milagros Peña (2017).

Absent:

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 a.m. by incoming President Melissa Wilde, who welcomed the new members of the Council and chaired the meeting. She began by introducing the person she had selected to serve as the Program Chair for the 2015 Meeting in Chicago – Grace Yukich, who is an assistant professor at Quinnipiac University.

Outgoing President Chris Ellison briefly summarized what was discussed at the First Council Meeting.

Melissa Wilde then presented various items that she hoped to address during her year as president, and she invited Council to offer suggestions about each of these items. Among the items discussed were the following:

1. The need for the Publications Committee to solicit bids from publishers for the publication of our journal so that it can review these proposals and decide by the end of 2015 whether it wishes to recommend that ASR continue its contract with Oxford

University Press or enter a contract with another publisher. Rebecca Kim, the Chair of the Publications Committee, agreed to begin soliciting bids from prospective publishers, so she can report on the options before the 2015 Annual Meeting.

2. The need for the Publications Committee to review our contract with Brill for the publication of the *Religion and the Social Order* book series. It was agreed that Rebecca Kim would ask Brill to extend our contract for at least another year (until 2015) to enable Bill Swatos to publish the edited volume that he is currently working on. Rebecca stated that she would engage the Publications Committee and other interested parties in discussions about the future of the book series so that she can make recommendations to Council before the 2015 Annual Meeting.
3. The desire for the International Liaison Committee to award more money (i.e., as much as \$1000) to a fewer number of international scholars to make travel more feasible for this segment of our membership. Council discussed what portion of the \$6,000 budgeted for the Gallagher Travel Grants should be awarded to international scholars and what portion should be awarded to graduate students. It was decided that \$4,000 would be budgeted for international scholars, making it possible to offer \$1,000 awards to four individuals in 2015, and \$2,000 would be budgeted for graduate student travel awards in 2015.
4. The desire to recruit new graduate student members to the Association. Melissa Wilde proposed that Council consider awarding graduate students who would be first-time presenters at our Annual Meeting one free night's stay at the ASR conference hotel in 2015. Melissa and Jim agreed that they would work out some details of what this might look like and how much money would be necessary, and present a proposal for Council to vote on by email in the upcoming months.

Jim Cavendish stated that it would be difficult at this early stage to approve a proposed budget because some expenses (e.g., how much ASR will owe to the JW Marriott) and some sources of revenue (e.g., how much ASR will receive in revenues from Oxford University Press) were still uncertain. Council agreed that before making final decisions about the 2015 budget, we would wait to see what our remaining expenses and revenues would be in 2014.

There being no other business, Melissa Wilde adjourned the meeting at 8:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James Cavendish
Executive Officer

Developments after the Council Meeting on August 16, 2014.

February 3, 2015

Upon the request of *Sociology of Religion*'s editor, Gerardo Marti, Jim Cavendish sent the following email to the Executive Council on February 3, 2015, to solicit their input:

Dear Colleagues on ASR Council:

As Editor, I have dedicated much time in the past few months strategizing for the journal, especially toward positively affecting our impact factor. You will hear more about a few initiatives being put in place sometime in the coming year.

For now, there are a few minor items I am considering. After talking with Jim as XO and Rebecca as Chair of Publications Committee, I would appreciate the Council's input on two items:

1. I would like to change the title "Deputy Editor" to "Associate Editor." Neither Jim nor Rebecca see any negative implications to this. I simply think that "Associate Editor" sounds more appropriate and is more standard among journals. My impression of "Deputy" is almost cartoonish, so I would rather convey more dignity to the role. Do you have any strong objections on changing the title from deputy to associate editor?
2. Every issue, I find gathering information for the "contributor bio's" page to be a hassle. I am asking authors this information often long after the paper has been accepted, and sometimes the bios of people are already out of date by the time they are printed. One issue was slightly delayed from the difficulty of obtaining contributor bio information. Also, in looking at other journals like JSSR, there is no contributor page. Also, I found that our own journal has not always had a contributor page, and looks to have started with David Yamane. Finally, I believe we are in a time where up-to-date bios of people are quite easily accessible through the internet. In short, I would like to remove the pages dedicated to contributor bios. Do you have any strong objections on dropping the contributor bio page?

Thank you all for your work — and let me remind you to be sure to cite recent SOR journal articles in your publications (early and often!) —

Gerardo

Gerardo Marti, PhD
L Richardson King Associate Professor, Department Chair
Sociology
Davidson College

In response to this email, the following Officers and Council members voted to support both proposals: Melissa Wilde, Lori Beaman, Christopher Ellison, Prema Kurien, Evelyn Bush, Giuseppe Giordan, Richard Flory, Michael Emerson, Milagros Peña, Christopher Bader, and Kevin Dougherty.