

**Association for the Sociology of Religion
Council Meeting
August 6, 2022
Sheraton Grand Hotel – Los Angeles, CA
James Spickard – President, Presiding**

Present: James (Jim) Spickard – President, James (Jim) Cavendish – Past President, Gerardo Martí – President-Elect, Tia Noelle Pratt – Secretary, Rachel Kraus – Executive Officer, Rebecca Catto – 2022 Program Chair (*ex-officio*), Joseph Baker – Editor, *Sociology of Religion* (*ex-officio*), Council Members: Richard Pitt, Tricia Bruce, Geneviève Zubrzycki, Damon Mayrl, Grace Yukich (President-Elect 2023), Besheer Mohamed, Katie Corcoran, Gary Adler (via Zoom), Observers: Maureen Day – Secretary-Elect, Ruth Braunstein – 2023 Program Chair, Sarah Levine – OUP Representative, Solange Lefebvre – Chair, Publications Committee (via Zoom).

Tia Noelle Pratt arrived at 4:11pm having been delayed due to her responsibilities at the ASA-Religion Section’s Business meeting. The meeting was already in progress. Jim Cavendish took the following notes before Tia’s arrival:

- 4pm – Jim Spickard convened the meeting.
- Everyone introduced themselves.
- We postponed discussing minutes until Tia arrived.
- Jim Cavendish presented the Nominating Committee’s report.
- Jim Spickard spoke about innovative things committees had done.
 - Jim Spickard spoke about the new investment plan.
 - Three issues will likely come up in the near future.
 - Redo the ASR website.
 - Membership is down. We’re not going back to normal.
 -

Upon her arrival, Tia Noelle Pratt thanked Jim Cavendish for taking minutes in her absence.

When Tia Noelle Pratt arrived, Jim Spickard was giving the President’s report which led to discussion on the 2022 Annual Meeting and future annual meetings.

- Geneviève Zubrzycki discusses the possibility of having a remote conference ahead of time and a smaller in-person conference. Jim S. mentions that SSSR used that model for 2021.
- Jim C. points out that a challenge of a smaller conference is finding a hotel and mentions that there could be an opportunity to move out of hotels and move back to universities as the annual meeting location which ASR did earlier in its history.
- Tricia Bruce discusses the realities of ASR’s “marriage” to ASA and the need to meet at the same time.
- Richard Pitt points out that moving to universities is possible only because the annual meeting is at the beginning of August.
- Grace agrees that alternative conference models should be considered.

- Jim S. points out that a problem with using a hotel is tech accommodations and that the bill for tech support at the Sheraton in Los Angeles was \$56,000 while additional internet coverage for meeting rooms was \$4,000.
- Gerardo Martí reminds Council that hotels are contracted two years in advance of the annual meeting meaning that ASR is already contracted to the hotel model for 2023 and 2024. There would be problems with the university model, too, including finding a university location that would be attractive to the membership – i.e., a centrally located university in a city. Jim C. mentions the University of San Francisco.
- Jim S. wants to circle back to this point later in the meeting. Council will decide at that time.

Tia Noelle Pratt calls for a motion to approve the minutes from the 2021 Business Meeting.

- Geneviève makes the motion, Damon Mayrl seconds.
- The motion passes with one abstention.

Tia Noelle Pratt calls for a motion to approve the minutes from the 2021 Council Meetings.

- Damon makes the motion, Geneviève seconds.
- The motion passes with two abstentions.

Program Chair's report: Rebecca Catto

- There were 180 attendees at the 2021 Online Annual Meeting.
- 200 attendees have registered for the 2022 Annual meeting.
- Overhauling the website to delineate the responsibilities between the Program Chair and Executive Officer will help the planning process run more smoothly.
- Re: the Gallagher Grant – it is a challenge for Gallagher recipients to have large charges on their credit cards and get reimbursed later. Could Council disburse Gallagher funds upfront? Jim S. points out that this will bring problems for ASR if recipients don't attend the annual meeting
- Rebecca asks about the visioning task force.
 - Grace Yukich responds saying the committee discussed issues of membership – using different modalities to increase participation including creating the “ASR Fellows” which would be scholars outside the U.S. or BIPOC scholars in the U.S., which would expand membership for underrepresented groups. She hopes the committee will move forward this coming year.
- Jim S. invites questions for Rebecca. There are none. Rebecca is thanked for her work.

Jim S. invites Gerado and Grace to report on their presidential committee appointments.

- Gerado has made all of his committee appointments except one and would like to appoint an international scholar. Grace has put feelers out for her appointments.

Jim S. informs Council there are committee reports that didn't have action items: nominations, finance, Fichter, Gallagher, Distinguished Article, Lifetime Achievement Award, MacNamara Award. The Publications Committee does have action items. Solange Lefebvre will join the meeting later via Zoom to discuss those items. At the time of the Council Meeting, there was no report from the Membership Committee.

Jim S. invites additional discussion on membership and the future of the annual meeting.

- Richard starts by saying that there are 4 conferences between August and November that pull from the same pool. That's a heavy financial burden. There is trouble with the job market. Scholars around the room can talk about jobs vis-à-vis their status in the profession and productivity. There is a need to strategize about raising the status of the sociology of religion. If the organization (ASR) doesn't prioritize the *subdiscipline* (of sociology of religion), the subdiscipline will die. It's not about the organization, it's about studying religion. This is the conversation ASR should have, not a conversation about "tricks" to increase membership. We need to remember and remind our colleagues that all the "Dead White Men" (Durkheim, Weber, and Marx) and DuBois were religion scholars.
- Geneviève echoes Richard's point. ASR must have this conversation (about the status of sociology of religion) in conjunction with the membership conversation. We're not going to change the status of sociology of religion in this meeting. Is there a way to make the ASR conference different from ASA rather than more of the same? We need to show the relevance of religion everywhere.
- Grace - It's a structural problem that we aren't going to solve overnight. ASR and SSSR are about community building. ASA-Religion isn't about building community. ASR has more time and space to do community building and *that's* the value added. We need to focus on more community building.
- Tia makes a point about public scholarship and its value in conveying religion's importance in everyday life along with the importance of academia recognizing the value of communicating our research to wider audiences. Geneviève echoes it.
- Ruthie Braunstein makes the point that the value of the ASR conference is not the papers and suggests "flipping the program" to make the sessions about the networking and more institution building. This could look like structured conversations around affinity groups and community building.
- Besheer Mohamed asks about the tension between public scholarship and academic recognition.
- Richard points out that the tension between doing public scholarship and the academy recognizing it as legitimate is a sociology problem because sociologists aren't in the public square. He goes on to suggest that the ASR officers make statements on behalf the vis-à-vis their role in the organization to raise the organization's visibility. Otherwise, personalities become visible, not the discipline. Ultimately, we increase membership by increasing the number of sociologists of religion.
- Damon calls for an "insurgent mindset" within religion and says we need to point out that editorial boards of journals don't have sociologists of religion on them. This is a way to force religion into the conversation within sociology more broadly.

- Jim S. says this is the conversation we need to have continually – not just once a year.
 - How do we make the conference more exiting and different?
 - The 2022 annual meeting will have Pew’s workshop on using open source data and a session on raising the visibility of the discipline.
- Tricia points out the value of informal community building vis-à-vis the hotel lobby.
- Jim C. points travel funding is a concern.
- Jim S. challenges Council to “make this happen” and make ASR an exciting place to be.
 - Jim C. says the Business Meeting is a place to ask membership what they want to see at next year’s conference.

Solange Lefebvre joins the meeting via Zoom to discuss action items from the Publications Committee.

- There is a need to create better working conditions for the journal’s editor.
 - Solid reflection is needed on ways to attract new editors.
 - Increase support for the SoR Editor. Options include:
 - Increase salary
 - An assistant to decrease the editor’s workload
 - workload is 10-20 hours a week
 - More benefits from the editor’s home university
 - Special campaign to increase financial support for the journal
 - Fundraising is now possible through the ASR non-profit arm
 - Explore publisher options to find a publisher to get more resources
- In short, make the editorship more attractive for scholars

Solange says the Publications Committee found that institutions generally don’t support someone who will be the editor.

- Gerardo did a lot of outreach to find an editor. Gerardo says that the burden on the editor has increased; yet, the stipend hasn’t changed. The stipend is not keeping up with the responsibilities.
- Joseph Baker adds that ASR receives less money from OUP. While the money is important, freeing up the editor’s time is what’s needed. He goes on to say that *Review of Religious Research* had one viable candidate for editor pre-COVID. People who take this on are usually mid-career and those folks are burned out.
- Jim C. reminds Council that when Gerardo was hired as editor, ASR would have to “buy” a course from his institution in order for him to get a course release.
- Geneviève points out that \$10,000 is not enough of a stipend given the work the SoR editor is required to do.
- Grace points out that grad students are not always available to assist. ASR should help the editor find a grad assistant if one isn’t available at the editor’s home institution because the obstacle is the time, not the money.
- Richard points out that being an editorial assistant is going to help a grad student get a tenure track job.

- Tia makes the point that the role of editor could be split between an Editor/Editor-in-Chief and a Managing Editor. Having a paid managing editor would be an additional burden on the ASR budget. However, Council needs to decide if the journal is worth it and if so, make the investment. Joseph concurs that having a managing editor is a model that could work and Council must decide if it is willing to make the investment.
- Jim S. says there was one application to be SoR editor. He did not say who the candidate is because the Publications Committee hasn't had a chance to review the application but does say the candidate is viable. He also proposes that Council raises the amount invested in the journal during the coming budget conversation.
- Solange supports having a managing editor.
- Jim S. says increased funds will make the job more manageable.
- Damon says that if a choice needs to be made, ASR should put extra funds into hiring a managing editor instead of increasing the editor's stipend.
- Richard says there needs to be enough money to hire a professional managing editor

Executive Officer's Report – Rachel Kraus

- Council was provided the budget in advance. ASR's finances are "not great" compared to previous years. ASR may not make the hotel room block. If not, there will be a fine incurred from the hotel.
- ASR's 501(c)(3) is attached to a separate bank account for its tax-deductible donations.
- The new investments portfolio is up and running. Beginning next year, the organization will draw down 4% of the portfolio to fund the organization's work.
- Does Council want the EO to begin investigating hotels for 2025?
 - Jim C. says it doesn't hurt to consider universities among the options for 2025.
 - Rachel points out that in the past Council has prioritized proximity to ASA.
 - Tia asks about the feasibility of finding a hotel that would take on a smaller conference if ASR decided to go with the model of a virtual conference followed by an in-person conference. Rachel says it's not feasible because of the number of people the hotel is expecting.
- Council agrees to give the EO the authority to investigate 2025 venues (hotels and/or otherwise).
- Jim S. wants to add a line item to the budget for the journal in support of "Other support for the journal" and let the new editor allocate how that is used. He suggests funding that line with \$10,000. Besheer suggests the draw down funds be used for journal support.
- Joseph points out it is important to bring the new editor into the conversation as to how to use the additional funds.
- Sarah Levine says Oxford can provide a Virtual Managing Editor. These are professional editors Oxford provides. Each one works with ~four OUP journals. The cost for each journal is \$15,000.
- There is robust discussion on how much funding should be provided for the new budget line item. There is consensus that the line item should be funded for \$15,000 and the new

editor should be included in how it's used. At the conclusion of this discussion, Jim S. calls for a motion to create a line item for \$15k for "support the journal". Geneviève makes the motion. Jim C. seconds. The motion passes unanimously.

- There is consensus is to move toward redesigning the website.

Editor's Report – Joseph Baker

- Editor's Transition –
 - If there is a viable candidate that is approved by the Publications Committee, there needs to be funding for the person to attend SSSR for in-person training. There are unused development funds that can be used for this process.
- Joseph thanks associate editors Ruth Braunstein, Grace Yukich, and Andrew Whitehead.
 - Having an Associate Editor for promotion has been very useful.
 - The book review editor is Jamie Kucinkas.
 - New members of editorial board were brought onto the editorial board for their ability to assess quantitative articles. Sarah Levine is the new OUP representative.
 - The journal received 182 manuscripts for the year. Acceptance rate is ~10%.
 - Decision times are about as good as possible. Fewer people are accepting invitations to review. There has been some improvement since the beginning of COVID. Journal rankings are good. The impact factor is 3.48 to 3.42 impact factor. SoR is in the top quartile of sociology journals. It is doing well vis-à-vis religious studies journals. The journal is in really good shape.
 - RE: diversity of authorship. There isn't a good way to track race and gender of authors on the submission platform. Joseph did a content analysis of race, gender of author and content of article.
 - Women took much bigger hit on research productivity during COVID.
 - Women are 53% of authors this year. There has been success on recruiting BIPOC scholars. 25% of authors are minorities. He doesn't know where that stands relative to the membership of the association, but it is a place to make improvement. The journal has used special issues and calls for papers to get more BIPOC authors. Hopes momentum continues.
 - There are no questions for Joseph. Damon thanks Joseph for his work. Council concurs.

Publisher's Report – Sarah Levine, OUP Representative

- Highlights data for the journal on usage, and region; impact factor is steady; there may be a dip next year due to changes in how impact factor is calculated.
- No questions for Sara.

Jim S. offers thanks to Council, Rebecca, Rachel, and the other officers and singles out Tia (for pushing him when he needed to hear something – he likes that). Jim C. and Tricia thank Jim S.

Tia makes a motion to adjourn the meeting. It is seconded by all. The motion passes unanimously.

The meeting concludes at 7:11pm.

In the months leading up to the August 6, Council meeting, Virtual Meetings were held to address pressing business. Subsequent votes resulted as follows:

- Vote to amend scheduling of ASR annual meeting to coincide with ASA-Religion's Day, passed unanimously.
- Vote on changes to the Gallagher Grant's eligibility requirements, maximum amount of aid, requirement of conference attendance and staying at the conference hotel, and application decision criteria passed with 11 Yes votes and 2 council members not voting.
- Vote on changes to the Fichter Grant's application process, membership requirements for grant recipients, and making explicit the expectation that funded research will be presented at future conferences passed with 10 Yes votes, 1 No vote, and 2 council members not voting.
- Vote to make changes to the ASR investment model and hire Mayflower as per recommendations from the Finance Committee passed with 11 Yes votes, 1 No vote, and 1 Abstention.
- Vote to provide direction to Mayflower passed with 12 Yes votes and 1 Abstention.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tia Noelle Pratt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "P".

Tia Noelle Pratt, ASR Secretary

Association for the Sociology of Religion
Business Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2021
Jim Spickard, President, Presiding

Present: Gerardo Marti, President-Elect; Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer; Maureen Day, Secretary; Jim Spickard, President; Jim Cavendish, Past-President; Joseph Baker, Editor – Sociology of Religion; Tricia Bruce, Council Member; Richard Pitt, Council Member; Rebecca Catto, Program Chair; and approximately 15 members.

Jim Spickard called meeting to order at 12:00pm. Provides overview. Minutes are distributed.

Jim Spickard:

- Changes to grants, challenges for those needing travel visas, changed investment policy, both endowments and types of investments. The amount we draw from the endowment each year is 4% and our investments are cleaner now.
- Change in the journal agreement, will be discussed more later.
- We now have a 501(c)3 arm.
- How can we raise the visibility of the organization, among potential members as well as the relevance of the discipline for the public? This is the question we're engaging.
- We're going to need to rethink how we do conferences in the new normal.
 - Rebecca Catto: slightly larger online presence compared to last year, scholars from about 12 countries are presenting.
- Jim Spickard: We were able to quickly accommodate people who at the last minute could not come (offering a Zoom presentation option).
 - Rachel Kraus: We've spent about \$35,000 and are in danger of not meeting our room block.
- The tech contracts have been challenging, with new items being discovered. We got it down to \$13,000 but then they surprised us with a new hotel requirement of needing to hire a tech person.

Gerardo Marti:

- Thinking about how we want to structure the 2023 meeting. Should we be thinking about new paradigms about the conference (e.g., inviting those who may not consider themselves "sociologists of religion," offering workshops).
 - Member says he likes that Zoom grants folks access, but he's sick of the technical bugs, he wants the social elements to be more vibrant.
- Do we want to have different, non-synchronous offerings?
 - From members:
 - One-day virtual conference week before.
 - Conflicts with ASA, we need to coordinate better.
 - Meeting with SSSR/RRA one year and ASA the other year.
 - Throw AAR into that rotation, too.
 - Thinking about inter-disciplinary collaboration (e.g., leisure scholars are looking at pilgrimage).

- Can we survey our members to see what we think about breaking from ASA and other ideas?
- Jim Spickard: We are overdue for a survey and the membership committee could do this.

Joseph Baker:

- Report to members about the *Sociology of Religion* journal. Ten percent acceptance rate, impact factor is good in relationship to both sociology and religion journals. We're getting decisions to authors quickly. Racial diversity of content is good, racial diversity of authorship needs improvement (hard to track as EU does not allow certain questions). Gender diversity of authorship is good. Transition to new editor, plan is in place and should be smooth.
 - Member: Big frustration from European scholars and receiving feedback that authors should be looking for more American authors.
- We have 25% of our authors coming from outside the US.

Rachel:

- Our financials are good, we are increasing our revenue stream by drawing on our new investment. Our decreased Oxford support will show itself in a few years and we'll need to be diligent and thoughtful.

Jim Spickard:

- We need to do a website, both because some plugins don't work and we need a different look and feel to it. Consider also what you want to know and access when you go to the website.
 - Member: Would like to see uploaded conference papers.

Jim Spickard:

- Thanks to Dan Delany, Tia Pratt, Rebecca Catto, Rachel Kraus, Jim Cavendish, the gavel is passed to Gerardo.

Gerardo Marti:

- Thanks to Jim Spickard and Joseph Baker.
- We're going to be trying new things.

Meeting adjourned at 12:54pm.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Day, Secretary

Association for the Sociology of Religion
Business Meeting Minutes
August 9, 2022
Gerardo Marti, President, Presiding

Present:

Katie Corcoran, Council; Ruthie Braunstein, Incoming Program Chair; Sam Perry, Council; Conrad Hackett, Council; Damon Meryl, Council; Grace Yukich, President-Elect; Rachel Kraus, Executive Officer; Maureen Day, Secretary; Gerardo Marti, President; Jim Spickard, Past-President; Joseph Baker, Editor – Sociology of Religion; Tricia Bruce, Council; Rebecca Catto, Outgoing Program Chair.

Gerardo Marti called meeting to order at 8:00am.

Gerardo Marti: Asks if agenda needs to be shifted for early departures.

Introductions

Gerardo Marti: In thinking about the future of ASR, we should use longterm thinking, creativity and experimenting. It's okay if things don't work; we're piloting new things.

Budget

- In discussing the journal's editorial transition, the incoming editor should overlap with Joseph Baker for a smooth transition.
- When the question was raised as to whether we should re-open the pool of journal editors given the new funding—there might be new candidates with the additional monies—it was noted that we don't have time to do this, as Joseph needs to leave.
- Rachel Kraus highlighted that the budget also includes money to re-do the website.

Jim moves to approve the budget. Tricia seconds.

Budget passes unanimously.

Conference

- The meeting went well, but we had some mishaps, especially with international payments, but we worked them out.
- People were less enthusiastic about the Zoom component. True that it allows some who would not attend otherwise to come, but we don't want a Zoom option to disincentivize in-person attendance.
- Some members think a Zoom option should be cheaper, but they do not realize the enormous technical costs required from the hotel that Zoom adds.
 - In addition, members likely are not aware that much of the technical equipment, set up, and operation were provided by and accomplished by volunteers. The expense of the equipment and the cost of transportation, as well as the efforts of attempting to accomplish a smooth running of hybrid sessions, often multiple sessions simultaneously, caused considerable strain on those volunteers. It was agreed that

dependence on volunteers for equipment, set up, and operation of zoom in sessions was not sustainable.

- One person shared that her university does not pay for conference hotel and transit costs if there is a Zoom option. There is a concern that this practice could spread and we'd need to rethink Zoom options if this practice becomes more common.
- If we offer two distinct "conferences" (the virtual "conference" could be a meeting or it could be several virtual engagements throughout the year), we'd want two program chairs.
- We want to be more intentional about international involvement. Both open calls as well as targeting/inviting scholars to encourage this (being mindful to go beyond the usual suspects).
- Be more intentional and creative with our resources so they really further the initiatives and goals we are aiming for.
- We need to consider how can we serve some communities and attract new people, like SSSR had lots of sessions on Mormon studies and that was very successful in energizing those scholars. We could do more sessions that aren't paper-focused, too, that are more workshop style.
- We could do symposium-style things, getting feedback on work when it's in an early stage.
- How do we have a more public profile? Is there a way to respond as a council to public issues? We can try to communicate better using online platforms. We could pitch ideas to bigger fish with resources and an audience, we could get more participation. We can amplify one another's work and function as a communication department. We could build more partnerships with organizations that have resources and audiences (e.g., denominational or congregational groups who would care about what we're finding from a practical perspective). It helps us to be seen as a panel of experts.
- 25% who presented were from outside the US. Half were online, half were in-person. We're missing the US folks.

Future Meetings

- A suggestion to have both open submissions and organized sessions. Then we can expand the types of sessions we have. We want to think about what serves the membership and, if it does, that is a success.
- We need to start thinking about 2025. We need to be thinking in concrete ways so we don't hold Rachel up (who needs conference expectations two years in advance). Given the urgent timeline and the unknowns of COVID, it might be best to have 2025 be "conventional" in relation to venue and proximity to ASA and we could start thinking about more outside the box thinking on these for 2026.
- Proximity to ASA meeting spaces has always been urged by Council in the past as a primary consideration in choice of ASR's hotel and meeting space. This allows member to attend both more easily. We can lose folks when we are far.
- This points to the importance of a membership survey. We should see what our members think as we consider these decisions. There is a survey in the works in the Membership Committee, but it would need to be revised to involve these questions we've discussed. Ryan would be a good candidate for the Membership Committee.
 - We could get a vision-oriented committee to help craft the survey questions.

Dues and Direction of ASR

- It was suggested that a meeting of representatives from all of the prominent social scientific associations committed to the study of religion, both domestic and international, be arranged by ASR leadership. This would allow us to see what the common vision or strategy is. We could have some good conversations about supporting each other's organizations.
- Consider raising dues? Two opinions.
 - No: Right now is not a good time to be raising dues. And we need to be clearer in the sliding scale options. We should raise the membership before we raise dues. If you raise everything by \$10, that just gives you \$3000, which is nothing compared to the endowment. A lot of faculty have lost funding.
 - Yes: I think that if we are shrinking, dues is not the issue. And costs are rising everywhere, including our costs. The increase in revenue could all go to international travel. We could earmark international travel for a donation.
 - Optional donation during membership enrollment could help with revenue and not overburden those whose budgets would be strained further due to an increase membership dues.

Conrad motions to add a contributor line to online membership process.

Sam seconds.

Unanimously passed.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00am.

Respectfully submitted by Maureen Day, Secretary