

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION SOUTHWEST REGION

REPORT TO AAR BOARD

Fiscal Year 2014 (July 1, 2013 – June 30, 2014)

The Southwest Region held its annual meeting March 7-9, 2014 at the Marriott DFW in Irving, Texas in conjunction with three other organizations (SBL-SW, ASSR, and ASOR) who jointly with AAR-SW compose the Southwest Commission on Religions Studies (SWCRS), which this year was observing its 40th anniversary and enjoyed a 5% increase in attendance over last year. The program comprised 26 AAR sessions, three more than last year. The plenary speaker was AAR Past President John Esposito, who spoke about “Religion, Politics, and the Public Square: Desecularization and the Academy” in an informal and engaging way.

The SWCRS anniversary observation included a “Fireside Chat” session with SWCRS founders that necessitated scheduling the AAR plenary at noon on Saturday. The coincidence of the anniversary year for SWCRS, the first year for the new SWCRS Executive Director Richard Bautch, the first year for the new AAR Southwest Regional Coordinator Katherine Downey, the absence of the AAR-SW President and Vice President, and the residence of the AAR Southwest Regional Coordinator in the DFW area, made for many changes in this year’s meeting.

Meeting registration and attendance:

SWCRS Annual Meeting Summary 2014

March 7-9, 2014, Irving TX

When indicated, comparative figures from the previous year (2013) are in parentheses

Registrants and Participants

Total registrants	315 (304)
Preregistrants	293 (281)
On-site registrants	22 (23)
Program participants not registered	7 (32)
Total possible revenue lost	\$336-\$476 (\$1,310)
Registration sales	\$16,107.07
Registration donations	\$500
Registration net revenue	\$16,607.07

By Type and Organizational Affiliation

Exhibitors	13	AAR	90 (94)
Faculty	144	ASOR	33 (28)
Students	123	ASSR	25 (14)
Retired Members	7	SBL	133 (139)
Partners/Spouses	7		
Non-members	8		
Unknown	13		

Hotel Sleeping Rooms

Contracted commitment: 201 (180)

Total rooms bought 225 (191)

Exhibitors

Total tables sold 28 (23)

Total exhibitors 12 (10)

Abilene Christian University Press, Abingdon, Ada Books, Augsburg Fortress, Baker, Baylor, Hendrickson, IVP, SBL, Eerdmans, Eisenbrauns, Zondervan

Onsite representatives 13 (8)

Total exhibitor fees paid \$3025 (\$2,075)

Vouchers paid \$205 (\$230)

Total exhibitor revenue \$ 2820 (\$1,845)

Business meeting:

The 2014 AAR-SW Business Meeting was held at the Marriott DFW at 6:00p on Friday, March 7, whereas in previous years the Business Meeting had been held early Sunday morning of the conference weekend. There were a number of items needing discussion, hence more time than the Sunday morning typically allows, and it was thought that members might also be fresher before the conference. Members were notified by email twice in advance of the conference and provided with an agenda for the meeting. Nonetheless, attendance was light, and members

throughout the weekend reported they had overlooked the email. Sufficient members, however, were in attendance, as was Susan Hill, Regions Director, to transact the business required, which was as follows:

- Treasurer's Report: Zero AV & Tech (all provided by Regional Coordinator's DFW-area school), lower Regional Coordinator expense (due to DFW residence), \$1000 special session expense to bring in former regional scholar – accolades for this sort of expense
- Formed a committee to draft the Policies & Procedures for the Southwest Region to support the Bylaws. Stacy Patty will chair the committee comprising Katherine Downey and Marc DiPaolo.
- Passed a motion to support financially the Southwest Region Student Director's participation in both the regional and national meetings. The Executive Committee will negotiate with the Student Director each year to provide adequate funding.
- Decided to support grad students with some sort of programming/reception next year coordinated by the Student Director, Regional Coordinator, and SWCRS Executive Director.
- Elected to AAR-SW Vice President Marc DiPaolo, Oklahoma City University

AAR-SW Officers:

Regional Coordinator: Katherine Downey, The Hockaday School

Past President: Jack Hill, Texas Christian University (As President this year, Jack was absent from the meeting, for he was on research leave in Aberdeen, Scotland. Allen Redmon filled in for him in the Business Meeting and in introducing the plenary speaker. Next year, Jack will assume Allen's duty to introduce the plenary speaker, Laurie Zoloth, who will then be AAR Past President.)

President: Allen Redmon, Texas A&M University, Central Texas

President-Elect: Jens Kreinath, Wichita State University

Vice President: Marc DiPaolo, Oklahoma City University

Student Director: BJ Parker, Baylor University

Challenges & Opportunities

- ❖ **Graduate Student Programming:** As indicated by the decision reported above, the abiding interest of the regional membership in programming sponsored by the AAR-SW for the benefit of the graduate students persists and became this year a proposal. It is of interest to SWCRS as well, and so several additional initiatives emerged:
 - In the SWCRS 2015 planning meeting, a Saturday evening student reception sponsored by SWCRS was scheduled
 - Also planned and scheduled will be a *New to SWCRS orientation* Friday afternoon

- *A Guidelines for Presenters* document, of special use to new presenters, but perhaps also pertinent to others, will be sent out to all presenters and presiders whose papers are accepted: Allen Redmon & Marc DiPaolo composing
 - Strong coordination with Student Director, BJ Parker, on the several initiatives to incorporate graduate students and to strengthen their participation
 - Invitation to Student Directors to observe SWCRS Directors meeting: Proposed unofficially to other SWCRS directors and received with enthusiasm, needs to be officially
- ❖ **Regional Leadership:** Efforts initiated two years ago by Jack Hill and Donna Bowman to encourage interest in regional leadership and foster a competitive election process have flagged. Solicitations of interest made via email months in advance of the meeting produced only one response. The election process to the presidential line this year was essentially acclamation of a volunteer. There are concerns also with representation of discipline, experience, etc. This will be one of the items the Policy & Procedures Committee address this year, and I will encourage program chairs to recruit members through a “Call for Service.”
- ❖ **Senior Scholar Participation:** Of concern at SWCRS in general is participation of senior scholars in the region. Discussion at the anniversary “Fireside Chat” raised this theme directly. Graduate students now make up nearly half of the attendees and presenters at SWCRS. AAR-SW will incorporate this appeal to senior scholars into the planning of next year’s sessions.
- ❖ **Non-Paying Presenters:** Richard Bautch did an extraordinary job this year of tracking down presenters on the program who had not registered in advance as they were supposed to have done. Nonetheless, some escaped his efforts (7 vs 32 last year). At the SWCRS Executive Meeting, a new policy established that any presenter not registering and paying will not be permitted to present in a subsequent year. Program chairs have been notified of this policy, and if their programs include previous non-paying presenters, they will be told to remove them.
- ❖ **Next Year’s Meeting Scheduling:** The meeting will again be held at the Marriott DFW in Irving, TX, Friday March 13 – Sunday March 15. Key events:
- Friday 5p: New to SWCRS Orientation
 - **Friday 6p: AAR-SW Business Meeting**
 - Friday 7:30: Premier Donor Reception
 - Friday 8:30 SWCRS Executive Board Meeting
 - **Saturday 4:00 AAR Plenary**
 - Saturday 5:30 Reception
 - Saturday 6:30 SBL Plenary
 - **Saturday 8:00 Grad Student Session (to be planned with Student Director)**
 - **Saturday 9:00 Grad Student Reception (SWCRS)**

We have in the Southwest an energetic and enthusiastic leadership team I hope will usher in new ideas while respecting the 40 years of SWCRS tradition. The several significant initiatives of the leadership are promising toward both objectives. To inspire more AAR members in the Southwest to become involved in the Region and to serve in its leadership, I composed and sent a Report to Membership of what transpired at SWCRS. Program chairs have submitted their calls for papers, are encouraged to pursue senior scholar participation, and are tasked with recruiting within their sections. The regional program chairs and presidential line contribute significantly to making my service as the Southwest Regional Coordinator a profound pleasure for me. I am honored to have been chosen. I look forward to the national meeting in San Diego, where I know that my enthusiasm will be refreshed by my meetings with the other Regional Coordinators, the Regions staff, and our Regions Director, Susan Hill.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Kenneth Jannet". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.