

Publications Planning Committee Report
Submitted Spring 2013
Revised November 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ADVISORS:

Members: Molly Aitken, John Cort, Susan Huntington (Chair), and Alka Patel.

Advisors: Melody Rodari and Cathleen Cummings.

COMMITTEE CHARGE:

To make recommendations regarding ACSAA's sponsorship and implementation of: 1) various electronic (online and/or downloadable) and print publications; 2) publication awards and subventions; and 3) the corresponding implementation committees and processes. As requested, the report consists of three parts: a Cover Statement, the Report itself, and a Ballot of items for the ACSAA membership to vote upon. Also as charged, the committee has invited feedback from the ACSAA membership prior to finalization of the report.

COVER STATEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Publications Planning Committee hereby submits its report and a ballot for the ACSAA membership. The Report includes the recommendations we believe are important and achievable as well as the structural means to accomplish them. The Committee explored all of the options and recommendations provided by the ACSAA member survey (2012) as well as member input directly to the Committee. In addition, the Committee looked at options not included in the members' survey, such as the current Bulletin, the ACSAA website, and the Bibliography that ACSAA formerly published. Formats of publications considered included electronic (online and downloadable) and print.

John Cort presented the spring 2013 report to the business meeting at the ACSAA Symposium business meeting on Saturday, November 9, 2013. The report has been revised in light of the ensuing discussion.

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES OF THE COMMITTEE'S DELIBERATIONS

ISSUES OF FEASIBILITY

Uppermost in the minds of the members of the Publications Planning Committee regarding publications, awards, and subsidies were considerations of:

1. Potential benefit to the membership
2. Potential benefit to the field
3. Logistics of a volunteer organization
4. Fund-raising priorities and limitations
5. Potential for long-term continuity
6. Likelihood of success

While the items listed on the survey and endorsed by the ACSAA membership are worthy, the committee does not recommend that ACSAA pursue most of these options. Instead, the committee recommends starting with commitments that are of the highest priority and that are also manageable and likely to be successful. Additional publications and awards might be implemented in the future and others might never be feasible for a small organization such as ours. Thus, despite the highly favorable responses to the questions posed in the ACSAA members' survey, the committee has not been able to recommend most of these suggestions. In particular, because the questions on the survey were formulated in the abstract, without prioritization and consideration of the logistics, financial commitments, and labor involved with such publications and awards, our recommendations are necessarily sometimes contrary to the members' views.

To review, the recent ACSAA members' survey yielded the following:

- 73% favor ~ Peer reviews of important new publications.
- 73% favor ~ Published proceedings of the ACSAA symposia.
- 62% favor ~ Offering publication subventions.
- 61% favor ~ Annual awards for publications or exhibitions.
- 74% oppose ~ Offering stipends with the publication and exhibition awards.
- ACSAA eJournal (An ACSAA eJournal was listed as a possibility in the survey section header, but the specific question on an eJournal was inadvertently omitted from the final survey.)

PEER-REVIEW AND PROFESSIONAL EDITING:

It is, of course, preferable to have peer-reviewed and professionally edited publications when possible. However, given what is likely a perennial shortage of volunteers who can respond in a timely manner and who have all of the necessary skills, it is simply not feasible to create an ambitious program of publications that depends upon the largesse of ACSAA's members.

At the same time, it has become common for organizations to make available publications that are not vetted or edited in the interest of disseminating information quickly and broadly. For example, abstracts and summaries of papers given at recent conferences could be easily posted electronically on the organization's website. Such materials would be understood by the community of users to have possible errors, editorial inconsistencies, and other flaws. The lack of pressure to perfect such on-line resources would encourage people to make postings, thus serving the need to get information out to the interested audiences. Understandably, however, there will be many individuals who do not want to post their own materials for the very reason that they are not perfected and finalized. Thus, the ACSAA membership would need to recognize that such summaries of conferences and similar publications would likely be incomplete as well as unedited and unvetted.

COMPETITIVE PROCESSES:

Some of the types of publications and awards discussed by the committee necessitate a competitive selection process. In general, the committee felt that competitions, whether for an annual book prize or a career recognition, can be divisive in a small organization such as ACSAA, where the nominees and selection committee members are all likely to know one another or know of one another. In the interest of being an inclusive organization and one where the members seek to find commonalities rather than differences, the committee does not recommend that ACSAA pursue an awards program, in which there might be jealousies, hurt feelings, accusations of cronyism, and other divisive elements. This does not mean that ACSAA should never use a competitive process in its deliberations, but, rather, that caution should be taken to assure that, while quality is the highest goal, the organization's other priorities in terms of serving its membership should also be taken into account. For example, in the case of a subsidy for a publication, applicants would have to recognize that ACSAA's scarce resources make it necessary to have a competitive process in order to decide which publications should be supported. At the same time, if resources are available there is no reason not to award subsidies to more than one candidate in a given year.

FUND-RAISING:

Our committee is not recommending that ACSAA undertake an expensive, ongoing publications program that would require a large base budget and extensive fund-raising efforts. For the occasional publications that we propose, we suggest that ACSAA should use a targeted strategy to appeal to specific donors. For example, if ACSAA wishes to provide a subsidy for a book on Indian painting, perhaps a collector with that specific interest could be approached for financial assistance. It might also be beneficial to try to accumulate a "pot" of money for projects, perhaps \$15,000 for subventions, and with ongoing efforts to keep replenishing the funds as they are drawn down.

REPORT

Ideally, ACSAA might undertake a full range of publications, both paper and electronic. However, the realities of funding, coupled with the small size of the organization and the corresponding small pool of volunteers, has led the Committee to recommend that a number of types of publication not be pursued, and that others be prioritized and undertaken depending upon resources.

Our full recommendation for ACSAA publications priorities are as follows:

Publications

1. Bulletin (recommended; most important to keep; electronic only)
2. Web page (recommended; most important to keep; electronic only)
3. Books and monographs as a regular series (not recommended)
4. Occasional papers/books (recommended with reservations pending appropriate vetting, editing, and funding)

5. Journal (not recommended due to the very high levels of financial and labor commitments necessary). Coupled with the demands of meeting a regular schedule and a large infrastructure, a regular journal, even if of high quality, takes years to establish in the academic community. Young scholars, in particular, should seek publication in peer-reviewed journals that are recognized by the art historical community for matters of hiring, tenure, promotion, and raises. Whether an ACSAA journal could ever achieve such status is unclear and, regardless, the amount of effort required to produce a first-rate publication is not likely something possible for ACSAA given the small size of the organization.
6. Bibliography (committee is divided on this; electronic only if ACSAA proceeds; every two years; if pursued, should be in consultation with the ABIA regarding a possible collaborative effort)
7. Conference proceedings (originally recommended; online and/or downloadable; unedited and unvetted). Authors would not be obligated to post if they do not wish to and the committee recommends posting on a restricted access section of the ACSAA website.

[Additional notes by John Cort, on the basis of the membership discussion of the report, November 9, 2013.

Several reservations were raised concerning this proposal. One set of concerns centered on security concerns, with people noting that restricting initial access to ACSAA members would not prevent subsequent unapproved downloading and circulation of a document. Other people noted that it is very difficult, if not impossible, really to prevent unapproved access. A second set of concerns centered on the wisdom of junior scholars posting unfinished research. Several people noted that if the abstracts are posted on the website, interested parties can contact the scholar directly.

As a result, the ACSAA membership voted to move this recommendation onto the list of items on which there is indecision.]

8. Book reviews on ACSAA website as part of the Bulletin (recommended; online and downloadable). Along with the usual scholarly publications, volumes that are appropriate for review include museum and exhibition catalogues and books that accompany exhibitions. A Book Review Editor should be appointed in order to minimize the burden on the Bulletin Editor. The Book Review Editor should solicit review copies of books from publishers and authors. However, some publishers and authors might not want to spare a copy for a small audience such as the ACSAA Bulletin readers. Therefore, in order to have somewhat systematic coverage and attention drawn to important new publications, reviewers might have to obtain copies of the book from a library.
9. A New Books Notices section should also be added to the Bulletin (recommended; online and downloadable). Along with book reviews (above), notices of new books will help ACSAA's members learn about new publications of interest. Notices about foreign and non-English publications should be especially solicited. The Book Review Editor should oversee the New Books Notices list. Individual ACSAA members who are providing information about their recent publications in the Members' News section of the Bulletin should also send this information to the Book Review Editor.

Awards and Subventions

Awards:

The two types of awards considered were:

- 1) award for an outstanding book
- 2) a career or other milestone award.

The committee was hesitant to have ACSAA begin to offer awards on a regular basis. In addition to the potential negative effects described above, it could take many years for awards to have the prestige carried by other larger organizations, and therefore the benefits are not as great

The current structure of ACSAA does not prevent someone from making a nomination for a citation or award to the Officers and Board in an extraordinary circumstance. No separate structure or committee is needed. If such awards citations or awards are made, the committee does not recommend that there be a financial/cash component and, of course, no self-nominations would be accepted.

Subventions:

Subventions for publishing books are seen as a high priority for ACSAA and a worthwhile target for fund-raising. Even small amounts of money can help leverage other funds from other sources so that publications can have the numbers of photographs needed. A review process is needed to insure that ACSAA supports only projects of high merit, but the committee does not feel that only one award should be given at a time as long as the work is worthy. As described above, funds should be raised specifically for this subvention award and might necessarily sometimes be targeted to publication of works in specific subfields.

Committees and Infrastructure Needs:

The Committee does not recommend that ACSAA establish an ongoing Publications Committee. As is currently the case, the Webmaster and the Editor of the Bulletin will work with the ACSAA officers and Board but do not need the oversight of an additional layer in the form of a committee. In the case of web publications, such as conference proceedings, the Webmaster can manage the uploading of files and the conference coordinators can take care of collecting and submitting the papers.

For subventions, the President of ACSAA can appoint appropriate committees as the needs arise, taking care to avoid potential conflicts-of-interest, and coordinating the process with ACSAA's fund-raising group.

BALLOT ITEMS:

The committee recommends:

Continuation of the Bulletin.

Continuation of Website as vehicle of distribution of information.

Subventions for forthcoming books. (Peer-reviewed but might be awarded to multiple projects in a given year. Funds should be raised specifically for these awards, which are targeted at \$5000 each.)

Occasional book reviews of new books, catalogues, and museum publications to be published on the ACSAA website. The reviews should be edited and a Book Review Editor should be appointed.

A New Books Notices list should be added to the ACSAA Bulletin and overseen by the Book Review Editor.

The committee does not recommend:

A journal (print or electronic)

Ongoing books/monograph series.

Prizes in general, including those with no financial reward. Career milestones or extraordinary publications might be recognized by occasional citations. If an idea for an award is presented or proposed to the ACSAA Board, a subcommittee should be formed to consider the specific case.

The establishment of a regular Publications Committee.

The committee is undecided about recommending:

Publication of ACSAA (and perhaps other) conference proceedings on the website in a restricted access section.

Revival of the ACSAA bibliography project.

Publication of occasional volumes of significance, for which funds would be raised explicitly. Either print or electronic or both. Peer-reviewed and professionally edited.