



## OAH Annual Business Meeting Minutes

APRIL 18, 2015, ST. LOUIS, MO

After OAH Parliamentarian Jonathan Lurie determined a quorum was present, OAH President Patty Limerick called the OAH Annual Business Meeting to order at 3:45 p.m. Fifty-one OAH members were present.

### **I. Minutes of the previous OAH Annual Business Meeting were presented, duly seconded, and approved.**

### **II. Report of the President**

OAH President Patty Limerick welcomed everyone and discussed some of the issues that came up before this annual meeting, including the Indiana Religious Freedom Restoration Act, criticism of the new AP test, and income inequality among tenure-track and non-tenure track faculty. The theme of this year's meeting was "Taboos," and the OAH was able to obtain Bob Mankoff, the *New Yorker* cartoon editor, as a plenary speaker. A lot of very interesting sessions were presented at this year's meeting.

### **III. Report of the Treasurer**

OAH Treasurer Jay S. Goodgold reported that the OAH is projecting an organization-wide balanced budget. He added that over the past several years, the OAH's partnership with Oxford University Press (OUP) has evolved into an important working relationship. With their publication of the *Journal of American History*, OUP provides us with a consistent cash flow from royalties and a worldwide marketing and distribution capability. Given the current online and electronic environments and the growth of consortiums, revenues for the *JAH* have remained flat over the past several years and are expected to remain flat into 2016. The OAH's newest publication, *The American Historian*, has completed its second year of operation and overall has performed well. While advertising is small for the current fiscal year (\$15,000), it is up over 500 percent from its initial year. Goodgold noted that membership dues, the OAH Annual Meeting, the National Park Service Collaborative, and the Distinguished Lectureship Program remain the mainstays of the OAH's revenue, and staff have worked hard to market these programs. It is hoped that attendance at next year's conference in Providence, Rhode Island, will be large. The OAH has continued to maintain a key relationship with Indiana University and the Indiana University Department of History. Goodgold concluded by noting that the overall financial status of the OAH remains very solid. As in the past, the organization continues to monitor its expenses very carefully as the revenue base is challenged by the new digital and mobile landscape. This is not a unique challenge to the OAH, but while building on its core revenue sources (membership, the *Journal*, and the annual meeting), it will actively look for other revenue sources without compromising the critical mission of the OAH.



## IV. Report of the Executive Director

OAH Executive Director Katherine M. Finley thanked everyone, including the board, the staff, sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees for making this a good meeting. This coming year the OAH plans to continue to look critically at all its programs as it implements a new strategic plan. The goal of these efforts is to provide the best programs to our members and concentrate staff efforts where they can be most effective. Then Finley noted some of OAH's achievements during the past year, including:

- The production of a new magazine, *The American Historian*, to address the professional needs of our members. The first survey given to members rated the magazine very highly, and so far advertising revenue has exceeded expectations.
- The 2014 annual meeting in Atlanta had 1,871 attendees, 232 sessions, and over 400 papers; registration was 10 percent higher than the previous year, and this represents a record number of sessions and papers. This year we had 142 sessions, 600 papers, 5 museum-style displays, continued the ever-popular "Hey, I Know Your Work" mentorship program, and established the "Pub Hub" as a networking event for publishers. This year's attendance was slightly above average for a city the size of St. Louis. The total number of attendees was 1,456.
- Last year (for the fifth year in a row), the OAH finished another year with a surplus and is hoping for a small organization-wide surplus this year.
- The OAH has worked very hard to increase membership and this coming year will be concentrating on increasing its core membership. Last year, the OAH finished with 7,399 members (lower from the previous year's total of 7,818), but we witnessed a smaller loss than anticipated. The OAH is hoping to finish this year with the same number or more members than last year.
- This past year, the OAH established a new prize fund—the Mary Jurich Nickliss fund for the best book in women's and/or gender history. The OAH will award the first Mary Jurich Nickliss Prize this year and will distribute the first grants from the Presidents' Travel Fund for Emerging Historians.
- Traffic on the OAH Web site has gone up dramatically. The number of unique visitors has increased 30 percent from 91,113 to 117,946, and the total number of page views has increased 47 percent from 297,738 to 437,217.
- The *Journal* is strong. Some of the articles have received national press attention. The *Journal* reaches individuals in 64 countries; during the past year, we entered into a new and more favorable contract with Oxford University Press.
- The OAH continues to work with the National Park Service and during the past year collaborated on 49 different projects, including 11 new projects.
- In 2013–2014, Distinguished Lectures were presented in 28 states. Forty-seven new lecturers will join the program this fall.
- The OAH has developed a new strategic plan which was adopted at the board meeting at this conference. The plan will guide the organization for the next three years.

Finley concluded with a quote from Peter Drucker: "The best way to predict the future is to create it." As the OAH implements its strategic plan next year, it will be doing its best to create the organization's future.



## V. Report of the Executive Editor

Since the fall 2014 OAH Executive Board meeting, *The American Historian* has published its November 2014 and February 2015 issues. The magazine's next issues are scheduled for May, August, and November. *The American Historian's* Web site, <http://tah.oah.org>, went live in October 2014.

The *JAH* has continued to respond to the evolution of the presentation of scholarship by creating a new feature, "Metagraph: Innovations in Form and Content," that appeared first in the December 2013 issue as a review essay (Thomas W. Zeiler on James G. Blight and Janet M. Lang's *The Armageddon Letters*) and then in the June 2014 issue as a full article (Cameron Blevins, *Space, Nation, and the Triumph of Region: A View of the World from Houston*). The June 2014 issue also featured Amy Bass's "State of the Field: Sports History and the 'Cultural Turn,'" with six respondents. The September 2014 issue featured our "Interchange" conversation, "The History of Capitalism," with Sven Beckert, Angus Burgin, Peter James Hudson, Louis Hyman, Naomi Lamoreaux, Scott Marler, Stephen Mihm, Julia Ott, Philip Scranton, and Elizabeth Tandy Shermer. Linenthal noted that he was very grateful to former *JAH* assistant editor David Prior for taking a leadership role in coordinating that project.

In December 2014 Michael J. Pfeifer offered "At the Hands of Parties Unknown? The State of the Field of Lynching Scholarship," with five respondents. (Pfeifer also participated in a *JAH* podcast conversation about the article.)

The *Journal* is looking forward to the June 2015 special issue, "Historians and the Carceral State," which has been a tremendous amount of work for the entire staff. He noted that his staff is most grateful for the crucial and enduring contributions of our three consulting editors, Kelly Lytle Hernandez, Khalil Gibran Muhammad, and Heather Ann Thompson.

Linenthal then discussed the *JAH's* latest venture into the digital world and thanked several members of the staff who, with no extra resources, created something that will continue to flourish. The *JAH* staff is excited to introduce *Process*, the new blog of the OAH, the *JAH*, and *The American Historian*. This blog is the result of the OAH's ongoing initiative to engage with the vibrant community of historians, historically oriented scholars, and educated readers that has developed on the Internet over the past decade. The blog platform's flexibility allows us to publish posts that are conversational, variable in length, and timely. It will cover a wide range of topics appealing to a broad constituency that includes graduate students, historians across the profession, and an educated readership. In its early stages *Process* will focus on teaching, scholarship, and the historical profession. During the blog's first ten days in existence it generated 7,017 views and 5,353 visits.

Linenthal reported that he will return full time to the History Department at Indiana University at the end of June 2016, when he will have completed eleven years as editor of the *JAH*. An executive editor search will be held this coming fall, with a new editor to start in August 2017. Linenthal reported that Managing Editor Steve Andrews will serve as interim executive editor.



## VI. Report of Nominating Board

Past President Al Camarillo gave the Nominating Board report for Stephanie McCurry (chair of the Nominating Board). He noted that they have nominated Earl Lewis, CEO and President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, as the Vice President (who will take office after the 2016 annual meeting).

## VII. Old Business—None

## VIII. New Business

OAH member and former executive director Lee Formwalt on behalf of Jim Loewen presented a resolution: "The Organization of American Historians hereby adds its voice to the growing demands by Native American organizations, our sister disciplines, and conscientious people of all ethnic backgrounds to change the name and logo of the Washington 'Redskins.' " The motion was seconded by Cecelia Bucki. An open debate on the motion occurred. A question arose as to whether there were criteria for the OAH to weigh in on controversial matters. Finley read the following criteria that were accepted in April 2013. These four criteria were: 1) Does the issue pertain to access to historical sources central to the conduct of research, writing and teaching of American History? 2) Is the issue of great importance to society to warrant participation? 3) Is the issue of great relevance to the membership of the OAH? and 4) Is the relevance of knowledge claims in the case about American history extremely high?

After discussion, a vote was taken. Forty-four individuals voted for the motion to accept the resolution; Four voted against and three members abstained. The motion passed, and according to the OAH Constitution and Bylaws the resolution goes to the Executive Board where it can vote to approve the resolution, vote to let it stand, or reject it. [Subsequent to the OAH Annual Business Meeting, the OAH Executive Board voted on April 29, 2015 to allow this resolution to stand and become effective.]

The 2015 OAH Annual Business Meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

