

OAH ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

April 12, 2014

Atlanta, GA

After OAH Parliamentarian Jonathan Lurie determined a quorum was present, the OAH President Alan Kraut called the OAH Annual Business Meeting to order at 3:34 p.m.

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

II. Report of the President

Alan Kraut welcomed everyone and announced three initiatives that the OAH has undertaken this past year. The first initiative is the OAH's production of a new magazine that is designed to meet the needs of history practitioners. Another initiative during his term has been reaching out at the annual meeting to students and to independent scholars through a mentorship program entitled "Hey, I know your work!", an independent scholars breakfast at the conference, and the establishment of both the Merrill Travel Grants and the new President's Travel

Fund. The third project this past year increased the OAH's Washington, DC, profile by establishing a Research and Government Committee with a Washington, DC, liaison and deputy liaison. Kraut thanked the program and local resource committee, as well the staff (especially Kathy Finley, Nancy Croker, Hajni Selby, Beth Marsh, Kara Hamm, and Michael Regoli) for all their hard work and help this past year.

III. Report of the Treasurer

OAH Treasurer Jay Goodgold noted that the OAH is once again on target to have a balanced budget for the 2013–2014 fiscal year. Barring any unforeseen circumstances, the OAH will have a slightly larger operating surplus this year than it did last year. Moreover, the OAH has presented a balanced budget for the 2014–2015 fiscal year. Goodgold noted that no monies from the OAH's reserve fund will be used on an operating basis unless approved by the OAH Finance Committee. Over the past year, we hired a new membership director, and her work has greatly helped stabilize and help improve the level of the OAH membership. The Distinguished Lectureship Program is slowly recovering from the loss of the Teaching American History grants, and the National Park Service Collaborative program remains very active and a vital part of OAH's mission. Goodgold noted that the OAH will continue to closely monitor the finances of these two important

contributions to the OAH mission. He added that the new magazine (of which a preview issue was given to conference attendees) holds great potential for attracting advertisers and new members to the organization. Most importantly, the magazine went through a very vigorous financial review by the OAH, and its inclusion in the budget does not alter the organization's balanced budget.

Goodgold noted that the Oxford University Press' relationship with the OAH remains a critical element for the organization's financial stability. Oxford has taken several steps to improve its relationship with the OAH, including added communication on a quarterly basis with OAH staff and a revised and augmented contract. Goodgold noted that the OAH's investments are with Indiana University Foundation and that he is pleased with the management of those funds.

IV. Report of the Executive Director

OAH Executive Katherine Finley thanked everyone including the board, the staff, sponsors, exhibitors, and attendees for making this a great meeting. She noted that her initial inclination in presenting her annual report was to compare the OAH to the 1970s Oldsmobile slogan, "It's not your father's Oldsmobile." However, upon further investigation, she discovered that would be a bad idea since that ad campaign, in an attempt to attract younger buyers, ended up alienating loyal customers and may have been one of the reasons for Oldsmobile's failure.

Finley noted that the OAH is not the same professional organization that it was many years ago and like Oldsmobile has focused on attracting a new generation of historians. However, she assured everyone that unlike Oldsmobile, the OAH realizes that the mainstays of the organization are its loyal members and its signature programs. She thanked the many long-standing members of the organization.

During the past several years, OAH has strengthened its publications and programs, which in turn has strengthened its finances. The *Journal of American History* is more respected than ever and now reaches a total of 4,111 institutions in 62 countries, which is up from 3,428 two years ago.

This year's annual meeting, managed by OAH's new Director of Meetings Hajni Selby, is also bigger and better than ever. The OAH had a record number of papers (over 400) and a record number of panels (over 200); the plenary sessions and activities on the Freedom Summer received national attention. She reported that a total 1,876 individuals attended this year's annual meeting.

The Distinguished Lectureship Program is recovering slowly after the end of the Teaching American History Program. A record 66 new lecturers were added this past year, and the entire program has a total of approximately 469 lecturers representing over 80 subject areas. Finally, the OAH manages a total of 38 different projects with the National Park Service, in which our historians provide guidance to major national park sites in their interpretation and presentation of American history.

To build loyalty and provide quality services, programs and publications, however, Finley emphasized that the OAH needs to make sure the organization is financially sound. Last year, the organization had a surplus of \$45,063 and for the fifth year in a row, the OAH is anticipating an operating surplus.

Finley noted that the OAH wants to provide valuable services, programs, and publications to the next generation of American historians. A new membership director joined the OAH staff in August—Beth Marsh—who has a PhD in American history. She has been busy preparing a marketing plan for the organization and is trying to expand the organization's reach and market to new groups but also keep the current members. At the end of the 2012–2013 fiscal year,

membership was up from 7,706 to 7,839. In November, 2013 the OAH had 8,122 members for the first time in many years.

Although membership is down slightly this year, Finley emphasized that the year is not over and that with the introduction of a new magazine, she believes that membership numbers will climb above 8,000. The new OAH magazine will be a magazine for historians of American history, whether they are tenured university professors, community college professors, adjunct instructors, graduate students, K–12 teachers, National Park Service professionals, or museum curators. The magazine will go to all members. If the sale of advertising is any indication of how interesting the new magazine is, the OAH already has sold more advertisements in the preview issue than in the entire last year of the *OAH Magazine of History*.

Meanwhile, the OAH continues to communicate with members via the print newsletter, *Outlook*, and its e-newsletter (which has an open rate of 37%, much higher than the average open rate for e-newsletters).

The OAH also has introduced a number of new benefits and established new travel funds and prize funds. She suggested that OAH members read the OAH Annual Report online for a full listing of the organization's achievements in the past year.

Finley concluded that the OAH has built upon the strong base of the organization and remains the leading academic association in American history with the strong *Journal of American History*. To add to these successes, the OAH leadership and staff are trying to make this an association that young people and those new to the profession will value and trust so that the young people joining today will be the distinguished members of tomorrow.

V. Report of the Executive Editor

Executive Editor Edward Linenthal has noted that he has been with *The Journal of American History* for nine years and will be retiring at the end of 2016 and has the same excellent staff that he had when he started. Linenthal noted that the *JAH* published its first review essay in a new section, “Metagraph: Innovations in Form and Content,” in the December 2013 issue. Etienne Benson’s article in this same issue, “The Urbanization of the Eastern Gray Squirrel in the United States” received attention on various blogs and was the subject of one of the *JAH*’s quarterly podcasts. In the year ahead the *JAH* staff is delighted to be working with three superb contributing editors, Kelly Lytle Hernández, Khalil Muhammad, and Heather Thompson, on the next special issue, scheduled for June 2015, “Historians and the Carceral State.” The *JAH* is also planning several state-of-the-field essays,

on lynching history, food studies, and Michael Kazin has agreed to write an essay focusing on the 50 years of JFK studies. The Interchange for September 2014 is “The History of Capitalism,” and they already have the topic and a list of colleagues who will be invited for the September 2015 Interchange, which will be on the United States and World War I. Linenthal concluded by thanking the international editors, the contributing editors, the editorial board, and the staff, who have done a superb job and make any editor look good

VI. Report of Nominating Board

Past President Alice Kessler-Harris gave the Nominating Board Report for Linda Gordon (Chair of the Nominating Board). She noted that they have nominated Ed Ayers, President of the University of Richmond, as the Vice President (who will take office after the 2015 Annual Meeting). The Nominating Board was operating under new rules that were designed to diversify the nominations. Kessler added that no one from an institution represented by present Nominating Board members can be nominated for the Executive Board. She encouraged members to volunteer to be on committees, which can be done on the OAH Web site, and she will encourage OAH staff to make that option more prominent.

VII. Old Business – None

VIII. New Business – None

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.