By now, you should have received notice of the electronic ballot for the 2010 AAR elections. The Vice President position is one of the most important positions in the governance of the AAR, so please cast your vote for the candidate now. Elections are open September 20–October 18, 2010.

If you are a current AAR member and have not yet received a link to the ballot, please notify us via e-mail at elections@aar.net. Be sure to include your full name and the e-mail address to which you would like the link to the ballot sent.

Vice President

The Vice President serves on the Executive and Program Committees, as well as on the Board of Directors. He will be in a particularly important position, during the presidential year, the incumbent makes all appointments of members to openings on committees.

John Esposito

John L. Esposito is a university professor in Religion and International Affairs. He is also the Director of the Center for Muslim–Christian Understanding at Georgetown University. Esposito is editor-in-chief of The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World, The Oxford History of Islam (a Book-of-the-Month Club selection), The Oxford Dictionary of Islam, and Oxford Islamic Studies Online. His more than forty books include The Future of Islam (Oxford University Press, 2010); Who Speaks for Islam?: What a Billion Muslims Really Think (coauthored with Dalia Mogahed, Gallup Press, 2008); Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam (Oxford University Press, 2003); What Everyone Needs to Know about Islam (Oxford University Press, 2002); Women in Muslim Family Law (Syracuse University Press, 1982); and Islam: The Straight Path (Oxford University Press, 1988). His writings have been translated into more than thirty languages. A former President of the Association for the Public Understanding of Religion and the School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University Award for Outstanding Teaching.

Statement on the AAR

Many of us can remember a time not too long ago when our family and friends wondered why we chose to study religion as a field of study. A line of inquiry that they could not immediately relate to most aspects of their daily life. Today, they cannot escape religion as an ongoing political issue in elections or Supreme Court appointments on the other.

We in the AAR are in a unique position as specialists in religion. We have an increasingly important opportunity to share our work and information with the broader community. We can help people understand the role of religion in current events, and enable more informed decisions at this critical time in our history.

Religion in the Public Square
The Public Understanding of Religion Committee, with which I was involved in its formative period, has achieved a great deal. It has brought scholars, visiting scholars, and the public together to discuss and debate topics that are important to advancing the understanding of religion. The committee has also given city churches an opportunity to participate in a dialogue that is not only important but also necessary.

Program in Mentoring and Dissemination of Knowledge

We have a long tradition of leadership in disseminating scholarship through the AAR journal, its newsletters, book series, and conferences. We have also been able to rethink publishing protocols and new ways to disseminate information and knowledge. I never imagined that portals like Oxford Islamic Studies Online could give scholars and students almost instantaneous access to sacred texts, historical documents, major reference works, and other resources.

Protecting our Gains from Financial and Ideological Threats

Despite the growing role of religion in politics and society, faculty across the country have been under siege from cuts to academic freedom and the threat of loss of funding. The AAR has been able to protect its gains from these threats and to continue to grow.

As we look to the future, our ability to meet many academic challenges will be strengthened by a holistic and inclusive approach to research. We will be able to respond with our unique resources to define and explain the critical role(s) of religion in the twenty-first century.

John (Jack) Stratton Hawley is professor of Religion at Barnard College, Columbia University. He is the author or editor of over a dozen books, including "The Memory of Love: Surdas Sings to Krishna," which was awarded the 2009 American Book Award for religion. He has also written "At Play with Krishna: Pilgrimage Dramas from Brindabara" and "Krishna: The Butter Thief." Other books — "Songs of the Saints of India," "Three Bhakti Voices: Mirabai, Surdas, and Kabir in Their Times and Ours," "The Life of Hinduism," "Devi: Goddesses of India," and "Sati: The Blessing and the Curse: The Burning of Wives in India" — chart a broader terrain. Hawley has worked with other scholars on a series of "dialogues" of the public understanding of religion, such as "Fundamentalism and Gender" and "Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination." His current book project is called "The Bhakti Movement: Excavations in a Master Narrative." "God's Vacation," on memory and retreat at three religious utopias in the United States, is also forthcoming.

Statement on the AAR

Growing up in Lombard, Illinois, I used to wonder where the other side of the world was. Lombard was pretty small, and we were pretty close to Chicago. So a group of us went to work. We expanded that corner of the AAR to make room for the historically deep and important traditions of the study of religion in the United States. So a group of us went to work. We expanded that corner of the AAR to make room for the historically deep and important traditions of the study of religion in the United States.
Today we find ourselves at another watershed moment — this time affecting the AAR as a whole. Recognizing as we now do the scope and nature of its global work, it is important for the organization to change the scope and nature of its work.

- By forging ahead with a website that will be much more interactive — clarifying our public presence, making it possible for current and potential members to engage with our goals, and encouraging current members to connect each other in more personal and wide-ranging ways;
- By working through that website to extend the work of the annual and regional meetings so that they become a year-round resource where scholars exchange information and ideas, sustaining local and global networks;
- By thinking about how members — again through the enhanced website — could do more to foster intercultural exchanges of students and faculty concerned about religion (study-abroad opportunities, short-term residencies, religion/NGO internships);
- And by opening a major initiative on the teaching of religion in community colleges, where so much of America's own global diversity is already bubbling to the surface.

Our times call for certain humility. I hope the gloriously protean AAR can increasingly serve as a gathering point for all, not just for the elite and well-funded but for a far broader swath of our membership — and the world's — to take part.