

Jack Fitzmier, Executive Director, American Academy of Religion

I am pleased to report that last year the International Association for the History of Religions accepted the AAR's application to become an IAHR member society. The IAHR is a "society of learned societies," comprised of nearly fifty member organizations and several other affiliated societies across the globe. The IAHR promotes contributions to the historical, social, and comparative study of religion and serves as an international forum for the critical, analytical, and cross-cultural study of religion, past and present. Many members of IAHR constituent societies are active AAR members as well, including the IAHR General Secretary, Professor Tim Jensen, and the IAHR President, Professor Rosalind Hackett. You can learn more about the IAHR [here](#).

For some months, the AAR International Connections Committee, as well as our Board and Executive Staff, have been discussing ways that we might take better advantage of our new IAHR membership. This fall, the Committee and the Board will give further consideration to one emerging vision.

Currently, the Committee identifies a particular region of the globe to be highlighted at each Annual Meeting, and the AAR brings several scholars from that region to the Meeting. This year, for instance, the region is the Mediterranean, and we will be hosting about ten international scholars in San Francisco. This strategy has worked fairly well, but administering it has become increasingly difficult. Scholars must be identified and recruited, travel arrangements and visa applications must be secured, and creative ways must be found to get the scholars onto the Annual Meeting program. Moreover, the impact of the current program is largely confined to AAR members whose work touches on the global region of the year. And in the main, the movement has been in one direction — from international regions to our Annual Meeting.

As an alternative that would take advantage of our new relationship with our partner societies in the IAHR, we are considering replacing the yearly regional focus with a grants program that would support collaborative work between AAR members and members of IAHR societies. Under this new vision, AAR members would be able to apply for multi-year funding to support research projects that might entail AAR member travel to IAHR international gatherings as well as IAHR member travel to our Annual Meeting. The research projects themselves would be granted program status at our meeting, most likely as Seminar Program Units. Such an arrangement, we think, would facilitate AAR members making their own international connections, would enhance AAR member scholarship, would offer IAHR member societies

new venues for their research, and would, over time, spread the impact of our international work across a larger number of AAR members.

This new way of underscoring our global connections is still in the vision stage and a number of details are still to be worked out. But I think it will take shape soon, and I believe that we will have more concrete plans in a few months. If you have ideas or thoughts on this matter, please feel free to [contact me](#). This e-mail address is being protected from spambots. You need JavaScript enabled to view it . I would love to hear from you.