

July 2015

Recommendations from SAR Media Committee report, February 2013

Below are the recommendations from the Media Committee report, with excerpts from the commentary. Most of the recommendations were tabled because of organizational changes and funding issues. Notes on the status of each recommendation are inserted below.

1. *Expand the digital publishing capability of SAR Press by*

- Continuing to digitize all existing publications, including older backlist;
- Make all new titles available in e-book form to both consumers and libraries; and
- Investigate opportunities for re-packaging SAR publications, or portions thereof, in new ways, both digital and print, as a means of expanding the audience for SAR-sponsored work (especially the classroom audience) and increasing revenue.

⇒The first two points have been implemented; the third did not get beyond the thinking stage.

2. *Focus SAR Press's trade publishing on the popular archeology series and Indian arts.*

Although the majority of SAR Press books are scholarly (including those intended as classroom texts), publishing for general audiences is also an important part of the program. However, general interest books have had mixed success and are becoming even riskier propositions in the current volatile publishing climate. The popular archeology series and books on Indian arts have consistently been SAR's most successful titles, both critically and commercially. Therefore we recommend focusing the general interest publishing program in these two areas. In addition, we suggest that SAR Press consider commissioning more high sales potential books like the volume by David Grant Noble currently in press, as well as a series of short books drawing on IARC holdings. The latter would be dependent on future plans for IARC, and would require hiring a writer specifically for this purpose.

⇒The popular archeology series is almost complete, after the recent publication of *Medieval Mississippians*. Noble's book has been published. Cost is a big concern for potential books based on IARC collections.

3. *Expand Southwest Crossroads as multimedia digital resource for multiple audiences.*

Southwest Crossroads, a web resource developed with grant funding and directed primarily at teachers, is one of SAR's most popular publications, judging from the number of hits and "click-throughs" from the SAR newsletter. (Links to *SC* are consistently the most frequently opened among the various items included in the newsletters.) It is SAR's most significant digital publication, and arguably one of the most effective in reaching general audiences. Much more could be done to develop and

promote this project. In addition, it could potentially serve as a platform for new online-only, multimedia projects, which are an increasingly important part of any organization's media presence. However, the initial grant funding has ended and further resources would be needed to do more than simply maintain *SW Crossroads* in its present form. The committee wants to explore possibilities for further development, but has not yet had time to focus on this project.

⇒No change on this point.

4. *In the longer term, create a space for collaborative scholarship and publication.*

As publishing is changing, so are the ways that scholars design and execute their research projects and exchange information about their work. At least three trends have been evident for some time: increased collaboration among scholars on research projects; a blurring of the boundaries among traditional disciplines in defining research projects; and the increasing importance of informal communication of research results prior to formal publication. Although traditional scholarly methods still dominate (and formal publication remains the gold standard for scholarly advancement), these trends toward collaboration and interdisciplinarity show no signs of abating, and it is therefore important for SAR to monitor these trends closely and plan for new forms of scholarly communication and publication. The committee identified two possible directions to consider:

- Create an online platform for collaborative scholarship, in which scholars work together on a publication, commenting on one another's work, and preserving comments as part of the publication. This could be done in conjunction with SAR-sponsored seminars, as a new approach to the advanced seminar edited volume.
- Create an online, open access journal in anthropology/archeology, along the lines of *Public Library of Science*. (Open access—making scholarly work available free to readers—is a growing trend in journals publishing, especially in the sciences.) A SAR-sponsored journal could incorporate selections from the proposed digitized database of SAR publications. It would provide an important service to the field, and would establish SAR as a significant innovator. However, open access remains controversial, and launching a journal is an expensive proposition under any circumstances. We include this idea here as something to consider in the future, after other recommendations are implemented.

⇒We recognized that these are ideas for discussion at a future date.

5. *Reorganize all SAR media activities into a single department to integrate the full range of staff skills across all programs.*

⇒This recommendation proved impractical given the other major organizational changes that began shortly after we completed this report.

Issues for further investigation

As noted above, the scholarly community is changing rapidly – in the ways scholars do their research, in teaching methods, and in modes of publication. There are many changes underway that will surely affect SAR and its media programs, but it is impossible to predict those effects at this time. We think it is critical to continue following several specific issues, outlined below, in our long-range planning. Many of these issues will go well beyond media in their impact, so it is essential for us to consider all of SAR’s programs – fellowships, collections, public programming, media – in our planning.

Publishing and selling work in digital formats, especially opportunities for selling existing material in new formats and for creating entirely new kinds of publications.

The digital publishing industry is constantly changing, and new opportunities are certain to arise, perhaps in ways we can only begin to imagine at this point. Changes in scholars’ research and teaching practices are also likely to require changes in publication methods, if SAR is to keep pace with those changes. Examples of future possibilities include selling individual book chapters; using *Southwest Crossroads* as a jumping-off point for further multimedia publishing; providing resources for multimedia publishing by resident scholars; and creating an online journal in archeology/anthropology.

Changes in the market for publications, both scholarly and general interest.

The marketplace for media of all types is highly volatile and likely to remain so. As SAR moves into digital publication, it will be essential to monitor costs, revenues, and market trends. For example, the pricing of e-books and timing of their publication (simultaneous with print or delayed) could have a significant impact on SAR Press’s revenue. Price too low or publish too quickly, and the Press could see revenue decline; but moving too slowly could also mean a loss in sales as more and more readers demand digital publication. In the scholarly arena, pressures for open access, now confined mostly to journals, could begin to affect our ability to sell books.

Changes in scholars’ research methods, especially the trend toward more collaborative work.

If we see changes in SAR’s fellowship programs, our publications programs would likely have to change as well. For example, we might imagine Advanced Seminar volumes shifting from collections of individually authored essays to collaboratively written volumes.

Changes in teaching methods.

We have discussed above the increasing use of customized course materials, usually delivered online, in preference to traditional textbooks and print course readers. Related issues to consider include the ongoing shift toward increasingly liberal interpretations of “fair use” of copyright materials for academic uses; the plethora of new types of screen devices that students use to consume digital materials; and the growth of online courses.