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AASR WebMaster

Website Progress Report, May 2006

The AASR website has been live now for nine months. Despite its as yet undeveloped state, www.a-asr.org proves already a very useful instrument of information for both the general public and the AASR membership body as is clear from the number of people visiting it and from the documents that have been placed on it. Further structural changes will soon be introduced in order to make into an instrument of not only information but also of communication.

Visitors

The site keeps track of the number of unique visitors consulting: how often they have visited it and how many page impressions they have made during their visits. In its rubric Statistics (<http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=3>) it says that to date (30.05.2006) 6,2885 visitors have paid 6,829 visits to the site and made 12,035 page impressions. On 29 May, 130 visitors paid 136 visits and made 199 page impressions. This month of May 2006, 2,053 visitors paid 2,241 visits, making 3,104 page impressions.

Content

To date, 160 documents have been posted on the AASR website, some permanently, but subject to occasional revision and updating, others until an event has taken place, a deadline has passed or for as long as needed. At the moment they are ordered in the following 'rubrics' or folders:

- *AASR* contains the Welcome statement, the AASR Aims, the AASR Constitution, the list of the AASR Publications, a description of AASR History, the lists of the AASR Executive 2005-2010, and the AASR Membership Form

- *AASR Bulletin 24* (November 2005), broken down into its 26 distinct contributions
- *AASR Conference on Health, Healing and the Study of the Religions of Africa*, 8-13 July 2007, at Gaborone, Botswana, with the statement of the problem to be addressed, the call for papers, the draft conference program, and the conference registration form
- *AAR 2006 Call for Papers* has four documents. The first document is General Information on the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting at Washington DC, USA, from 18 to November 2006, which will have Africa for its international focus. Its second document contains the General Guidelines for submitting panel or paper proposals; its third the Specific Guidelines; whereas its fourth lists all the sections, groups and consultations which invite paper proposals from scholars of religions in and on Africa.
- *News* is perhaps the most important rubric of the present AASR website. It contains 26 documents of an explicitly temporary nature, such as conference announcements; calls for panels and papers, and for contributions to edited volumes; offers of fellowships and scholarships; adverts for lectureships, research posts and other vacancies; news items, and a request for help in an HIV/AIDS project. It will be re-ordered soon into three more specific folders: Calls for ...; Vacancies; News.
- *Recent Publications* is a new rubric. It contains three articles, one from *AASR Bulletin 24*, and two from this number. In due time it will hopefully be expanded into an Electronic Archive of articles by AASR members and others on the study of the religions of Africa.
- *Weblinks* contains links to the IAHR and to those of its affiliates which have their own web site; to the AAR; to e-journals; and to the web sites of AASR members
- *Site Statistics* (see above)
- *Forums* (see below)
- *Search this site* (see below).

Structure

The AASR web site is at the moment only informative and whatever documents have been posted on it are accessible to both AASR members and the general public. That will change in the course of this summer, when the AASR Members-Only level will become operational. That level will be accessible to AASR members by means of their (working) e-mail address and a password. The 57 AASR

members, whom I listed in AASR Bulletin 24, pp. 6-8, are therefore again urgently requested to send me their current e-mail address in order that they too may gain access to the Members-Only level as soon as that becomes operational. At a later moment, to be determined in consultation with the AASR Executive and in particular with the AASR Regional Representatives, access to the Members-Only part of the AASR website will be granted only to members who have paid their annual membership fee.

As soon as this level is operational, all rubrics mentioned above, except that on the AASR, will be moved to the AASR Members-Only level. That level will moreover also be greatly expanded by the addition of at least two more features: the complete and updated electronic version of the AASR Register of Members, and, towards late 2006, the Forums facility. The latter will enable AASR members who have access to the Members-Only section of the AASR website, to communicate with any other AASR member who has access on any subject relating to the study of the religions of Africa.

Communication

An important step has recently been taken in the development of the AASR website into not only an instrument of information but also of communication. 'Open source' software for handling all future AASR e-mail traffic has been installed on the server on which the AASR website operates. This non-commercial software is capable of handling any number of e-mail accounts, which the AASR may wish to install now or in the near future in conjunction with the AASR website. It imposes no limits on the size of the messages to be sent through it. As a first step, all members of the AASR Executive have been sent an e-mail account name, a user name, an@a-asr.org e-mail address and a password, together with an extensive document that instructs them in precise detail how to install the account(s) linked to their particular AASR office(s). For the moment, they are the following:

Account name	e-mail address

AASR President	President@a-asr.org
AASR Vice President	VicePres@a-asr.org

AASR General Secretary	GenSecr@a-asr.org
AASR Treasurer	Treasurer@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for East Africa	RepresEA@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for Southern Africa	RepresSA@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for West Africa	RepresWA@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for Europe	RepresEU@a-asr.org
AASR Representative for North America	RepresNA@a-asr.org
AASR Bulletin Chief Editor (Ojo)	ChiefEditor@a-asr.org
AASR Bulletin Co-Editor (Platvoet)	Co-Editor@a-asr.org
AASR Publications Officer	PublOff@a-asr.org
AASR Webmaster	WebMaster@a-asr.org
AASR Internet Officer	info@a-asr.org
AASR Mail Administrator	admin@a-asr.org

The following four of these AASR e-mail addresses are now operational:

WebMaster@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

Co-Editor@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

info@a-asr.org (Platvoet);

admin@a-asr.org (Platvoet).

AASR members may use these for any business relating to the AASR website, the AASR Bulletin, the AASR e-mail system, and for asking questions or sending information, e.g. for updating their AASR registration particulars. As soon as other AASR e-mail accounts will also have become operational, an AASR officer's personal or institutional e-mail address will be replaced by his or her AASR e-mail account in all relevant lists in order to inform AASR members that they may use

these for conducting AASR business with him or her. In addition, other accounts, permanent or temporary, will be installed whenever the need for them arises, e.g. for organising the Botswana conference, the fund raising committee, etc.

To complete this system, four e-mail distribution lists have also been installed on the server. A message sent to one of these addresses will distribute it to all those on the list of that address. They are:

e-mail address	distributed to

Executive@a-asr.org	all members of the AASR Executive
Editors@a-asr.org	editors of the AASR Bulletin
Representatives@a-asr.org	the five AASR Regional Representatives
Technical@a-asr.org	WebMaster and Mail Administrator

When the need arises, other such distribution lists may be installed, temporarily or permanently.

Conclusion

The next progress report will be published in AASR Bulletin 26. It will report on the introduction of the Members-Only section and the operation of the AASR e-mail system. It will also announce when and how the Forums and the Search This Site facilities of the AASR web site will become operational. Once these are in full swing, the AASR website will be structurally and functionally complete but for one (crowning) part: the Electronic Archive.