

Prenotandum: This report of the Webmaster on the AASR website was published in *AASR Bulletin* 26 (November 2006): 19-22

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www.a-asr.org, II

The AASR website (www.a-asr.org) is now divided into two parts. The one entitled ‘Welcome to the AASR’ is accessible to the general public. To the other, entitled ‘Welcome AASR Member’, only AASR Members can log in by means of a username and a password. As Webmaster I grant each AASR member access by entering his/her e-mail address, together with a password, into the document in the website’s manager that governs access the Members-Only Area of the website. I can, therefore, grant access only to the members of whom I possess a working e-mail address. I grant it to new AASR members only after I have received their full registration particulars.

All 150 AASR members, of whom I have a functioning e-mail address, have meanwhile been informed by an e-mail message about this division and how they may access the Members-Only Area. In the system that I have adopted, a member’s e-mail address serves as his or her Username for logging in into the Members-Only Area, for I can only inform them that they have been granted access and how they may log in, if I have their current e-mail address. It is therefore important that AASR members update me on changes in their e-mail address(es).

I could not, therefore, notify and grant access to the 41 registered AASR members whose current e-mail addresses I do not possess. Some have never added their e-mail address to their registration particulars. Others did add it but have since changed it and did not send me an update. In *AASR Bulletin* 23 (May 2005), pp. 6-8, is a list of the names of the 49 members of whom I did not have a (working) e-mail address in early 2005. I am happy to report that I have been able to shorten that list by 8 names now. The remaining 41 are requested to send me an e-mail at WebMaster@a-asr.org in order that I may grant them access to the Members-Only Area of the AASR website too.

The open and closed parts

The part of the AASR website accessible to the general public has now been termed 'Welcome to the AASR'. It contains the following folders and documents:

- AASR: Members, Meetings, Media, Membership
- AASR Aims
- AASR Constitution
- AASR Publications
- AASR History
- AASR Executive 05-10
- AASR Membership Application Form
- AASR Membership Dues
- Webpages of AASR Members
- AASR Conference on 'Health, Healing, and the Study of the Religions of Africa, University of Botswana, Gaborone, 8-13 July 2007
- Persons & Posts
- News
- Weblinks

The contents of the Members-Only Area are found, after logging in, on the 'Welcome AASR Member' page. It contains at present the following folders and documents:

- AASR Bulletin 24
- AASR Bulletin 25
- Calls for Papers and Contributions
- Requests

- Scholarships
- E-Publications

All future and past AASR Bulletins of which I have an electronic text will soon also be posted in the Members-Only Area, as will the AASR Register of Members. The latter should allow us also to build an extensive Electronic Archive of publications on the religions of Africa within the Members-Only Area, as I explain below.

Plans

An Executive-Only Area will soon be installed also. AASR Officers will log in to the Executive-Only Area by the same Username and Password as for logging in to the Members-Only Area. In the document governing access to the secluded parts of the AASR website, they have been granted access to both the Members-Only and the Executive-Only areas. I hope that AASR Officers will soon also install their office-bound AASR e-mails accounts. So far, apart from myself, only two did so: the AASR General Secretary and the AASR Representative for North America, as you may see on the inside cover of this bulletin.

The next important phase in the development of the AASR website will be the operationalisation of the Forums facility. It will enable AASR members to create platforms for worldwide on-line discussion of topics of common interest to AASR members in the wide field of the study of the religions of Africa, e.g. on 'Theology and HIV/AIDS', on 'Islam and Public Life in Africa', on 'the Pentecostalisation of the mainline Christian churches in Africa', on 'Jews in Africa', on religion and politics in Africa, AICs, NRMs, the methodology of the study of spirit possession, to name but a few of the numerous issues that may be discussed in forums. Forums may also be created for preparing a conference, for organising a research group, or for co-publishing a book. I hope to have mastered the technical side of the administration of forums before mid-2007 and to announce in AASR Bulletin 27 how they may be initiated.

Personal webpages

A visit to <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=142>, 'Webpages of AASR Members', shows that so far only AASR members posted in universities in Europe, North America and South Africa have been able to divulge full pertinent academic information about themselves by means of a personal webpage because the websites of their universities offer them that facility. Personal webpages, after the model of my own personal webpage at <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=162>, may be installed, however, on the AASR website for all AASR

members who wish to have one. Members interested in this option may contact me at WebMaster@a-asr.org. Personal webpages will normally be located in the area accessible to the general public, but may also be placed in the Members-Only Area if members so wish.

Electronic Archive

A large electronic archive of recent publications in the field of the study of the religions of Africa may also be gradually developed within the Members-Only Area through the linking facilities of the Content Management System (CMS) of this website.¹ Members will not only have the option of referring to their publications under 10. in the AASR Register of Members, or in their personal webpages. They will also be offered the option to attach the publications themselves, in .pdf (Acrobat) format, to these and other bibliographic references (e.g. in the rubric Recent Publications in AASR Bulletins). I plan to gradually attach all my own publications to my personal AASR-webpage as a start of this electronic archive. The AASR will become a veritable knowledge-sharing community, if many AASR members will likewise store their articles and chapters in this electronic archive. As the texts will be accessible to AASR members only, I trust that the archive will not violate the copyrights of the journals in which, and publishing firms by which, these texts were published in printed form. Lastly, I should note that the AASR website has search facilities by means of which the publications stored can be ordered and retrieved through indexes of authors, societies and subjects.

Site statistics

As <http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=3>, Site Statistics, documents, close to twenty thousand distinct visitors have paid more than 22.000 visits to www.a-asr.org to date (2.01.07) and made over 35.000 page impressions.² The AASR website has therefore been quite successful so far as a site accessible to both AASR members and the general public. However important these figures are in terms of the function of www.a-asr.org to inform the general public about the AASR and channel information more speedily to AASR Members than is possible through a printed bulletin, it should be remembered that these numbers are likely

¹ E.g. visit <http://www.a-asr.org/>, select Webpages of AASR Members, navigate to Jan G. Platvoet, select his personal webpage (<http://www.a-asr.org/index.php?id=162>), navigate in his List of Publications to 1993c, 'Contexts, Concepts, & Contexts', and click on it and the text appears in .pdf format.

² Not all of them are friendly visits. A number are for spamming purposes.

to grow less dramatically now that the Members-Only Area has been installed. For the greater part of the information contained by the site is accessible now to AASR members only. And that secluded part will increase exponentially in the years ahead. I therefore urge AASR members to regularly access it. Channelling privileged information to AASR members and fostering electronic communication between them should, in my view, be the primary functions of the AASR website in the years ahead.