

ED Report Annual Business Meeting

The political, social, economic, and also psychic stress of the past year has taken a toll on everybody. AAR's members and staff are no exception. It is on the background of it all -- the daily horror in the news, the continuously rising precarity of many and uncertainty for all -- that the relative well-being of AAR is a real success. While many challenges persist, we can look back at a year of meaningful programming and active engagement, support for and recognition of members' work, improvements in communication, creation of community, and meaningful advocacy.



Since January 2026, we have a new set of strategic goals and priorities that clarify the need for AAR to work toward financial and organizational stability, while continuing to create opportunities and increase the value of belonging, to foster scholarly and teaching excellence in all areas of a drastically changing field, and to advocate for Religious Studies and scholars of religion in a variety of contexts.

Finances/Budget:

Spending Policy Review	FY2025 Actual	FY2026 Actual	FY2027 Projection
3yr Rolling Average	\$7,339,194	\$6,540,066	\$5,871,664
5% Draw	\$363,663	\$323,509	\$287,226
Additional draw over 5% spending policy	\$1,204,676	\$445,669	\$197,174
Total Draw (\$)	\$1,568,339	\$769,178	\$484,400
Total Draw (%)	21.4%	11.8%	8.2%

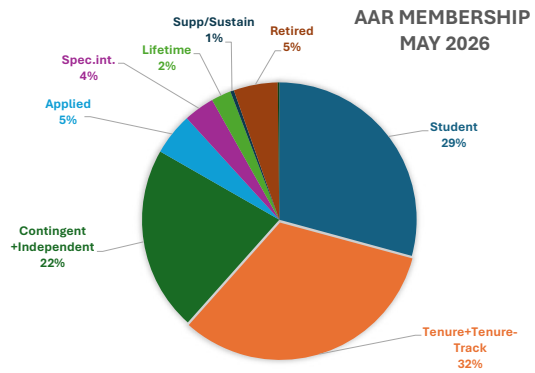
We are moving in the right direction.

- Member **donations** more than doubled, to \$67,945
- \$100,000+ external **grants** secured
- Increased revenue from **member dues**
- Decrease expenses and **optimized operations** and staff resources
- Strategically **leveraged partnerships** to support AAR's mission

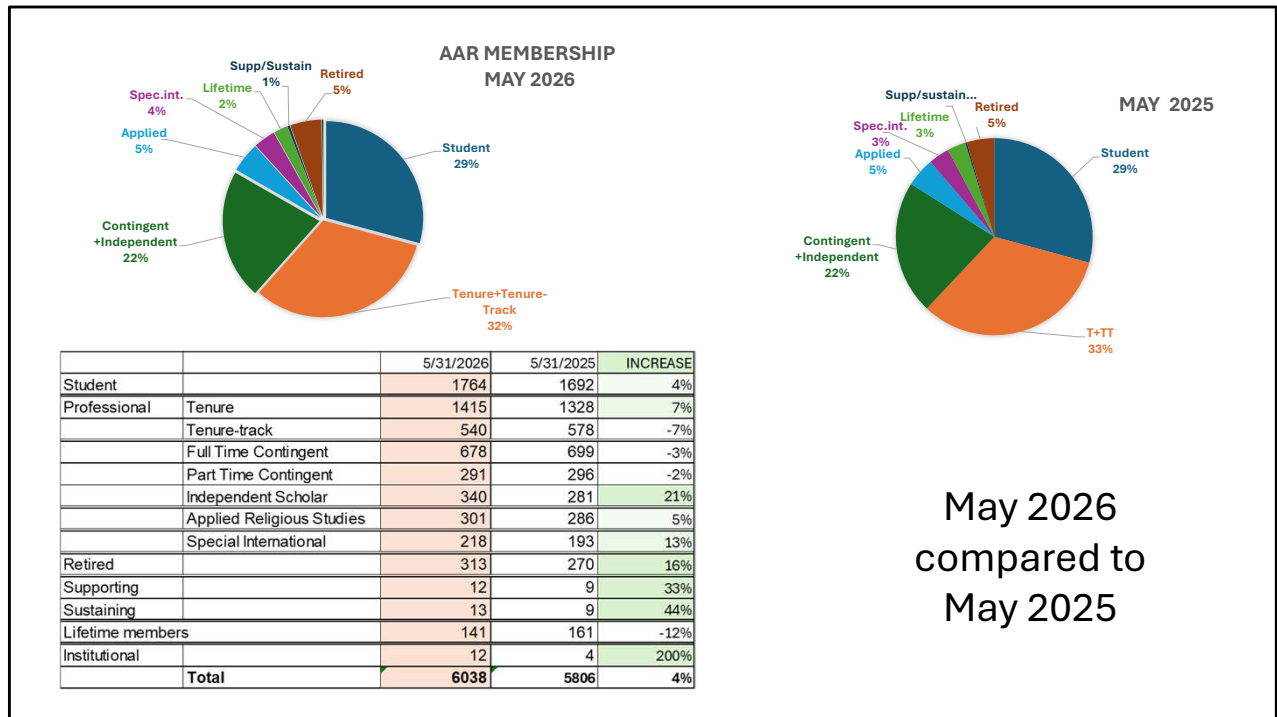
In the realm of fundraising and moving AAR toward greater fiscal stability, we are moving in the right direction (as evident in the anticipated further meaningful reduction of our deficit). Over the past year, our initiatives succeeded by doubling the amount of member donations during the period, by securing more than \$100,000 in grant revenue from external sources, by increasing revenue from member dues (through improved systems of tracking/reminding/encouraging), by decreasing expenses and further optimizing operations and staff resources (which also has included ending the Reading Religion Program and eliminating 1.5 staff positions at the end of this month, as well as moving all Board and Program Committee meetings to Zoom), and by strategically leveraging partnerships to support AAR's mission and current work (e.g. by collaborating with MLA in providing chairs training, planning collaborations with ATLA around Annual Meetings that will bring additional exhibitors and increase revenue for AAR, and partnering with Theta Alpha Kappa (and SBL) in starting a project to obtain better data about the state of the field.).

AAR Membership - May 31, 2026

Student		1764	29.2%
Professional	Tenure	1415	23.4%
	Tenure-track	540	8.9%
	Full Time Contingent	678	11.2%
	Part Time Contingent	291	4.8%
	Independent Scholar	340	5.6%
	Applied Religious Studies	301	5.0%
	Special International	218	3.6%
Retired		313	5.2%
Supporting		12	0.2%
Sustaining		13	0.2%
Lifetime members		141	2.3%
Institutional		12	0.2%
	Total	6038	100.0%



Besides conference registrations, membership growth and retention is the main source of revenue for AAR. We currently have more than 6000 dues paying members.



Membership numbers compared to last year show 4% growth (but are likely underreporting the actual trend, due to shift in registration deadlines). April 25 to April 26 comparison show an increase of 7% membership. When registration rates increase on Friday, we may have new numbers to compare.

While the overall distribution of memberships is staying the same compared to one year ago, there may be some interesting trends to observe, e.g. more independent scholars – which is great, but may be related to reduction of contingent and tenure track positions. I find encouraging the increase in sustaining and supporting members and now 12 institutional memberships – these are examples of individuals and institutions actively supporting the AAR.

Communications/ Publications

Newsletters

Our newsletter is sent out weekly on Thursdays (with the exception of holidays and Annual Meetings) and covers the latest news, events, opportunities, and calls to action from AAR and related organizations. Read the latest editions below and subscribe:

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THE AAR WEEKLY BRIEFING
NEWS & NOTABLES

News & Notables
The latest AAR announcements, member interviews, and exclusive deals available to our members.

THE AAR WEEKLY BRIEFING
PROGRAMMING EDITION

Programming
Upcoming events, webinars, career development opportunities, and Annual Meeting updates.

THE AAR WEEKLY BRIEFING
PUBLICATIONS EDITION

Publications
Read the latest articles from Reading Religion, Religious Studies News, and the Journal of the American Academy of Religion.

THE AAR WEEKLY BRIEFING
ADVOCACY EDITION

Advocacy
Discover actions you can take to resist the compounding negative impact of current political developments, policy changes, and legal challenges.

RSN RELIGIOUS STUDIES NEWS

The Latest from RSN

Member Spotlight: Yanatan Y. Brafman
June 03, 2025

LEADERSHIP PARTNERSHIP
Ann 03, 2025
Leadership Partners: Ann Greg

open tabs
May 21, 2025
Open Tabs | May 2025

Spotlight
May 03, 2025
A Conversation with Emily Rolley, 2025 Excellence in Teaching Award Winner

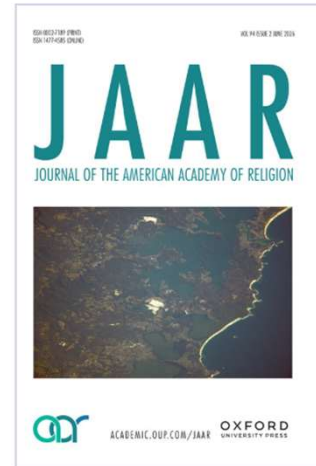
RSN Podcasts

Our podcast, hosted by Kristian Petersen, explores the latest in religious studies through interviews with award-winning authors.

The Rights of Reproductive Justice with Elizabeth O'Brien
Elizabeth O'Brien, associate professor of History at UCLA and author of *How We Got Here*

The Sovereignty of Hope: Scholarship, Practice, and the Future of Academic Freedom
This episode is one of LASTS (Research Association of Teachers)

Androgynes and Eunuchs in Rabbinic Literature with Max K. Streufeld
Max K. Streufeld, associate professor of Religion at the University of Toronto



Latest Issue

Volume 94, Issue 2

June 2026

We communicate with our members through **weekly newsletters**, regular social media posts and of course through our website.

With the discontinuation of Reading Religion, our online magazine **Religious Studies News** will take on greater importance, and I encourage you to check out the many interesting contributions.

Our flagship journal, **JAAR has caught up** from the previous backlog and is now publishing the current volume in the current quarter (yay!) We continue to work with OUP on publishing our book series.



2025-2026 WebinAAR Attendance

Year-Round Programming

Date	Webinar Title / Topic	Registrations	Attendance	Recording Views (up to 6/9/26)
25-Jul	Inclusive Pedagogy #2 – UDL 3.0	28	16	NA
30-Jul	Steps Toward a New PhD	49	27	28
24-Sep	Strategies for Resilient Undergrad Programs	24	11	13
26-Sep	Scholarship Series: Teaching with Native American and Indigenous Religions on Stolen Land	78	45	9
1-Oct	Teaching Controversial Topics: Immigration and Religion	36	22	7
10-Oct	Scholarship Series: Theology after Gaza	102	69	NA
14-Oct	Women in Publishing	17	14	NA
17-Oct	Scholarship Series: The Future of Scholarship – Religion & Human Rights	21	14	13
24-Oct	Scholarship Series: Religion, Race & Public Scholarship	45	26	13
29-Oct	PWD Inclusive Pedagogy #3: AI and Accessibility in Online Teaching	31	12	4
31-Oct	Scholarship Series: Theology, Religion & the Modern University	53	25	2
31-Oct	Scholarship Series: The World of Bahai' Faith	69	48	4
4-Nov	The Role of Religion in Today's Democratic Crises	95	53	57
7-Nov	Scholarship Series: Buddhist Feminist Historiography	65	38	12
10-Nov	Religious Studies Closures – Insights, Strategies & Steps	42	28	25
14-Nov	Scholarship Series: Religion & Conflict – Case Studies from Ukraine	31	17	5
10-Dec	Meet the 2026 AAR President: Dr. Laurel Schneider	70	44	237

30-January	Navigating the 2026 AAR Call for Proposals	33	18	128
4-February	R&A 250: "An American Christian Nation? What are the Right Questions? What is at Stake?"	76	59	55
20-February	Religion & Gender Studies: A Strategy Session	82	45	34
3-March	R&A 250: "Representing Religion in Museums"	25	30	16
5-March	Presidential Series: REL Toolbox	36	21	8
23-March	Archiving Reading Religion	42	26	49
25-March	Recruiting and Retaining Majors & Minors: An Update from LSU	26	19	2
7-April 7	R&A 250: "Approaches and Resources for Teaching Religion and America at 250"	14	12	7
21-April	The Urgency of Public Literacy on Religion in the Digital Age: 2026 Marty Award Winner	82	52	10
28-April	Better Surveys, Better Data	67	25	7
29-April	Strategies for Reinventing a Unit: A Case Study from the University of Northern Iowa	21	13	7
6-May	R&A 250: "Religion, War, and Revolution: What are we getting right and/or wrong about religion in Early United States?"	9	6	10
18-May	Wikipedia as Pedagogy	27	16	8
2-June	Teaching Religion in an Era of AI	132	70	8
Total in FY 26		1528	921	778

In addition to the Annual Meetings in June and November, we offered robust year-round programming, from several mentorship programs to **more than 30 webinAARs last year**. Attendance at webinars continues to be healthy – depending on topic they are larger or smaller, but all have been welcome additions to YRP. Over the last year, more than one thousand members have attended or subsequently viewed the webinar recordings (and the recordings continue to be accessible online)



JANUARY 21, 2026

The Church of Stop Shopping Wins the 2026 AAR Religion and the Arts Award



JANUARY 21, 2026

Andrew Mark Henry Wins 2026 Marty E. Marty Award



JANUARY 21, 2026

Emily Bailey Wins 2026 Katie Geneva Cannon Excellence in Teaching Award



JANUARY 21, 2026

2026 AAR Research Grant Winners



We have again awarded Awards and Research Grants. Our Award winners have also shared their expertise in articles and online webinars that continue to be accessible to our members. Judging from the sizable attendance at these webinars, many more people are able to learn from these brilliant scholars than the previous often sparsely attended in person sessions that competed with 40 other sessions.

Advocacy and Partnerships



JUNE 09, 2026

AAR Signs On to ACLS Statement on OMB Proposal for New Criteria and Process for Federal Science Research Grants



MAY 04, 2026

Letter to the Leaders at the University of Denver

Presidential WebinAAR Series #1 – The REL Toolbox Workshop
American Academy of Religion

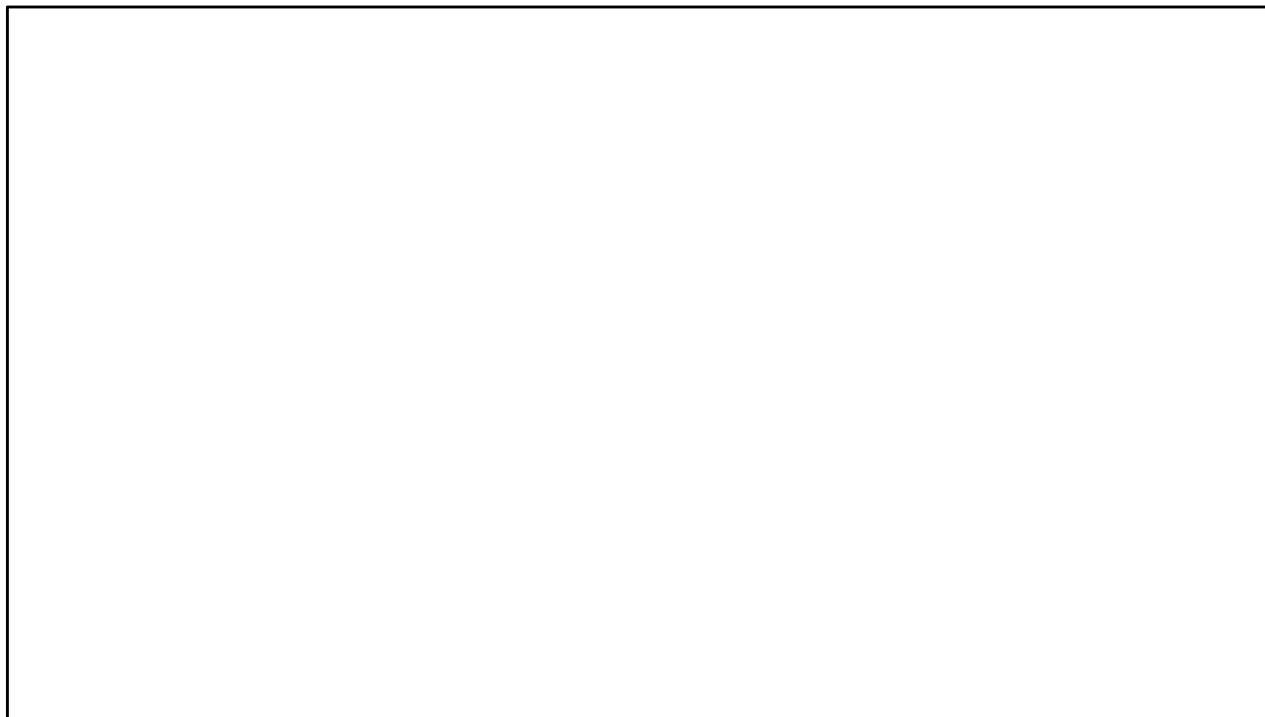
REL Toolbox / Leadership Roles

Leadership Roles

Within the typical unit in our field there are often a number of leadership roles—not all units have each. However, in fact, smaller Departments may just have a Chair, usually appointed by the Dean who may preside (the College or School which provides the administrative home for the Department) (often, but not always, placed within its Humanities or maybe Liberal Arts division). In such places, faculty members will likely each play a variety of service roles to assist in running the program (e.g., someone may be the liaison to a student association or serve on a curriculum or awards committee which only periodically meets). But in many Departments some of those service roles will be either well-defined and recurring, with faculty appointed to them for a term longer than just an academic year, or a way to ensure continuity (i.e., for example, how an undergraduate program runs from year to year).

Each of the following pages offers a brief overview of the sorts of responsibilities of each of these leadership roles, with the list being shared among all faculty members. Your setting and local traditions may vary to whatever degree, but the shared duties probably overlap considerably, regardless your setting (i.e., no matter what challenge you may face

In addition to public statements, creation of resources, and endorsement of advocacy by related organizations, AAR will continue support professional development, and diversification of our program offerings, for an increasingly diverse membership in our rapidly shifting fields.



As you may have noticed, we are doing more with less. I want to thank the small but mighty AAR staff who show up for work with enthusiasm and reliability. I am also grateful to the hundreds of AAR members who serve in volunteer leadership roles, at the regional level or in AAR governance, on committees, or in Program Units, and who give generously of their time and resources, care genuinely for colleagues, mentor and encourage their students and peers, and find the courage to continue to do their important work in the midst of a climate inhospitable to higher education, to put it mildly. Our membership organization truly is by and for members, and I firmly believe that what we collectively do is significant and that professional associations like AAR are increasingly important. Thank you for contributing to this important work.