Unofficial Tips, Suggestions, and Rules of Practice for Elected and Non-Elected Positions

Animals & Society Section of the ASA

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This document is a practical “how-to” of roles and duties for volunteers and elected council. It was compiled in the 2020 section council. It is not official, but only created to help clarify expectations and reduce uncertainties/mysteries of service.

All volunteers should adhere to the official ASA guidelines and section bylaws. This is a supplementary, informal document for reference only.

A separate manual with additional guidelines for coordinating our media presence is available upon request.

Elected Positions

Chair

Communication

- Chair should regularly contact membership (perhaps once a month) with gentle reminders of upcoming events, requests for submissions to social media, blog, and newsletter, requests for volunteering, etc.
- Chair is also responsible for approving listserv messages. The ASA has guidelines on what is and is not appropriate for the listserv.
- Chair should make sure that website is current and work with web administrator to this end.
- Work with the social media coordinator for access to section Facebook and Twitter; post regularly.
- Chair is responsible for coordinating with the newsletter administrator for one spring and one autumn issue. This will require proofreading, editing, and submission of a “letter from the chair.”
- Review bylaws for any necessary updates; there are specific procedures and deadlines for this and the ASA will remind you.
- You will be the primary recipient of administrative information from the ASA which should be conveyed to membership as appropriate.
- You may be asked to submit a document defending the right of the section to continue to exist due to our low numbers. If this happens, convene with council and past chairs for ideas on what was used successfully in the past.
- The ASA requires an annual report each year—information on what they should contain can be found on the ASA website (budget and expenditures, plans, diversity strategy, etc.).
- Update the shared dropbox with any relevant documentation

### Section Awards
- Assemble a volunteer committee to assist with decision-making. The ASA has guidelines on award selection available on the [website](#). There will likely be too many submissions for everyone to read everything, necessitating some division of labor.
- Individually email winners with congratulations.
- Make announcement of winners to listserv.
- Request newsletter editor to announce winners in next issue.
- Send list of winners to the ASA coordinator for official recognition.
- Order awards (in the past, we have ordered small animal-shaped award statues; during the COVID-19 when physical awards were not possible, we donated to an animal charity on behalf of each winner and distributed a virtual certificate of award). Our section funds should be used to purchase these but take it easy as they can be costly and most of our money will go toward the official reception costs.
- Awards should be formally announced and distributed at annual conference.
- Request that our section web administrator update website with new deadline and submission contact for next year’s awards.

### Elections
- The Past Chair now takes on the responsibility of setting up elections, but the chair should have input on potential candidates. Traditionally, we have had difficulty getting enough people to volunteer, so you may need to do some active recruitment.
- To the above, it is useful to maintain networking and solicit new members and potential volunteers.

### Conference
- You are responsible for determining the theme (which should coincide with the ASA theme for that year). This should be decided with the input of the council. You will have to write the call for papers.
- The Chair is responsible for setting up the conference using the ASA online system. The ASA will email resources to this end but be prepared as it is a bit tedious to figure out. Due to our low numbers, we typically have one regular session, one roundtable session, and a business meeting. We will also have an open meeting in which all are welcome to attend.
- You will be responsible for choosing who presents, in what order, and the table topics for the roundtable session, but you may want to create a committee to assist with decision-making.
• You will need to designate volunteers to preside over the tables in the roundtable session. Table presiders essentially begin and end the table session, keep time, and facilitate engagement between presenters and other table members as needed. You will be responsible for coordinating the presiders.

• At the conference itself, you will be responsible for presiding over all sessions, keeping time, making announcements, wrapping up, etc.

• You will be responsible for organizing the reception. Traditionally, this has been a joint event with the environmental section. We have considered having our own reception, but as many of our members are also members of the environmental section, we have kept with this approach. The environmental section expects a large contribution of funds in order to jointly host; be careful that enough funds are available. It may be the case that the cost is not worth the reward in future conferences. The council of the environmental section attempts to make reception refreshments vegetarian, but have been open to making them vegan if you are willing to put in the effort of finding a suitable location (this entails a lot of online research and calls/emails to different venues and the ASA has certain standards regarding accessibility which must be met). For consideration, the 2019 joint reception had 200 attendees. Awards are announced at the formal reception.

• It is also helpful to have an informal networking meeting for section members as well as an informal dinner/meeting of the chairs. Organizing these informal meetings can be your duty, or you can ask the incoming or past chair to do this.

• Be sure to take time to solicit information from attendees who might be interested in volunteering (this list will be invaluable when it comes time to putting together committees for awards, membership drives, etc.).

• The business section is a time for the council to come together to review, reflect, and plan for the year(s) ahead. This is open only to elected council members.

• The open meeting should review expenditures, achievements, goals, etc. and anything else non-council might be interested to know. The open meeting is designed for full transparency and democratic access to the section.

• At some point during the events, the incoming chair and council members should be announced and the outgoing chair thanked. Un-elected volunteers who do much of the behind-the-scenes work for the newsletter and social media should also be acknowledged.

• Achievements for the year should be summarized and celebrated.

• Report back any comments, decisions, etc. from the meeting to the listserv. Follow up with council after the conference with a reminder of what was accomplished and what upcoming plans might be. Develop a plan of action. Much of this information will also be incorporated in the annual report.

Leadership

• Represent the section in formal contexts, keeping in mind that the section has a variety of values, institutional/extra-institutional affiliation, academic status, and
expectations from the section. For instance, not all of our members are associated with a university, and not all of our members are vegan or supportive of veganism.

- Consider, in coordination with the council, ways in which the membership might be sustained and grown.
- Further activities are at the discretion of the individual. Some chairs have organized pre-conferences, liaised with other sections (within and outside of the ASA), submitted to Footnotes or Contexts on behalf of the section, added new sections to the website or newsletter, created resources (such as a podcast, video series, or this document!). These extra efforts are not required or expected.

**Past Chair**

**Decision-making**
- Past-chairs are expected to participate in council decision-making, committees, etc.

**Mentorship**
- The primary task of the past-chair is to mentor the incoming chair. If possible, attend the conference and any associated meetings.

**Elections**
- In our section, we have identified the past chair as the primary person responsible for organizing the election. Traditionally, we have had difficulty getting enough people to volunteer, so you may need to do some active recruitment.

**Chair Elect**
- The chair elect does not have any formal role expectations but is considered “in training” and will use the time to shadow the chair.
- The chair elect is expected to participate in council decision-making, committees, etc.
- This person might volunteer to assist with planning conference events.

**Council-Members**
- Members should make a good-faith effort to attend meetings and volunteer for committees regarding awards, paper selection for conferences, etc.
- Members provide council in decision-making, much of which takes place via email and at the annual conference.

**Student Representative**
- Duties are similar to the council members, but the representative will want to consider how they might advise the council on student interests. They will also
represent students who may wish to petition the section, organize with students, etc.

Treasurer/Secretary
- The main task of the treasurer is to keep up with our available funds, which are not much given our small size. Maintain all documentation on expenditures and income.
- Report on funds at annual business meeting.
- When costs are incurred (namely, the ordering of awards and paying for the reception), the treasurer will work with the ASA rep and Chair. This usually entails a simple form (often the Chair completes the paperwork) and liaison with the ASA rep (including indicating consent for expenditures).
- As secretary, this person should also keep notes from meetings as needed, although the Chair also takes on much of his responsibility, particularly in coalescing information from activities, emails, etc. taking place throughout the year.
- Update the shared dropbox with any relevant documentation

Non-elected Volunteers

SOCIAL MEDIA
A separate manual with guidelines for social media is in development and will be added to the folder.

At the last section meeting (2019), it was agreed that we need a larger social media presence. But what do we mean by a larger social media presence? If we mean more followers, that's pretty meaningless. We already have almost 2,000 followers on Twitter and 1,300 on Facebook. Our goal should be a more engaged presence, basically finding ways to engage followers and create a space for discussion that could become a source of knowledge on the issues, outside of the section. In other words, a qualitative, not a quantitative change.

Goals:
- A qualitative shift in the section’s media presence that should result in:
  - amplified voice of our section
  - a more engaged community
  - our social media sites to become a public resource for animal and society issues

Suggestions for achieving this:
- Encourage section members to participate in social media via Likes, Shares, and especially Comments (reminders to be sent in newsletter, email from chair, etc.)
- Chair and council members should be actively involved in helping with this effort (the chair via sending emails reminding people about getting engaged, and everyone by promoting the posts)
Members who want their work acknowledged via our social media should follow our accounts and considering contacting the coordinators directly when they have an item they want promoted.

Section Member Social Media Outreach Coordinator

Tasks:

- Communication with section members in order to highlight relevant work on social media, section newsletter, and website
- Reach out to members with recent publications and engage them in the promotion of their work
- Work with Chair and newsletter editor as needed to promote the use of social media by the section members (remind members that they can promote their work via these avenues, encourage members to be proactive about sharing relevant work and reaching out to coordinator(s))
- Manage the online resource folder where members should submit postable materials related to their professional work: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fxnm47t6dr1aicx/AABntCx2aF2Ocjqb2rX3MGQAA?dl=0

Notes on role:

- This position might be particularly appealing to students since it involves working with faculty.

Facebook Coordinator

Tasks:

- Coordinate section Facebook presence.
- Share sociological topics related to our field, upcoming events, etc.
- Create engaging posts (see manual!)
- Encourage engagement with posts in the form of Likes, Comments, and Sharing
- Joint folder for members content submissions: https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fxnm47t6dr1aicx/AABntCx2aF2Ocjqb2rX3MGQAA?dl=0

Notes on role:

- Issues: It seems that people tend to do those things only when they are somehow personally involved with/in the posts. The anonymity of the "poster" (as in posting as the "ASA section," basically an amorphous entity) is a big hurdle. People like to be involved with other people, particularly people who are famous (at least on social media, a reality unfortunately). One solution to this is to promote the people doing the work, but "guest posts" might also be useful.
- This person should be the primary poster—chairs have traditionally been added as well.
Twitter Coordinator

Tasks:

- Coordinate section Twitter presence.
- Create engaging posts by facilitating comments, sharing, etc. (see manual)
- Share sociological topics related to our field, upcoming events, etc.
- Joint folder for content submissions:
  https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fxn47t6dr1aicx/AABntCx2aF2Ocjgb2rX3MGQAa?dl=0

Notes on role:

- This person should be the primary poster—chairs have traditionally been added as well.

Blog Coordinator

- Strive for a new blog post for the website every season (at least 2 a year, preferably 4).
- Reminders to the social media coordinators, newsletter editor, and chair to promote the blog and solicit contributors.
- Actively solicit contributors from members, particularly as they have new research or events to cover.
- Blogs should be submitted to the website coordinator to post.
- Choose a post to share in each newsletter.
- Joint folder for content submissions:
  https://www.dropbox.com/sh/fxn47t6dr1aicx/AABntCx2aF2Ocjgb2rX3MGQAa?dl=0

Newsletter Editor

- Edit two newsletters per year, one in late spring, one in autumn. Past formats are available on the website.
- Remind Chair to put out call for submissions.
- Solicit “Letter from Chair” from the Chair.
- Create content for newsletter as needed (collecting essays from members, creating Q&A with members on new research/publications, listing new publications).
- As appropriate for the issue, announce award winners, new elected council members, section numbers, reports on meetings, etc.
- Reach out to social media coordinators for most popular stories.
- Finished newsletters should be submitted to the listserv, following chair approval.
- Finished newsletter should also be submitted to the web administrator for uploading.
Website Administrator

- The ASA must approve and grant access for any web administrator.
- The ASA web platform is a bit antiquated and clunky to use. The person who takes on this duty will need to have intermediate level experience with web design and maintenance including some knowledge of html coding.
- It is strongly recommended that dated information (such as award winners or upcoming events) not be listed on the website, as they tend to go stale, are not regularly cleared (particularly when there is turnover in the web admin role), and gives our section an unprofessional appearance.
- For the above reason, any new additions to the website should be consistent in format and look tidy.
- Bulletin can be updated periodically, but older information should be cleared to keep this section timely and fresh.
- Maintain website with periodic updates.
- The ASA automatically updates council members, so this should not be edited. However, non-elected volunteers should be added and removed as appropriate—given considerable section turnover, there is frequently confusion about who is doing what, so it is vital that this remains updated with relevant contact information.
- Award submission information should be updated each Spring with the incoming Chair’s email and the new year.
- Each newsletter should be uploaded as they are published.
- Periodically, blog submissions from members should be added in coordination with the blog coordinator.