

SBL Handbook for Research and Publications Committee

2015

This handbook outlines the role and activity of the Research and Publications Committee as the volunteer body responsible for the policies and procedures of the SBL Publications program.

Research and Publications Committee

The Research and Publications Committee (R&P) is the volunteer body responsible for the policies and procedures of the SBL publications program.

Description

The Committee is composed of six SBL members in good standing, five of which are selected by the Nominating Committee and approved by Council. The Nominating Committee designates which member will be the chair. The general editor of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* serves as the sixth voting member of this committee by virtue of his/her editorial position. Each member is approved for a three-year term that may be renewed. Effort is made to have representation from the guild outside North America and to provide for both male and female members, although there is not a proscribed formula for gender equity. The Editorial Director reports to the Committee and participates in the meetings in an advisory capacity. The Managing Editor attends the meetings and acts as secretary. Neither the ED nor the ME is a voting member.

Responsibilities

The primary function of the R&P Committee is to engage in strategic thinking in reviewing and setting policy related to the SBL publications program. That is, the Committee establishes the broad, long-term goals and the general shape of the publications program as a whole, but it does not exercise oversight over the day-to-day operations of the SBL publications department. The Editorial Director manages and directs operations of the department and reports directly to the Executive Director.

The Committee votes on editorial appointments (both general series editors and editorial boards) and reports decisions to Council. The Committee reviews any new book series that is proposed for SBL publications.

As a standing Committee of the Society, R&P reports to Council prior to the Annual Meeting. Included in this report should be information on the number of books published since the last Annual Meeting and the slate of editors that the Committee has approved. If any new books series have been approved, they should also be included in the report. The Council report will be presented to the Executive Director no later than 5 November each year.

SBL pursues publishing partnerships with other academic presses, responds to proposals from those presses, and maintains such partnerships to the extent that it is strategically important and enhances the work of the Society. The Research and Publications Committee is kept apprised of these relationships through reporting by the Editorial Director, but the Committee itself serves only in an advisory capacity, not as a decision-making body.

The Committee meets at least twice annually via teleconference or videoconference, generally in April and September. The dates are decided in advance by polling the committee members as to

availability. The Committee also meets in person at the Annual Meeting in November. From time to time there will be situations that require immediate action by the Committee, and in these cases, email discussions may serve to reach consensus. If a teleconference is needed, the chair has the right to call such a meeting.

Seeking financial support for the production of books and journals is also a function of the R&P Committee. Members are encouraged to engage in fundraising conversations with their institutions and other members of the guild with the goal of developing relationships that will result in regular donations or subventions to the program or the establishment of endowments for particular titles or series.

The Editorial Director reports on publications' finances to the Committee and may, in some cases, confer with the Committee on financial matters, particularly if there are large projects involved. The Committee is not responsible for development or approval of the publications budget.

Principles

The SBL publishing program produces, at a minimum, thirty titles each year in addition to a quarterly journal, an annual journal, and an online book-review website. SBL also produces, markets, and distributes books for one publishing client (Brown Judaic Studies) and serves as the North American distributor for Sheffield Phoenix Press. The R&P Committee does not have operational oversight for the work of the publications staff, but it may review the year's publications and make suggestions related to the program.

The work of the Committee with the series editors should follow the principles of the following binaries:

Core versus Peripheral:

The core values of the SBL publishing program are excellence and opportunity. The series editors should be guided to openness to cutting edge ventures, including new series or journals, without sacrificing standards of excellence. SBL has long been known as a publisher that recognizes scholarly work that may have a very narrow appeal in the field. Earning potential is not the only criterion for a title being published by SBL; SBL makes available meritorious scholarship that other presses might decline to publish.

Senior versus junior voices:

The Committee, in setting policies for the publishing program, should keep in mind the need to encourage submissions by junior scholars while upholding standards that make the program

attractive to senior established scholars. Balance in the program gives credibility as well as room for experimentation and growth.

Evaluation versus Acquisition:

Recognizing that acquisitions are crucial to the life of the publishing program, the Committee sets policies and standards that encourage thorough evaluation of manuscripts and proposals before acceptance. The emphasis in acquisitions is quality and not quantity.

Relationships

The R&P Committee is a standing committee of Council. As such, it reports directly to Council and the chair serves as liaison from Council to the Committee. Committee members work closely with the SBL publications staff and the Executive Director in an advisory capacity.

The Committee gives support and direction to the series editors, and annually reviews the series through reports submitted by the series editors to the Editorial Director. Each series is evaluated every four years and given a rating based on the following:

- 1) series is thriving; continue in the same general direction
- 2) series is active but needs encouragement for further growth and development
- 3) series is no longer active or pertinent; discontinue

In addition, the Committee may determine if a new series is needed to fill an area of the field not encompassed by an existing series; committee members work with the Editorial Director and other SBL staff to develop the new series.