

Best Meeting Ever!

The 2008 Boston meeting last month drew 5,500 attendees for more than 490 SBL sessions – both all time SBL records! The meeting was by all accounts successful in every way, managed with the smooth efficiency that is the hallmark of an SBL meeting. As the survey responses come in we are hearing this type of comment

“Thanks for a great meeting in Boston, one of the best I've ever attended. The numbers seemed high, the 'buzz' was as good as ever, and the book exhibition seemed very comparable. All in all, a great weekend.”

The exhibitors at the meeting this year reported brisk sales, as good as any year in the past. To quote one of our exhibitors, “Wow!” Our exhibitors were impressed with the SBL’s organization, traffic in the exhibit hall, and sales. More than 90% of the New Orleans exhibit space is already reserved. Preliminary results from our attendee survey show that 98% of attendees entered the exhibit hall this year, another all time high. The SBL Publications department reports that the SBL sales were the best ever – surpassing Philadelphia 2005 which had been the highest sales year. Another publisher indicated a 13% increase over San Diego 2007.

The SBL Career Center made its debut at this year’s meeting, providing a comfortable and professional atmosphere for candidates and employers. We facilitated discussions between nearly 200 candidates and 40 employers. One of our candidates wrote,

“I spent most of my meeting time at the Career Center and just wanted to commend the staff who were courteous and helpful beyond the call of duty from pre-meeting process to the very end.”

This is fewer candidates and employers than previous years. We will work to ask how this can be improved by getting more alternative career opportunities before those looking for jobs. In an increasingly difficult employment environment, decreasing jobs and no new hires, we will work hard to find ways to help those looking for ways to use their degrees and employment.

The Boston program encompassed a greater range of choices and diversity in subjects covered than at any time previously. The SBL now has more than 150 program units on topics across the discipline, including the following new units: Service-Learning and Biblical Studies Workshop; Ethics and Biblical Interpretation Consultation; and Latino/a and Latin American Biblical Interpretation. Some of the highlights from this year’s program included the SBL Presidential Address by Jonathan Z. Smith entitled *Religion and the Bible*; a session on “The Roman Cult of the Emperor,” featuring classicist Karl Galinsky; sessions on the SBL’s initiatives on teaching the Bible in Public Schools; and sessions highlighting resources for biblical scholars from the Index for Christian Art, NYU’s new Institute for the Study of Antiquity; the Perseus Project; and the Virtual Codex Sinaiticus. More than 20 affiliate organizations were represented on the SBL program this year, hosting sessions for their members and open to SBL members. New affiliate organizations for 2008 included the Academy of Homiletics, the Karl

Barth Society of North America, the Søren Kirkegaard Society, and the North American Association for the Study of Religion. The SBL thanks these organizations for enriching the program this year.

While celebrating this year's successful meeting, we look forward to the 2009 Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Make plans to join us.