

SBL ICI Handbook

SBL Mission Statement:

Foster Biblical Scholarship

SBL Strategic Vision Statement:

Founded in 1880, the Society of Biblical Literature is the oldest and largest learned society devoted to the critical investigation of the Bible from a variety of academic disciplines. As an international organization, the Society offers its members opportunities for mutual support, intellectual growth, and professional development through the following:

- Advancing academic study of biblical texts and their contexts as well as of the traditions and contexts of biblical interpretation
- Collaborating with educational institutions and other appropriate organizations to support biblical scholarship and teaching
- Developing resources for diverse audiences, including students, religious communities, and the general public
- Facilitating broad and open discussion from a variety of critical perspectives
- Organizing congresses for scholarly exchange
- Publishing biblical scholarship
- Promoting cooperation across global boundaries

Vision of the International Cooperation Initiative (ICI):

Expanding on the mission and vision of the SBL as a whole, the ICI strives to foster biblical scholarship and to facilitate mutual cooperation among colleagues. The core value of the ICI is the promotion of two-way collaboration between the more traditional centers of biblical study and the two-thirds world that is generally underresourced and underrepresented in the guild. To this end, the programs listed below have been established. For further information, consult the SBL-ICI website at <http://www.sbl-site.org/InternationalCoopInitiative.aspx>.

- **Online Books:** The online book depository provides free access to books published by SBL and other publishing partners to students and scholars in countries identified as having a gross domestic product (GDP) substantially less than the average GDP of the United States and European Union. SBL has invested in technology that recognizes the IP address of a visitor to the SBL web site. If a person is recognized as being from an ICI country s/he is allowed access to the full range of PDF files available on the site.
- **Scholarly Exchange:** SBL provides an opportunity for scholars to volunteer to mentor students in underresourced settings, particularly community

colleges and seminaries, whose faculty expertise may not extend to the areas of interest of all students.

SBL members may also volunteer to teach abroad or conduct classes via the Internet. The database of these volunteers includes information regarding their specialties, their language skills, and the time frame of their availability as well as their curriculum vitae, thereby making it possible to identify a scholar who has the qualifications and interests that would make him/her an appropriate choice as a mentor or teacher.

Scholars from underresourced areas also have the opportunity to share their expertise and unique point of view with their colleagues in other settings. An example would be the participation in a classroom via Skype or some other type of technology.

- **Membership:** Understanding that membership in the Society includes benefits both tangible and intangible and that we embody our mission best when biblical scholars from around the globe are included in the conversation, SBL has introduced a fee structure for persons in ICI countries making membership more affordable for those with limited resources. In cases where even a minimal membership fee is a hardship, arrangements are made for complimentary membership. In addition, members from any country are encouraged to sponsor the membership of others who cannot afford to join.
- **Publications:** Through ICI, SBL has established two open-access book series. In particular, International Voices in Biblical Studies strives to publish materials in the primary language of the author whenever possible. Ancient Near East Monographs is co-published with the Centro de Estudios de Historia del Antiguo Oriente at the Universidad Católica Argentina. The volumes in this series may be published in either English or Spanish. SBL also provides institutional JBL subscriptions at a reduced rate to libraries in countries that qualify for the Online Books program.
- **Meetings:** In addition to the SBL Annual, International, and North American Regional meetings, SBL is working to encourage and facilitate regional meetings in other parts of the globe by offering expertise in meeting planning and logistics to local associations and societies. The goal is to foster biblical scholarship rather than to promote the SBL. It is also hoped that publications resulting from papers given at these meetings will be published (either in print or electronically) in order to allow voices from underresourced areas a place in the scholarly conversation and exchange of ideas. Meetings are publicized through the SBL Events Calendar.
 - **Travel Grants:** In 2012, SBL reinstated travel grants to the Annual Meeting. Preference is given to applicants from ICI countries

- **Skype Sessions:** SBL successfully transmitted two Annual Meeting sessions to ICI countries in 2012. Plans are underway to continue and expand this initiative so that those who are unable to attend the Annual Meeting will have an opportunity to be part of the conversation with their peers.

SBL Liaison Network:

The work of the ICI cannot be successful unless students and scholars are aware of and take advantage of the opportunities that it affords. The Liaison Network has been established to facilitate two-way communication between the SBL and persons in underresourced countries. As an ICI Liaison, one is charged with the responsibility of establishing and maintaining contact with institutions and scholars within their geographical area and to act as a conduit for information both to and from SBL and local scholars.

From the information above, one understands that ICI seeks to include all the program areas of SBL in ways that make the Society more accessible and affordable for anyone interested in biblical studies and related fields. ICI is led by a volunteer executive board that reports directly to the SBL Executive Director. Current board members are:

Ehud Ben Zvi, Chair and Co-general Editor of ANEM
Roxana Flammini, Co-general Editor of ANEM
Louis Jonker, Co-general Editor of IVBS
Monica Melanchthon, Co-general Editor of IVBS
Charles Haws, SBL Staff Liaison

The board is assisted by Tim Langille, Liaison Network Coordinator.

SBL members in ICI countries are invited to participate in the Liaison Network on a regional, country, or institutional level. In countries where a representative is already serving, volunteers are needed to represent ICI in individual institutions. When the network has become “staffed” at the country and institutional levels, regional coordinators will be named. Interested persons should contact Tim Langille at tim.langille@gmail.com.

