



ASOR Media Note For Immediate Release

**ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives:
Safeguarding the Heritage of the Near East Initiative Collaborative Service Award**

[The American Schools of Oriental Research](#) (ASOR) is pleased to announce a new \$900,000 cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of State and ASOR Cultural Heritage Initiatives (ASOR CHI): “Safeguarding the Heritage of the Near East Initiative Collaborative Service Award.” The project continues the strong partnership between ASOR and the U.S. Department of State to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of Syria and Iraq, and to extend the scope of work to include the preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of Libya. The new cooperative agreement also includes increased support for in-country projects that connect local communities to historic places and heritage.

ASOR, founded in 1900, is the preeminent organization of archaeologists, historians, linguists, and cultural heritage professionals who initiate, encourage, and support research into, and public understanding of, the cultures and history of the Near East and wider Mediterranean. As ASOR’s President, Susan Ackerman (Dartmouth College) observed, “The work of ASOR CHI is a fundamental part of ASOR’s mission, and we are very pleased to begin another year partnering with the Department of State to preserve and protect the cultural heritage of Iraq, Syria, and now Libya. We are proud to be able to do all we can on behalf of these countries’ cultural heritage and on behalf of their citizens, whose identity is supported and sustained in these war-torn times by the rich cultural legacies of their homelands.”

ASOR CHI is lead by four principal investigators: Michael Danti (ASOR Academic Director), Andrew Vaughn (ASOR Executive Director), Scott Branting (University of Central Florida), and Susan Kane (Oberlin College). Marina Gabriel, Susan Penacho, and Will Reynolds serve as Project Managers. The international team also includes 15 eminent specialists who have agreed to donate more than 600 hours of expert time over the course of the twelve-month project.

Since ASOR CHI’s work began, in August 2014, the Cultural Heritage Initiatives team has carried out three emergency response initiatives in Syria and produced over 1,000 reports on the cultural heritage situation in Syria and northern Iraq. In addition, ASOR CHI inventoried 13,000 sites in Syria and northern Iraq, conducted 9,000 satellite assessments, completed 750 detailed condition assessments, made 4,150 heritage observations, and compiled 10,000 archived media entries on cultural heritage incidents and assets. All of these data have been used to assist local cultural heritage experts in emergency response efforts and to help combat the trafficking of illicit antiquities by terrorists. The incident reports and special reports have affected U.S. policy and law and are posted online.

ASOR CHI’s work is a prime example of how and why the humanities and social sciences are a critical component in the international effort to fight terrorism. Pauline Yu, President of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), stated, “I commend the scholars of ASOR for applying their deep expertise to this urgent need. The destruction and looting of ancient monuments and artifacts deprives not just the

suffering people in conflict zones of their priceless cultural heritage, but all the world's people. ASOR's work is a splendid demonstration of humanities scholarship in the service of humanity." William Adams, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, added, "NEH is pleased that ASOR continues to document the destruction of antiquities in the Middle East and that the training of cultural heritage professionals in the region continues to be a priority. NEH shares and supports ASOR's commitment to preserving this heritage."

The United States is committed to protecting cultural heritage from pillage, looting, and illicit trafficking around the world, and the cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of State and ASOR is part of a larger U.S. Department of State effort to preserve the histor