

The Society for Archaeological Sciences - The First 40 Years (More or Less)  
Rob Sternberg

Dec. 2019

The SAS recently celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding. Here I give some historical background for this Society. Some of this material was used in my introduction for *The Encyclopedia of Archaeological Sciences* (Sandra L. López Varela, ed., Wiley-Blackwell, 2018, 1992 p.)

According to SAS co-founder R.E. (Erv) Taylor (personal communication), "The original idea for the SAS came about as the result of a consideration of the contrast between the support for archaeological science/archaeometry in England and Europe as opposed to the United States... The actual idea was developed in conversations between Rainer Berger and myself and we coined the name Society for Archaeological Sciences (plural, "sciences"). I then contacted various individuals around the country to sound them out. There was support by a number and they became the first Acting Executive Board." The founding SAS Acting Executive Board consisted of Rainer Berger, Karl Butzer, James B. Griffin, P. Edgar Hare, Richard L. Hay, Vance Haynes, Robert Maddin, George Rapp, Jr., Max Saltzman, and R.E. Taylor. During the International Symposium on Archaeometry and Archaeological Prospection in 1977 at the University of Pennsylvania, members of the board met to lay the groundwork for the formal organization and development of the SAS. By-laws for the Society were adopted in June, 1977. Revisions of the by-laws were approved in May, 1991, and again in March, 2005. We are indeed considering another round of by-laws revisions, in accordance with an apparent 14-year cycle. The Articles of Incorporation for the Society for Archaeological Sciences were filed with the Secretary of State for California on 29 March 1979.

The founding of the SAS came at a time when there was increasing openness to the idea of interdisciplinary work (Heidi Ledford, Team Science, *Nature*, 525, 2015, p. 308-311), and the formation of profession societies and the corresponding development of infrastructure to support such research (The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine, *Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research*, National Academies Press, Washington, D.C., 2005, 332 p.). The Geological Society of America's Geoarchaeology Division was also formed in 1977, the same year as the founding of SAS. As Rip Rapp (personal communication) related, "Both SAS and the Geological Society of America Division were founded as part of a broad effort to get archaeological science and archaeological geology able to function better – you need professional societies, university grad programs to train the next generation, journals, newsletters, meetings, etc. Both have been successful in 'leading the way'."

SAS had 100 charter members, costing \$5 per year, and has hovered around 300 members in recent years, now costing \$25 for a regular membership. Other categories of membership have been student/retired, lifetime, and institutional. SAS has often been perceived as an "American" organization; although the table below shows that a majority of the members are from the U.S., the membership is international, the officers have

increasingly come from other countries, and every other business meeting is held at the International Symposium on Archaeometry.

	Year		
	1977	2017	
Members, total	100	285	
U.S.		167	(59% of total)
Canada		17	
UK		25	
Europe		48	
Oceania		8	
Mexico/S. America		9	
Asia		9	
Africa		2	
Regular		152	
Student/retired		58	
Lifetime		63	
Institutional		13	
Cost (regular)	\$5	\$25	(90% pay via PayPal)

The first SAS business meeting was held on April 25, 1979, at the Society for American Archaeology (SAA) meeting in Vancouver. A questionnaire in Fall, 1979, showed SAA to be the most popular potential venue for SAS meetings, so annual business meetings continued to be held during the SAAs. SAS business meetings were later held at the International Symposium on Archaeometry (ISA) when that meeting was in North America. Since the 2008 ISA in Siena, the SAS business meeting has alternated between the ISA and the SAA, whether the ISA was in North America or elsewhere in the world, in accordance with the increasing internationalization of SAS.

For a number of years, the offices of President and Secretary-Treasurer were the two elected positions on the Executive Board, as designated in the by-laws. Subsequent elections brought those listed below into the offices of President and Secretary-Treasurer. Elections switched from annual to biannual in 1991. The office of Secretary-Treasurer was absorbed into the duties of the General Secretary (appointed by the Board) for several years. The office of Treasurer was re-instituted in 2017 as an appointed office by the Board. The Editor of the *Newsletter/Bulletin* has been selected by the Board.

The office of the General Secretary was established in 1981, with R.E. Taylor assuming the post. This office was intended to provide administrative continuity to the organization. All business affairs including the maintenance of the membership files and legal records are to be maintained by the General Secretary. Records were computerized in 1981. Erv Taylor held this position for more than 20 years, helped by as Associate Secretaries-general Chris Prior, Elizabeth Stilwell, and Donna Kirner. Rob Sternberg succeeded Taylor at General Secretary in the summer of 2002. Kyle Freund became the third General Secretary in 2017.

<u>Year</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Secretary-Treasurer</u>	<u>Editor</u>
1979	Karl Butzer	Rainer Berger	Suzanne De Atley
1980	R.E. Taylor	Matthew Hall	Suzanne De Atley
1981	Jonathan Ericson	David Weide	Suzanne De Atley
1982	John Weymouth	Elizabeth Coughlin	Suzanne De Atley
1983	George Rapp, Jr.	Thomas J. Riley	Suzanne De Atley
1984	Rainer Berger	Barbara Luedtke	George Rapp, Jr.
1985	Joseph Michels	John Twilley	George Rapp, Jr.
1986	Joseph Lambert	Prudence Rice	Pat Martin
1987	Jeffrey Dean	Irwin Rovner	Pat Martin
1988	Garman Harbottle	Patricia Crown	Pat Martin
1989	Doug Price	Patricia Crown	Pat Martin
1990	Suzanne De Atley	Rob Sternberg	Rob Sternberg
1991	James Burton	Chris Prior	Rob Sternberg
1993	Erv Garrison	Chris Prior	Rob Sternberg
1995	Pat Martin	Chris Prior	Chris Nagle
1997	Rob Sternberg	Felicia Beardsley	Rob Tykot
1999	Chris Prior	Felicia Beardsley	Rob Tykot
2001	Arleyn Simon	Felicia Beardsley	Rob Tykot
2003	Greg Hodgins	Colleen Stapleton	Rob Tykot
2005	Aaron Shugar	Colleen Stapleton	Christian Wells
2007	Thilo Rehren	(office discontinued)	Christian Wells
2009	Sandra López Varela		Christian Wells
2011	Patrick DeGryse		James VanderVeen
2013	Robert H. Tykot		Vanessa Muros
2015	Marc Walton		Vanessa Muros
2016	Rachel Popelka-Filcoff		Thomas Fenn
2017		Destiny Crider	
2018			Carmen Ting

Interdisciplinarity and the successful creation of a successful subdiscipline are inherently challenging in an academic world largely organized around traditional disciplines. As the field of archaeological science (here used interchangeably with archaeometry) has developed over the past 60 years (using the benchmark of the journal *Archaeometry*, volume 1, published in 1958), many requirements for interdisciplinary success have been satisfied, such as: the formation of professional societies; holding conferences where developments in archaeological science are presented; publishing research in journals; funding opportunities for research and education; recognizing professional accomplishments with awards; development of academic curricula and research laboratories; making information available via newsletters, social media; and publication of reference works and textbooks. David Killick (The awkward adolescence of archaeological science, *Journal of Archaeological Science*, 56, 2015, 242-247) discusses some issues related to these requirements, including a comparison of funding in

the U.S. and Britain, and the access to archaeological science in less wealthy nations. Since SAS organized as a professional society, it has been active in all these areas necessary for the development of professional infrastructure, as will be discussed further below.

The official organ of the SAS since 1977 has been the *Newsletter*, changing its name to the *Bulletin* with volume 12. It is currently in its 41<sup>st</sup> annual volume. Newsletters were quarterly from the start. The length was 4-6 pages through volume 5. The first 10-page issue was 10:1, with subsequent page length records increasing to 16 pages in 10:3, 24 pages in 15:1, 28 pages in 20:1/2, and 32 pages in 21:1/2. Some other milestones: the first stapled issue was 7:1. Bitnet email addresses first appeared in 10:1, with more than half of the officers and editorial staff showing email addresses by 12:1. The cover went glossy with 24:1. A CD-ROM of pdf files for the first 25 volumes of the *Newsletter/Bulletin* was prepared by General-Secretary Rob Sternberg and student assistant Isaac Weaver in 2004 and added to every couple of years. All back issues are now available as pdf files at the Society's web site.

An Editorial Staff for the *Newsletter* was first listed in 11:1, with associate editors at that time in archaeological chemistry, archaeometallurgy, environmental archaeology, geoarchaeology, geology, remote sensing. Among the many associate editors, the *Newsletter* benefited from the especially stalwart 20+ years of service from Martha Goodway with her archaeometallurgy column from vol. 8 through 27, and Charlie Kolb's archaeological ceramics contributions from vol. 19 through the present vol. 41.

The *Journal of Archaeological Science* (Elsevier) was floated as a potential journal for SAS in Newsletter 3:1 in a message from President Butzer. Special subscription rates to JAS for SAS members became available in 1979. The cover of JAS has stated since 2000 that it is "published in association with the Society of Archaeological Sciences." One of the JAS editors sits on the Executive Board of SAS. SAS also selects one of the managing editors of *Archaeometry* (Wiley), who also sits on the SAS Board. The third discounted journal now available to SAS members is the *Archaeological and Anthropological Sciences* (Springer).

The SAS has sponsored archaeological science sessions at the SAA meeting since 1982 (*SAS Newsletter*, 5:2), most recently two sessions at the SAA in Washington, D.C., in 2018 -- "Advances and Prospects in the Archaeological Sciences on the 40th Anniversary of the Founding of the Society for Archaeological Sciences, I and II" -- organized by the three general secretaries in SAS history, Erv Taylor, Rob Sternberg, and Kyle Freund. The first international conference session sponsored by SAS was at the Pacific Science Congress, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1983 (4:2), where Foss Leach and R.E. Taylor served as co-conveners of the symposium "Archaeological Science in the Pacific Region." Informal relations with the International Symposium on Archaeometry have been strengthened, with several SAS members and former officers serving on the standing committee of ISA as former organizers of International Archaeometry Symposia.

Student poster awards have been presented for presentations at the SAA annual meeting since 1998. These were re-named as the R.E. Taylor Student Poster Awards in 2002 when awards were also added for the International Symposium on Archaeometry. The SAS Student Research International Travel Award has been available since 2012. Up to \$1000 is available to help with costs of international travel for laboratory or field research to student SAS members. Starting with ISA 2018 in Mérida, three travel bursaries were awarded to SAS student members participating in the meeting. Student travel funds and some general conference support have been provided for a few other international meetings on an ad hoc basis.

Plenum Press (later Kluwer and now Springer), in cooperation with the SAS, issued five volumes in the book series *Advances in Archaeological And Museum Science*. The editorial board for this series has included Martin J. Aitken, Edward V. Sayre, R.E. Taylor, and Robert H. Tykot. Volumes to date are: *Phytolith Systematics*, Susan C. Mulholland, and George Rapp Jr. (eds.), 1992; *Chronometric Dating in Archeology*, R.E. Taylor and Martin J. Aitken (eds.), 1997; *Archaeological Obsidian Studies*, M. Steven Shackley (ed.); 1998; *Science and Technology in Historic Preservation*, Ray A. Williamson and Paul R. Nickens (eds.), 2000; *Biogeochemical Approaches to Paleodietary Analysis*, Stanley H. Ambrose, and M. Anne Katzenberg (eds.), 2001.

In May of 2010, Wiley-Blackwell proposed that the SAS sponsor a 4-volume encyclopedia of archaeological sciences. A year later, Wiley-Blackwell formally asked for SAS to sponsor the *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Sciences*. This is going to press in 2018, with Sandra L. López Varela as editor-in-chief, with 483 entries, written by contributors from 43 countries.

From 2014-2018, SAS had arrangements with the open-access online journal *Science and Technology of Archaeological Research* (STAR), with Robert Tykot as editor-in-chief. This enabled free submissions from SAS members, and included the proceedings of the ISA 2014.

Promotion of the SAS has changed over the years as new methods of reaching out have evolved. Gar Harbottle developed the first SAS poster, based on Albrecht Dürer's engraving *Melencolia I*, in 1980 (4:2). A later poster was produced under the guidance of Erv Taylor. The first SAS logo was developed by Betsy Lawlor in 1994 (17:3), and revised by Michael Gregg in 2010 (33:2) with tweaks by Andrew Zipkin in 2017. An improved membership brochure came out in 1994 (17:4). For several years in the late 1990s and beyond we displayed a portable membership display at meetings around the globe.

Foss Leach first got SAS online, starting with the electronic bulletin board ArchSci in 1991 (14:1). This morphed into the listserv SAS-Net and the ftp site SAS-Depot later in 1991 (14:4). Jim Burton took over responsibility for the listserv, and also got our website up in 1997, which can now be found at the domain name [www.socarchsci.org](http://www.socarchsci.org). Destiny Crider began managing the web page in 2005, and she also took the reins of SAS-Net, which is still operative. Back issues of the *Bulletin* are currently available as pdf files on

the web site. Rachel Popelka-Filcoff and Destiny Crider proposed an SAS blog, which was started in 2009 and still continues. We experimented with Twitter in 2014. The SAS Facebook group started in 2010, and now has over 700 members (much larger than the size of our Society membership), with enthusiastic stewardship provided by Vice President for Social Media and Outreach Andrew Zipkin. With a new editor for the Bulletin, Carmen Ting, in 2018, the SAS is considering a new format for the Bulletin online which will be integrated with our other social media.

We look forward to the future. We anticipate continuing our successes of the past, but improving upon those with new ideas and new energy from you, our members. Let us know what you think!