

MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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Mary Lou McNamara, Editor

Perry Cunningham, Designer

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President's Message

As I begin my service, I want to thank the many of you who have helped this organization. Gary Shepherd, for one, has done an excellent job as president over the past two years, and I have already relied on him for advice and assistance. The board members, too, have offered their advice already. I'm certain that I'll rely on their judgment frequently, and I appreciate their willingness to serve our group. This is especially true of Lynn Payne, who has been secretary/treasurer for many years. He has proven to be an important source of consistency and stability for MSSA.

I also want to tell each of you "Thanks" for helping to maintain this organization. We share an interest in Mormonism and in the social-scientific study of religion, making us relatively uncommon in our field. In my own case, I didn't really consider a career in this area of work until I learned of this organization, known then as SSSML. Reading those newsletters, I discovered that others shared my interests, and that it was in fact possible to make a career of this kind of work. Attending the conferences held in conjunction with SSSR and RRA added much to my thinking and enthusiasm for what social science might contribute to our understanding of religion. So, each of you have played a role in

my professional life, and I'd like to say "Thank you!"

During the next two years, I hope to make some contributions to the MSSA. My primary goal is to help other scholars and students learn of our association, so that we can maintain a vigorous group. In order to do this, I'd like to focus on completing the brochure. This will give us a tangible way to announce our existence to potential members of our group. Once the brochure is completed, we will be able to use it for the basis of a web site that also will help us to attract new members. The web site also will enable us to establish links to other organizations, and thereby help us to tell others about the good things MSSA has to offer. Please, if you were asked to write a brief section of the brochure, resolve to complete it this week!

If you have suggestions regarding what MSSA should do to make an impact on the world of Mormon studies, and on the social-scientific world more generally, please contact me! Lastly, if you have any ideas or contributions to make to the newsletter, please send them to Mary Lou or to myself. In particular, if you have read any books and would like to provide your thoughts in a review, or if you have any other contributions, we need your help. If we all work together, we can accomplish much more than if we work alone.

Thanks again!
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Reunion in Houston

Plan to attend the next MSSA meetings, to be held this year in Houston Texas, October 19-22 in conjunction with the meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association. Tim Heaton, past president of MSSA and an LDS demographer and professor at BYU, will present MSSA's biannual Glen Vernon lecture. He will discuss one of two topics, the socioeconomic status of Mormons or the state of LDS families.

The theme for SSSR is "Religion and Transnationalism: Challenges of the 21st Century." The theme for RRA is "Gender, Religious Organization and Practice." These themes should spawn a number of good papers relevant to Mormon studies.

The joint conference will be held at the Doubletree Hotel. Houston, which is the nation's fourth largest city, should be pleasant at that time of year. Possible diversions include Sam Houston Park (with eight of the oldest buildings in Texas and the Museum of Texas History), the Museum of Fine Arts, Holocaust Museum, Rice University Village (with over 400 cafes, shops, and galleries), and the observation deck on the 60th floor of the Texas Commerce Tower.

Boston Highlights

The 1999 MSSA meetings featured two MSSA-sponsored sessions. The first, "The Role of Researchers in Religious Organizations," was a panel discussion convened by Perry Cunningham (LDS Church Research Information Division). Panelists from other churches were Kirk Hadaway, United Church of Christ; Richard Houseal, Church of the Nazarene; John O'Hara,

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod; Craig This, The United Methodist Church; and Cynthia Woolever, Presbyterian Church.

Panelists took turns explaining the role of research in their church; sponsorship; resources; critical research challenges; customers; products; and research methods. There were great differences among churches concerning the role of research and the resources available, but common challenges were relevance and credibility (e.g., reorienting research from what is requested to what could be helpful; surviving organizational politics; credentialing that includes personal faith and organizational sympathies).

The second MSSA-sponsored section was "Faith and Fathering in Times of Change and Challenge," organized by David Dollahite and convened by Gary Shepherd, with John Bartkowski as the discussant. In the first presentation, Rob Palkovitz reported on interviews with 40 fathers. He derived four categorical approaches to faith and fathering (discouraging, disinterested, provider, generative). He noted that men often feel inadequate in giving spiritual or religious guidance to their children, and concluded that ministries could help men be more positively engaged in religious training.

In the second presentation, David Dollahite presented a paper (authored by Loren D. Marks and him) titled "Religious Experience and Meaning in Latter-Day Saint Fathers of Children with Special Needs" based on interviews with 19 fathers. They found three dimensions of religious experience: spiritual belief, religious practice, and faith community. Spiritual belief in an "eternal perspective," was central. Religious practices were most meaningful when they were both sacred and relational. Faith community was most helpful when the congregation helped the

fathers meet their families' needs.

John Bartkowski summarized this excellent session by saying that religion can be viewed as a cultural resource for empowering fathers; fathers can gain confidence and competence by participating in religious communities.

There were other papers of specific relevance to Mormon studies and other papers given by MSSA members. Conference attendance was a bit lean but it was a good conference.

Business Meeting Minutes

The 1999 MSSA business meeting was held Sunday morning in a sunny corner room of the Boston Swissôtel, with continental breakfast fare. It was fun to gather together. The following business transpired:

The new officers, to assume duties immediately after the meeting, are:

- President Mike Nielsen
mnielsen@gasou.ed
 - President Elect Daryl White
dwhite@spelman.edu
 - Sec/Treasurer Lynn Payne
paynelr@ldschurch.org
 - Board Member Mary Lou McNamara
mnamaraml@ldschurch.org
 - Board Member Grant Underwood
gru2@byu.edu
 - Board Member Cardell Jacobson
cardell_jacobson@byu.edu
 - Newsletter Mary Lou McNamara
mnamaraml@ldschurch.org
- Lynn reported that MSSA currently has \$350 in checking and \$1070 in savings. Money is tight, so the group considered raising MSSA dues to \$10 per year. Instead, voluntary contributions will be solicited along with regular dues.

- Recruiting new members should be an emphasis in 2000. Several outreach efforts were discussed, such as contacting members of the Mormon History Association. Mike Nielsen is hoping to create a MSSA web page. Work is underway on a MSSA brochure.
- Plans were discussed for next year's meetings. Possible session topics include changing perceptions of LDS members about themselves; the role of lay leadership in the 21st Century; and the Church, family and gay rights.
- Armand Mauss, who has recently retired and moved near UC Irvine, was invited to continue his Mormon Studies bibliographic work (see the reference to his forthcoming work in "Announcements"). MSSA will continue to publish updates as they are available.
- MSSA will celebrate our 25th anniversary in 2002. It is proposed that MSSA honor Armand Mauss with a lifetime achievement recognition.

Announcements

The long-awaited comprehensive bibliography of works on Mormons is out! The citation is: James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker, Studies in Mormon History, 1830 - 1997, with a Topical Guide to Published Social Science Literature on the Mormons, by Armand L. Mauss and Dynette I. Reynolds. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. 1151 pages. \$100.00. (The social science section occupies pp. 1063-1151 and goes through the 1998 literature). To order, phone 1-800-545-4703. Watch for the companion volume, Mormon History, about a year from now. This will be a collection of 8 or 10 bibliographic

essays, including one on the social sciences by Armand Mauss.

Discussing “the beliefs, rituals, business practices, and well-guarded secrets of one of the world’s fastest growing and influential religions,” is Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, Mormon America: The Power and the Promise. San Francisco: Harper, 1999. ISBN: 0060663715.

With separate chapters on ten virtues and the institutions that guard them, is Gordon Bitner Hinckley, Standing for Something: 10 Neglected Virtues That Will Heal Our Hearts and Homes, Random House Times Books, February 2000. ISBN: 0812933176.

Larry Young, president of MSSA from 1995 to 1997, has been named executive director of the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) after a 13-year career at BYU. According to a February 15 article in The Salt Lake Tribune, SUWA claims 18,000 members and has a full-time staff of 14, with an annual budget of \$1.6 million. The Tribune states, “SUWA’s confrontational approach to public lands issues, along with its refusal to budge on an environmentalist call for 9.1 million acres of wilderness in Utah, has earned the group the loathing of most Utah lawmakers . . . At the same time, however, SUWA has gained considerable clout with the Clinton administration and key pro-environment members of Congress.” Congratulations Larry on your new position!

Post-doc Research Fellowship in Spirituality and Health--The National Institute for Healthcare Research is looking for a recent graduate in psychology or a related social science discipline for a 24-month post-doctoral research fellowship. The fellow will get broad exposure to the research on spirituality and health. S/he

should have proficiency with multivariate statistical methods. Interested applicants should contact Michael McCullough, NIHR, 6110 Executive Boulevard, Suite 908, Rockville, MD, 20852. Deadline for applications is March 15, 2000.

Articles are invited for a special issue, "Religion in the Lives of Elders" in the journal Activities, Adaptation, and Aging. This special issue addresses religion in the lives of elders and how counseling and programming for this population can incorporate a mindfulness of life's spiritual aspects. Topics can be related to spiritual approaches to counseling and programming or to religious organizations and churches as sponsors of health and recreational programs for the elderly. A wide range of manuscripts are being solicited; submissions can be empirical or conceptual. Submissions must be received by April 10, 2000. Manuscripts will be reviewed by two readers; the special issue will be released October 2000. For more information, contact Michael Maples, University Counseling Services, Kansas State University, 232 Lafene Health Center, Manhattan, KS 66506-3301 or maples@ksu.edu.

The International Congress on Religion and Mental Health will occur on April 16-19, 2001 in Tehran, Iran. Sponsored by the Tehran Institute of Psychiatry, this conference will examine a wide variety of issues related to religion and mental health. Included among the topics are stress and mental health, the role of rituals, clinical applications of religious teachings, and many others. For more information, visit their web page: <http://www.angelfire.com/ri/tehranpsychinst/2001.html> or contact Tehran Institute of Psychiatry, Jahan St.1, Taleghani Ave., 156363 TEHRAN / IRAN; Tel: (0098 - 21) 7537847, 7534354; Fax: (0098 - 21) 7433847; Email: rmental2001@mentalhelp.net.

Contributions to MSSA are welcome. Other than the newsletter, the main expenses are the annual breakfast meeting (although those present chip in) and the biannual Vernon lecture. If you care to, please send your contribution to MSSA c/o Lynn Payne, Treasurer, Research Information Division, 18th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150.

Please send newsletter items to Mary Lou McNamara, mcnamaraml@ldschurch.org or LDS Research Information Division, 18th Floor, 50 East North Temple Street, Salt Lake City, UT 84150. News or items about Mormons studies or MSSA members is welcome (Mormon Studies course syllabi, book reviews, forthcoming publications, professional opportunities, etc.).

Selected Web Sites for Mormon Studies

Michael Nielsen

Many web sites have interesting and useful information for Mormon studies. The following list of web sites is offered here for starters. These subjective groupings are for convenience only, as several sites include information that crosses categories. In some cases, addresses need to be entered into your browser exactly as shown (caps, lower case). If you find it difficult to connect to a site, retype the information. Also, none of these addresses have spaces in them, so if a URL address extends over two lines, make sure that you ignore any spaces that the address might appear to have.

Official Sites

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints offers some general information about the church: <http://www.lds.org>

Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is an excellent source for more information about the Missouri group: <http://www.rlds.org>

Family search is the famous genealogical resource maintained by the church: <http://www.familysearch.org>

Brigham Young University has some informative pages, as well as a directory useful for locating your

colleagues at BYU: <http://www.byu.edu>

The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) site is a good representation of the conservative view from Utah Valley:

<http://farmsresearch.com> In the spirit of capitalism, however, many of the more interesting things on the site are pay-per-view.

Private, Faith-Promoting Sites

Each of these sites are maintained by individuals or private groups, and represent a variety of 'faith-promoting' perspectives.

All About Mormons: <http://www.mormons.org>

Foundation for Apologetic Information & Research: <http://www.fair-lds.org>

MormonNET: <http://www.mormon.net>

Scholarly and Historical Information Exchange for Latter-day Saints (SHIELDS): <http://www.shields-research.org>

Nick Literski's Temple Pages is becoming the definitive source of information for up-to-date news about the church's temple-building activities:

<http://www.vii.com/~nicks/>

Gospel Doctrine Sites:

<http://www.ldscn.com/lynne/gd.html>

For social scientists, the Affirmation (Gay and Lesbian Mormons) site is one of the most interesting sites on this list, with essays and commentary on the church's activities regarding sexual orientation issues: <http://www.affirmation.org>

Private, Critical Sites

Critiques and criticism directed toward Mormonism have found voice on the Internet. For the most part, they mirror what has long been available in print sources. Still, these sites are some of the more interesting of their kind, and some of them include interesting testimonials or personal experiences of those who have left Mormonism.

Mormonism Research Ministry: <http://www.mrm.org>

Mormons in Transition: <http://www.irr.org/mit/>

Recovery from Mormonism:

<http://www.exmormon.org>

Utah Lighthouse Ministry: <http://www.utlm.org>

Private, Relatively Neutral Sites

Restoration.Org includes information about LDS,

RLDS, and various restoration groups:

<http://www.restoration.org>

The Temple Endowment Page:

<http://members.aol.com/VeilWorker/endowment.index.html>

The Ontario Center for Religious Tolerance is an excellent, nonjudgmental source for religion information. Their page on Mormonism is found at:

<http://www.religioustolerance.org/lds.htm>

Missionary folklore is the subject of:

<http://php.indiana.edu/~dostlund/mission.htm>

For commentary on the recent Proclamation on the Family go to: <http://ckim2620.home.mindspring.com/>

I've saved the best of this group for last-- an extremely diverse and interesting range of articles and resources ranging from history to current events is provided at:

<http://www.california.com/~rpcman/MAPI.HTM>

Book Publishers

Deseret Book Company:

<http://www.deseretbook.com>

Signature Books: <http://signaturebooksinc.com>

University of Illinois Press:

<http://www.press.uillinois.edu/>

Used LDS books may be found using several specialized sites, including Alibris

<http://www.alibris.com>, Bibliofind

<http://www.bibliofind.com>, and the MX Book Finder

<http://www.msbf.com>

Used LDS books and Mormon collectibles (and forgettables!) frequently appear on e-bay:

<http://www.ebay.com>

The best source of information about Mormon literature:

<http://humanities.byu.edu/mldb/whatswhr.htm>

News

Mormons Today compiles news from a remarkably wide range of sources. Their e-mail digest is my favorite source for LDS news:

<http://www.mormonstoday.com/index.shtml>

Gems News offers selected news briefs, and is less likely than Mormons Today to include controversial items: <http://www.ldsworld.com/gems>

Deseret News: <http://desnews.com> (the church-owned newspaper)

Salt Lake Tribune: <http://sltrib.com> (Salt Lake's

alternate newspaper voice)

Associated Press: <http://wire.ap.org> (includes many stories on Mormonism from the AP Utah bureau)

Humor

Robert Kirby regularly pokes fun at Mormonism's quirks: <http://www.sltrib.com/kirby/>

Although not strictly LDS in focus, the Utah Baby Namer offers an interesting view of Mormon culture. Find out whether or not there were any Utah babies named Mahonri at:

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/3450/>

Internet Search Sites

If these sources don't reveal the information you seek, here are three excellent search tools.

My personal favorite is FAST Search:

<http://www.alltheweb.com/>

Google: <http://www.google.com/>

Northern Light Search:

<http://www.northernlight.com/>