

ASSR Organizational History

The Association for the Scientific Study of Religion was founded in the early 1980s as an organization where researchers from the liberal arts and the social and behavioral sciences could gather each year to share their research efforts, interests, and ideas as they related to the study of religion in society. Through the combined efforts of the late sociologists Morton B. King (1930-1993), Harry Hale (1933-2011), and Frank Forwood (1923-2007), as well as many others, the ASSR became a reality and joined with the Southwest Commission on Religious Studies (SWCRS) as an organizational section of their regional meeting, held annually in the Dallas, Texas area.

The ASSR has been home to many prominent authors, researchers, and speakers throughout its history who shared the belief that religion is a critical element in the world in which we live and worthy of study and further understanding with the hope that such efforts have positive outcomes for our society and its future. The organization's continued focus on the study and understanding of religion and belief systems demonstrates its commitment to its original goal.

An *Annual Proceedings* is published and a collection of past publications is housed in several prominent university libraries. (The most complete collection of ASSR Proceedings can be found in the Fondren Library on the campus of Rice University in Houston, Texas. The most recent *Proceedings* can be found on the Archives page of the ASSR's website.)

To encourage and reward outstanding research and papers, and to recognize scholars for their meritorious efforts, three awards have been created that recognize author-participants at the annual meeting. The Frank P. Forwood Award for Excellence in Presented Research is awarded to the overall outstanding scholarly effort yearly. The Harry Hale Prize for Graduate Research and the Harry Hale Prize for Undergraduate Research is awarded for outstanding achievement by students who present their papers at the annual meeting.

In addition to those named above who were involved in the founding of the ASSR, others (but not all) very worthy of mention for their contribution of service to and participation in the organization include: the late Professors Joseph Stamey, William Zellner, Linda Kraeger, and Anson Shupe; Professors Emeriti Joe Barnhart, Richard Ambler, and Jeter Basden, and Professors Mary Ann Clark, Todd Jay Leonard, J. B. Watson, Dennis Horton, Dianne Dentice, and Jon Loessin, as well as Independent Scholar, Patrick Scott Smith.