

Report of the U.S. National Committee for Byzantine Studies **(USNCBS) 2009**

The U.S. National Committee for Byzantine Studies (USNCBS) is now, since constitutional changes of 2006 and 2007, a Standing Committee of the Byzantine Studies Association of North America (BSANA). Its officers are chosen for a five-year term, concurrent with International Congresses, from a slate of six nominees at the appropriate annual meeting of BSANA, which takes place in the autumn at various institutional hosts, whether universities or museums. BSANA itself evolved out of the annual Byzantine Studies Conference, which Alice-Mary Talbot and Walter Kaegi co-founded in autumn 1975. USNCBS President: Walter E. Kaegi, Vice-President: Anthony Cutler, Secretary-Treasurer: George Majeska. These officers continue to serve until the end of the 2011 Congress. The list of USNCBS includes about 700 names.

The USA is a large country with wide geographical dispersal of senior Byzantinists and students and independent scholars but a concentration of activity has existed since the 1970s in principal clusters, each of which has sufficient library resources for original research: Boston/Cambridge, greater New York (including Princeton and New Haven), Washington/Baltimore, Ann Arbor MI, Chicago (incl. relatively nearby Madison WI, Notre Dame IN, Kalamazoo MI), Los Angeles, and San Francisco/Berkeley. Philadelphia is also developing into a recognized center with important museum resources. Flow of new students, some of whom are truly exceptional, is continuing into graduate Ph.D. programs. Undergraduate enrollments vary around the USA, depending on course offerings, but are essentially solid. Byzantine art and architectural history attract many undergraduate and Ph.D. students. Byzantine archaeology exists in the USA, but falls under the jurisdiction of diverse units and very seldom is a free-standing academic unit. U.S. archaeologists are excavating and writing up reports on many Byzantine sites in southern and southeastern Europe, western Asia, and North Africa, but there is no single directorate or clearing-house. Sponsorship and funding is uneven. But the field of Byzantine studies in the USA is constantly changing with its professors and students and their changing intellectual interests and methodologies.¹

One of our greatest challenges is provision of adequate instruction in Byzantine Greek. Alternating summer programs at Dumbarton Oaks and at the Gennadius Library (American School of Classical Studies in Athens) have helped to fill this gap.

The last several years have witnessed the welcome endowment of U.S. Byzantine positions, including but not limited to History posts at the University of Wisconsin at Madison (John Rowe Family Chair), the University of South Florida, and the University of California at San Diego. On the negative side there is the continuing struggle to avoid the suppression of existing positions in the light of retirements, deceases, and

¹ For two overviews of aspects of US Byzantine studies; Alice-Mary Talbot, "Byzantine Studies at the Beginning of the Twenty-first Century," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* [University of Illinois] 105 (2006) 25-43; Walter Kaegi, "Byzantine Studies Present and Future," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 28 (2004) 243-267.

resignations. We seek to avoid transformation of existing regular positions into part-time and adjunct ones. The recent international and domestic financial crisis has added pressure. Our colleagues in Classics have set precedents for us in how to try to fight reductions in existing professorships. The flourishing of late antique studies and related languages such as Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac in recent decades has positively affected Byzantine studies. Cooperation continues with programs of Modern Greek Studies. However we especially need more younger scholars, course offerings, and research on the Palaeologan era and on aspects of Byzantium and the Slavs, especially early (pre-Petrine) Russia.

Publications. In addition to Dumbarton Oaks publications (see www.doaks.org for list), among others, book titles have appeared from the University of California Press, the University of Chicago Press, Princeton University Press, the Pennsylvania State University Press, and the University of Pennsylvania Press. A major new phenomenon is electronic republication in e-book format of selected older and some recent titles as Humanities E-Books with the sponsorship and financial assistance of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS). The possibility is growing for digitization and electronic accessibility of university lectures in audio format and for the worldwide web. Newer electronic media as well as satellite imaging and LIDAR have created new pathways for the next generation to investigate. Opportunities abound.