

# Preparing Your #AAS2021 Proposal

June 24, 2020

00:11 Maura Elizabeth Cunningham [MEC]

Welcome everyone. My name is Maura Cunningham, and I'm the Digital Media Manager at the Association for Asian Studies. And I'm so glad that everyone is joining us today for this first AAS Digital Dialogue. This is a new series and we're very grateful to the Henry Luce Foundation for supporting it. We're really excited that this enables us to connect with and engage with AAS members even during a time when we're not able to gather together in person. But today's session does look forward to the day when we will be able to gather again, face to face, at—we hope—our Annual Conference in March 2021 in Seattle, Washington. And so today, we wanted to give everyone the opportunity to hear a little bit from some members of our program committee and our conference staff about preparing a proposal for the Annual Conference. We know that this can be a very intimidating process for some people, especially if you've never done it before, and we'd like to take some of the mystery out of it and explain how this all works.

So we have three speakers today. Brian Hatcher, who is a professor and the Packard Chair in Theology in the department of religion at Tufts University. Brian is the 2021 program committee chair. Robyn Jones, who is a Certified Meeting Professional. She has been the AAS conference manager since 2010, so she's marking a decade organizing our conferences for us. Miriam Kingsberg Kadia, who is an associate professor of history at the University of Colorado Boulder, and she was on the program committee for two years in 2018 and 19. So the three of them are going to talk a bit about the call for proposals process and how the program committee does its work, and then they will answer your questions, so please feel free to submit those through the q&a box at the bottom of your screen.

02:21

And with that, I think I'll turn it over to Robyn.

02:25 Robyn Jones [RJ]

Okay, so I'm going to go ahead and share my screen with our PowerPoint today. Good afternoon, everyone.

02:37

So we could just get started with our general submission guidelines. This webinar is intended to just give you a few tips, a little bit of information on the process of the call for proposals. We're going to do, as Maura mentioned, a q&a at the end. And so I'll be sharing my screen a little bit later, to walk you a little bit through the application. So we can just get it started with the most important part of our call for proposals is that it's open to everyone. You do not need to be a member to participate in the proposal process, nor do you need to be a member to participate and present at the conference. That's one big rule. We want it to be open. Not only the process, but the conference itself, is open to anyone and everyone who's interested in attending and presenting.

The next rule is a pretty big one as well. And we get lots of questions on this one: the One-Appearance Rule. What that means is, one person can only participate on one session. You may have multiple roles on that session, but you can only participate and present on one session.

All sessions are one hour and 45 minutes in length. That goes for organized sessions, organized panel sessions, roundtables, workshops, digital technology, they're all the exact same time length, which is one hour and 45 minutes.

And so we wanted to spend just a little bit of time talking about the 2020 accepted panels from the Boston conference. The call for proposals states that we will accept for consideration any proposals and sessions that were accepted for the 2020 program within the call for proposals. Unfortunately, there's no guarantee of acceptance this year. However, you may still submit that proposal again for **consideration**.

04:53

And so we're going to move on down to the different proposal types and there are a few different types and we're gonna run through each one. The main type that where we've received the most proposals are the organized panel sessions. And those are our paper-based sessions. There are a few submission requirements, you must have a minimum of three papers and a maximum of four papers. And that just so that there is enough time in that one hour and 45 minutes, for all the presentations and the q&a session at the end. We prefer to that there is one chair on that session and you may have up to two discussants as well. Each organized panel proposal must have a overall panel abstract of 250 words, maximum, and organized panels because they are paper-based sessions, of course, each paper also needs to have a title and abstract at the maximum 250 words. There's Brian, if you want to talk a little bit about organized ....

06:00 Brian Hatcher [BH]

Thanks, Robyn. Hi, everyone. Yeah, I think for the organized panels, that's probably the format most of us are the most familiar with from other professional organizations and conferences. So it's this standard group of people presenting papers, with a chair and then a discussant or perhaps two discussants as it indicates here. I think the key thing there is the relationship between the overall panel abstract and then the papers that are submitted along with that and the abstracts and titles that go with them. Because you want to have a compelling focus for the panel, you want to have a theme or an event or some topic of compelling interest that makes for a good panel and then but you also need to have papers that obviously relate to that topic, and cohere around a central theme or perhaps pursuit of a methodological issue or a kind of disciplinary debate, but we'd be looking for the coherence of the overall panel, not just a set of papers loosely listed under the umbrella of a general abstract ... that's going to be less compelling to us. I think that's the the main thing I would stipulate on that. Miriam, would you like to add anything?

07:13 Miriam Kingsberg Kadia [MKK]

Yeah, just to reinforce what what Brian has just said, I think sometimes we see panels that are focused around a particular keyword or a methodology or a new concept or ... any of these can be viable strategies, but I think it's really important to be clear about what draws them together. If it's sort of a geographic area, or a time period, that might be a little bit less compelling than some kind of argument-based coherence.

07:49 [BH]

And this applies, I think, generally to all the panels, or all the submission types, but some diversity in the discussant or the presenters, that is, their diversity of rank and diversity of institutional locations, geographic location, gender; a good panel is not going to be five people from the same institution or five people from the same rank. It's going to hopefully indicate a kind of robust cooperation across ranks, across institutions, and across space, I would say.

08:23 [MKK]

I think all sort of also across time as well, we should emphasize, we serve on the program committee for two years. So if if you're working with the same people, again and again and again, then that's also something that can be noticed.

08:39 [BH]

That's a good point. Yes. Thank you. Yeah, I think, Robyn, I think that there may be some questions we can return to.

08:49 [RJ]

Okay. I'll move on to the next. The most popular after the organized panel proposal, are our roundtable sessions. These are discussion-based sessions. So no formal papers are presented, at least not in the same way that the organized panel proposals are presented. This one has a minimum of three and a maximum of five discussants and one chair. So that's a total of six people, sometimes we get questions on that. So when you submit your proposal you're assigning the role of discussant to five people, and then the chair, the one person, and in many instances, you can serve as chair and discussant on the proposal. That one has a maximum of 350 words and that's to allow more time to discuss in the abstract, exactly what each discussant will be talking about.

09:52 [BH]

Yeah, yeah. So I would jump in on that last point and say that obviously everything rides there on an abstract that makes a compelling case for the for the vitality and interest in the roundtable topic, and then shows us quite clearly how each discussant is bringing something to bear and bringing some material, some new questions, some new archival evidence, whatever it might be to bear in this discussion. In my experience in the American Academy of Religion, this type of submission is becoming more and more popular and they do generate very vital sessions that sometimes address the problem of what can be the kind of fatigue of the panel-based, or paper-based panels, in which you have just a serial list of paper presenters and then a discussion at the end. Here, the goal is to get robust discussion going from the beginning. But we need to see how the the participants are interacting with one another, what they're bringing to the table, as it were. And of course, it would be helpful if if the topic is timely if it's something pressing across regions across time, across disciplines, so they're all at. Miriam again, I'd ask if you had anything?

11:10 [MKK]

Yeah, definitely. I think just to sort of once again, underline what you said. I think the intellectual, the roundtable is a really useful way of generating more audience engagement, and also maybe recruiting participants for the roundtable who are unwilling or not yet ready to commit to presenting a full paper. I think one of the most popular formats for a roundtable that I've seen in past years is, is sort of a discussion of a recently published book, for example, and there, I think that this can be a great forum for doing that. One thing I would encourage people to do is make sure that the idea is not just to

celebrate the book, but also to critically engage with it to situate it in the literature to carefully consider its argument, to bring it into conversation with specialists to who the author themselves may not have considered.

12:13 [BH]

Yeah, yeah. That's a very good point. And I think that a book, a film, an event, either in the present day or in the past, or a comparative issue that perhaps spans three different regions or different time, time periods that can be brought together by specialists who can bring their their own expertise to bear on it. But again, not a, not a celebration of a single scholar's work, but more critical intellectual engagement.

12:45 [RJ]

All right, great. We'll move on to workshops. Workshops are sessions relating to teaching and professional development with a special emphasis on the development of new skills. There are a few different areas that a workshop can cover, such as new tools for research, a first book, language pedagogy, and pretty much anything, honestly. If you're submitting your workshop proposal, we refer to those presenters as presenters, as opposed to a roundtable, where they're referred to as discussants. So this one is a little bit more flexible. We've had some workshops that were accepted with one name as presenter, and up to three is the maximum on that one. We don't receive too many, but we still encourage them and would love to see more come in through the submission process.

13:47 [BH]

Yeah, I'll just again, jump right on that I'd love to see more of these. I think it's often I think, felt that these large Annual Conferences, given their scale and some of the routinization in the programming, don't do enough to help people at various stages of their careers learn new techniques or get over certain kinds of hurdles or develop new kinds of connectivity, whatever it might be. So the the list of topics here is suggestive, not exhaustive. But to think about the opportunity to gather people together to talk about, for instance, the tips on turning your dissertation into a book—what goes into that? What are the struggles and the pitfalls to be aware of, who are the resources that exist out there for doing that? New tools for research—this may segue into the digital technology panels, but there are all kinds of developments that are taking place around us that certain sub-niches within our community have more mastery over and we would welcome them to bring them to a forum like this to teach us all in a kind of workshop fashion. So I hope we'll get several compelling proposals like this.

14:58 [MKK]

Just to follow up on that, I think one of the sort of manifestations of the importance of the workshop is, is that this really does a huge service and keeping us connected to larger developments that apply to the various subfields that together constitute the AAS. So I see this as performing a very valuable service. That being said, in my two years on the program committee, I did not actually encounter any workshop proposals. So I do want to underline Brian's call and encouragement for more of these types of submissions.

15:43 [RJ]

So this is just a little more information, the requirements and one new requirement we have added in the last year is the minimum—adding a minimum of two learning objectives, and that information will also be posted on our online program, along with the abstract. The learning objectives just to give any potential participants an an idea of exactly what they would [unintelligible].

16:12 [BH]

If I can add there, I mean, this is like a basic tip from grant writing and all of that: If you're asked to provide something by the grantee or grantor, then then provide that. So here, make sure if you do this workshop route that you indicate clearly for us what the learning objectives are. I think sometimes it can be felt, well, it's implicit in our abstract what it is we're hoping to get out of this, what the objectives are. But make it explicit so that we, we can clearly see that you're ticking that box. I think that's just a simple piece of useful advice.

16:44 [MKK]

It's also written in a different format that's very easily accessible to people who are just scanning the program and deciding whether or not to attend your workshop. So spelling it out very clearly in the most simple sort of short terms can be a major service towards building your audience as well.

17:02 [BH]

Yeah. Which is, which raises a very good point over all the submissions is that remember you're trying to reach the broadest possible audience. So translate technical or genre-specific terms into language that people can understand. You want to draw people in, not exclude them by using too much jargon that's specific to your own sub-sub-discipline. So that's just a good general tip, I think. Thank you, Miriam.

17:28 [MKK]

And that goes for the for the program selection, the selection committee as well. We're looking over a great deal of material and I think we all try to do it very conscientiously, but it takes a great deal of time. Each year I had about 600 pages of material to churn through. So making things as easy as possible for us to understand is certainly a good way of increasing your chances of acceptance.

BH: That's right.

17:58 [RJ]

Moving on to individual papers. So this category is available to anyone who has not organized a session, or maybe just doesn't have, like, the context to organize or no one has reached out to join a session, you could submit an individual paper and those are definitely supported and reviewed and accepted. We probably get about half as many individual paper submissions as all of the other session types, but they're really easy to submit. All we require is a 250-word abstract with your title, and there's a few other questions on that application, but that's the general information that is required when submitting. There's some information here. Some preference is given to those proposals submitted by advanced graduate students who have completed the PhD in the last two or three years. Those who presented individual paper one year, are not eligible in the subsequent year, and I'll get back to that one second. Once assigned to a session, individual papers may not change to another session.

And the acceptance rate is pretty small. So, our conference is considered mainly a session-based conference. And for that reason, we don't have a lot of space for individual papers. So because there's limited space, we do try to open up that opportunity to other individuals the next year, and that's the reason for not being able to accept one paper two years in a row. The acceptance rate is about 10%. But we still encourage you to submit them, of course. There is a section on our website. I want to mention this so that I don't forget it later. If you are interested in joining a session, you can log into our forum and submit your paper topic to let everyone know, hey, I have this paper, I'd love to join a session

if you're creating a session on this topic. And that way, anyone looking for presenters can find you and your topic and reach out and build their session, using your paper, or you could just go ahead and still present the paper on its own and it will be reviewed individually.

20:31 [BH]

That's great. Thank you, Robyn. I think this is an important category to acknowledge that there are often advanced graduate students who have not yet achieved that kind of connectivity in the field that comes with time, who may not have yet found the conversation partners to work with. So if it doesn't work by using the resource that Robyn just mentioned off the website, you may still feel like, Well, I've got some compelling work I'd like to share, so submit a proposal for an individual paper. Obviously here, everything rides on your abstract, you can't count on the larger compelling framework of a panel with some other names on it, you're going to have to convince us. And so all the things that apply to everything we've said so far kind of come to bear on that one individual submission, you need to be clear, compelling, creative, but also not too difficult to discern, as Miriam was saying, don't make the language too, too, too specific or narrowly focused that the selection committee can't make sense of it, or we feel that there won't be enough audience for it. But if you can do those things, I know we've found several compelling clusters of individual papers that came together for the last session that unfortunately, we weren't able to hold in Boston, but it is possible for these individual papers to find a place and become part of a panel that has its own utility. So if this is the option that looks good to you, don't shy away from it just because of the 10% selection rate. Although bear that in mind.

22:07 [MKK]

I guess I kind of want to provide a little additional insight into how we handle the individual papers. So these, all of the program committee looks these over as well and rank them much as we would do the panel submissions. But the sort of twist here is that you can be at the top of the stack, but still not be selected for admission onto the program. This is because we're also looking to join the individual submissions into thematically or subject coherent panels that that audience members would want to attend. We don't flag them on the program. It's not obvious which panels are comprised of individual papers versus pre-submitted by AAS attendees. So we're looking to bolster the program with individually brilliant research that adheres to a particular theme that seems to be suggested by as many of the the top ranked papers as possible. So that, if you're working on something in if it turns out that you're working on a topic that not many people have expressed interest in working on for from among the individual papers, then you're less likely to be submitted for inclusion on the program than a paper that could be lumped into many different categories. So sort of drawing out the larger implications of your research, I think, is particularly important here for boosting your odds of being considered for inclusion on the program.

23:54 [BH]

Absolutely.

23:55 [RJ]

Okay. One other point that I do want bring into everyone's head is one of the frequently asked questions I receive regarding individual papers is where's the list of session topics where I should submit my paper. And so I'm aware that other organizations will post a list of predetermined topics and sessions, for individuals to submit their papers to. AAS is a bit different in the sense that we want to see everything. We don't sort of group you into these predetermined topics. We'd love for you to submit

papers on any topic. So the answer is there is no preset list. Just go ahead and submit your paper and the topic and it will be reviewed.

Digital technology proposals. So in 2019, in Denver, we held a Digital Technology Expo, it was very successful and decided, following that conference that we would add a different proposal type to the Call for Proposals just to sort of really narrow down these session types. So, here it says we encourage proposals related to Digital Research, or focus on teaching images or text, analytical methods for research on Asian source materials. There are three types, a workshop, the roundtable, same format as the other workshop and roundtables but these focus on digital technology, and then another special type of lightning presentations, which were to incorporate a number of presenters, I believe, for the 2020 conference, we had on the lightning sessions, maybe up to eight or nine people presenting within five to seven minutes and very quickly with three PowerPoint slides. So that's a new session type a lot more information is posted within the call for proposals if you're interested.

And so here's the program committee review process. Brian, you want to sort of run through these?

26:31 [BH]

Well, again, I mean, some of this has been stipulated for each of the individual types that we've run through, but obviously we're looking for work of a high intellectual standard, engaging with the issues at play in a particular field or at a moment in your discipline across the range of panelists. We need well written abstracts, they need to be coherent to the selection committee members. As Miriam pointed out, again not too obtuse or written in coded language that we won't be able to make sense of the coherence and in the organized sessions between the overall abstract and the individual paper abstracts is going to be crucial. Coherence of the papers to the overall topic as it stipulates here. I think I mentioned already we'd like to see, in fact, we insist on having if we can, diversity of gender, ethnicity, institutional balance. As I said, we don't want everyone from one institution, we don't have everyone who's worked with one particular advisor, we, we need to see conversation across generations, across genders, across disciplines, etc. So, rank is also important. It's nice to get a picture of the field across several generations from graduate student up to senior professor. So, not every panel will have that extensive range, but some gesture towards including people at the advanced graduate, assistant professor along with a full professor, or some combination thereof will be viewed positively. And obviously, we're looking to see panels that are likely to generate discussion. We want this not to be a, a passive exercise for the people who come to these sessions, but it's something in which they will be actively engaged. So we will be trying to judge as best we can in the selection committee, what separate panels are going to give us this result. So, and of course, finally, follow the guidelines. As I said, if if something is stipulated as required for the submission, make sure you do it and make sure it's clear to us.

28:45 [MKK]

If I can just add to that, I think one thing we also have sort of more informally looked for in some years and explicitly stated in other years is sort of a balance in field. Historically, literature and history have been the most strongly represented fields at the AAS conferences. And we very much encourage people, especially in the social sciences, who sometimes seem underrepresented. Also, people who work on pre-modern topics who also sometimes don't make a strong appearance on the program, we very much welcome those locations as well.

29:27 [BH]

Absolutely. Great.

29:34 [RJ]

So, I am just going to run through a few key important items that we need to consider during the submission process. So again, just to recap, I am the conference manager at AAS but I'm not a member of the program committee. I do not read or review proposals, my role essentially in the call for proposals process is to assist you, the submitter, with any questions you may have related to anything on our website, any questions or issues you may be experiencing with the actual application itself, and any other general questions. So, on that note, I'm just going to run through these points really quickly, and then point you to our website, just a few items, and then we'll get to q&a. So, first off, all proposals must be submitted via the electronic application by the deadline. And basically, basically what that means is, we are not able to accept any proposals via email. Everything needs to be submitted via the electronic application.

Secondly, you may log into that electronic application using your AAS credentials, or you can create a new account. So we mentioned earlier that membership is not a requirement to submit or participate. However, you do need an AAS account in order to submit the application. And what we mean by AAS account, if you're a current member, obviously, you can use your current username and password. But if you're a past member or expired member, you can still use that same login information that you used when your membership was active, it will still work if you had any transaction in our database such as registered for the conference as a non member three years ago, or bought a book, those same credentials that you use to log in will work in our system, you don't need to create a new account. And there are some steps that can help you find your password if you don't know it. But if you are new, you can go ahead and create a new account.

On our website and within the application, we've created a few step by step instructions with screenshots of that electronic application and I highly recommend that you take a look at these it definitely helps if you view them in advance of getting into the system just so that you know what to expect. And when you are in the system, you do not need to complete the proposal before you submit it, you can do a few steps, save it come back later, at any time before the deadline to continue the application, you don't need to complete it all in one, one step.

And then lastly, the way the AAS call for proposals is formatted is the organizer really takes the main responsibility of submitting all of the information for any of the sessions. So that goes towards the organized session types, workshops, roundtables, digital sessions, the organizer is responsible for collecting all the data from their participants and submitting it. So here we just listed pretty much what you need to collect. First and Last Name, of course. That's really important because on our end, it's important that it's entered correctly. Because on our end, we're trying to match participants with registration. And sometimes if it's sort of flip flopped, or, or not spelled correctly, it can cause a problem on the registration end administratively for the Secretariat. Also, we need the affiliation. The rank is important that you capture that information to submit. What we mean by rank is professor, assistant professor, student, that type of information. And of course a valid email address. And this last bullet point is really just for organized sessions mainly, the paper titles and abstracts for each paper, you will need to collect in addition to submitting the main 250 word session abstract.



And then lastly, the deadline is Tuesday, August 4, at five o'clock p , Eastern time. And I just want to make one comment about the five o'clock deadline because we do get questions about it and wonder why it's not August 4, at the end of the day. And so really, it's for your benefit, because we want to make sure that there are staff members available during office hours to help you leading up to that deadline. Generally, the call for proposals is open, in any given year, six to eight weeks, but the bulk of the proposals arrive in the last week, with most arriving on the day of the deadline. It's just what happens. So we want to make sure that we are available to help you. And then usually a lot of the questions that come in on the deadline is usually just because you may have been rushing and maybe skip the step. That's why it's five o'clock. Now I'm going to stop sharing my screen for just a second and pull up another.

35:16 [BH]

While you're while you're doing that, I do think the time—we know how time works and we know we have many things on our plate. So we often push off to the last possible minute. Well, we, we know what we need to do by a deadline. But since you can enter and leave the portal, and save your work, do get started early. And also communicate, if you're particularly doing an organized panel, communicate early with your fellow participants, make sure you're all on the same page. Try to read each other's work, try to have an eye for the coherence, again, the cohesion, the cohesion that's going to hopefully be evident to us. Obviously, the less time you leave, the less chance you have of pulling this thing together. So it's just a word to the wise, if you will.

36:04 [RJ]

I just want to point out really quickly and then we'll get straight into questions. We have a link to the Call for Proposals on a few different sections of the website. Down below, I also have highlighted the frequently asked questions, you can easily access or go straight into the proposal. You can navigate the call for proposals through this side menu. This is the home page, but the side menu will appear within each section. So you can easily skip back and forth to each session.

What I really wanted to highlight here were a couple things. This is the forum where you may submit your interest in joining a session or creating a session. You do need to be logged in using your AAS account. Again, doesn't matter if you're a member or nonmember, but you do need to log in in order to reply or submit to either of these topics. So that's the one extra I want to show you, as well as ... The submit a proposal button is located on every page. In the past we've had some people indicate that it was difficult to find. So we tried to place it in a few more places. So it is always here. And it's here as well. But these are a bit different. And this is what I want to point out. When you click the submit a proposal on this page, it's just one more step of information to help out before you get there. This is one location where the step by step walkthrough PDFs are located. When you open them, there are screenshots of every step sort of walking you through exactly where to click and what to do, so I highly recommend viewing these before you start your proposal.

But if you're pretty eager, and you just want to get in to the system, that information—I'm going to log in here—is also listed within the applications. If you go straight to the application, we also have those step by steps listed here as well. You'll also notice the frequently asked questions is also listed here. Same frequently asked questions that are on the website, but this way, you can get to it more quickly. Generally, if you have any questions, my information is listed here, so you can easily send an email and there's a link to our website. But the main area that you'd be most interested in this, this is where you

would go to click to start a proposal. I've already started a proposal. Once I've started one, this is what you will see, it will say incomplete, I did not finish it purposely. I'm just going to go in and show you.

This application is a task-based system. Each part of the application is a separate task. Once you complete the task, it will—you'll notice all of these are in color. Once you complete a task, it will shade into gray with a check mark it will tell you exactly when you completed that task. I did this one earlier today. But the important thing that I want to point out is you do not need to complete each task in the order listed here. You can bounce around, take the easier questions first and come back and complete those more intense sections a little bit later. Again, as mentioned earlier, you can just close, it will save everything you've already completed without your needing to. So that's just a general overview. We wanted to make sure you were aware of what to expect. And the step by steps are very helpful. And we recommend using them.

40:15

So, we can go back into Q&A, Maura?

40:20 [MEC]

Yeah. I'm back. Again, I have a question please put it in the q&a box down at the bottom of your screen and we have a few already. So several people have asked about the different roles and if you can explain chair, discussant, organizer. One person wrote in, what is the chair's role—chair is not the same as organizer, correct? So if you could review what those different roles are, and maybe also how that affects the one-appearance rule, because there is kind of a quirk to it.

40:58 [BH]

Yeah, Miriam, do you want to take a stab at the organizer versus chair? Since you've done this a couple times already?

41:08 [MKK]

It can be the same person and often are you also the chair is as an optional position and you don't necessarily need one. Often the advantage of recruiting there is that you can solicit somebody who's fairly high profile who works on your topic or an adjacent topic who, who may be able to help you draw a large audience. The chair basically, in my understanding, introduces the participants and moderates the q&a afterwards. He may, he or she may or may not make a few additional remarks, but it's not the responsibility of, say, of the discussant, to, to comment extensively on the papers. And the organizer is the person who puts together the panel. So for instance, sometimes the chair is a senior scholar recruited by the organizer who is a more junior person who's working on a particular adjacent topic, and does all of the work of recruiting the participants, writing the collective abstract, and so forth, making the submission.

42:13 [BH]

That's that's a really useful way to put it. And I think the chair is going to be the timekeeper and keep the thing flowing along. But I do think, yeah, your point of, if possible to flag a big name, a person who may draw some attention to your panel, and some gravitas, perhaps.

42:35 [MEC]

Great. So Robyn, I think this is a question for you. But is there a possibility that we will have a virtual conference next year?

42:50 [RJ]

Oh, you know, we are watching the news about this as closely as everyone else. Right now, we're planning for an in-person conference in Seattle. But we're also planning for a hybrid conference. What that means is, we expect, we hope that we will be in Seattle in March. But we are also planning to record sessions that are taking place in Seattle and possibly livestream a few events from Seattle so that we can offer virtual attendance. So if you are not able to attend, you can virtually watch sessions from your home on screen. Of course, if something happens, unfortunately, like it did this March, we are making sure we are in a position where we can transition to a virtual conference, but for now, it's going to be hybrid where there will be some virtual presentations.

43:52 [MEC]

Several people have asked how are time slots assigned for sessions and especially, there's a concern that too many panels that are too similar wind up around the same time. So could you explain, I know it's quite a big process to put everything in time slots?

44:10 [BH]

Yeah. And true confession, I've only done this once. For the, for this Boston meeting, which didn't happen, unfortunately. But it is a monumental task. And first of all, major kudos to Robyn for organizing all this. And as you can see already from her walkthrough of the application process, it's all as streamlined as it can be. And the Cadmium platform that we use seems very clear and straightforward. But the meeting of the various groups to decide that, different area councils how we'll arrange these panels, it's a it's a monumental job. And everyone's aware that there's always the likelihood that someone is going to be put in a time slot that they did not wish to have or that two panels on a related topic may end up being slotted at the same time, every day. Every effort is made to avoid that. And either Robyn or Miriam might comment on the actual method we use, at least in the previous session that I attended, a physical layout of, of index cards in order to map, as it were, the entire meeting, with index cards representing each session so that you could see where things were at what time and what sort of overlap there might be with, with the individual groups coming around and and making sure as best they can that the overlap is avoided. But given the scale, some overlap, some conflict, and some disappointments are inevitable in terms of time slots and all of that. So I don't know, I'm not being particularly specific about the the process but I don't know. Miriam or Robyn, want to jump in?

45:44 [MKK]

Sure, I can explain. Here's where it really pays to have a very specific and concrete panel title. That will tell us as we're laying out the schedule exactly, chronologically, geographically and thematically, and disciplinarily, where your panel fits to give us the greatest chance of not scheduling it against another panel that does the same thing. Basically, what we do is each panel title is written on an index card. That's all the information we have—not the names of the presenters. It's completely anonymous. At this point, the Japan council will have all the Japan index cards, the China council will have all the China index cards, the trans-national council will have all the trans-nation index cards, so on and so forth. And there are a certain number of slots available based on the number of rooms for each time frame. So basically, we're just putting down the index cards within each timeframe, trying to avoid a lot of overlap between disciplines, topics, so on and so forth, and not over-scheduling the more popular timeframes relative to the less popular timeframes.

47:04 [RJ]

I think it's also important to share that—just from a logistics point of view, generally, and lately, the last three to four years, we've had 400 plus sessions with 11 time slots. And within those time slots, we're using 40-plus rooms concurrently. So in any given time slot, there's 40 other sessions going so it's inevitable, unfortunately, there may be conflicts but the Program Committee does a pretty great job, they do their best to sort out all of the cards and making sure that there's the least number.

47:47 [BH]

I forget Robyn, is it possible to indicate any sort of absolute conflicts for applicants like I'm traveling from, from Beijing on the 11th or whatever the date might be, and I just simply can't do a morning panel on such and such a date. Is that their scope for that?

48:06 [RJ]

Yes. So that information is also in the hands of the committee as they're scheduling to see, exactly Oh, you can't schedule it this day, because they've indicated that.

BH: if there are those absolute conflicts, you can indicate that and we'll make every effort to to accommodate them.

48:26 [MKK]

But at the same time, please don't just suggest that you would prefer a Saturday or Friday afternoon time slot, without sort of telling us you need a reason.

48:43 [BH]

No one wants that 8am panel slot, but sometimes we just have to have it. Yeah, and it's, it's a remarkable process to see everyone working with one another. It's not competitive. It's quite, it's quite cooperative. And I think it's done with the best of intentions to achieve the right kind of, the best kind of fit that we can. So inevitably there'll be disappointments. But I think it's a major accomplishment when it's all said and done.

49:10 [MEC]

Yes, so, one of our audience members wrote in and said that there's an impression that the AAS has a lot of panels on social and political issues, but not so much on art history or material culture. And that those, those panels that we do have focus on more modern topics, not pre-modern. So can you explain a little bit how we arrive at the balance in terms of disciplines and subjects, and how the conference comes to look the way it does in terms of those factors.

49:48 [MKK]

I think always encourage underrepresented disciplines and pre-modern specialists to apply. We're really limited with what we have in terms of applications. So that sort of, I think the fact that some disciplines are more lightly represented represents either, either sort of a historic tendency to present at different conferences, or a sort of a marginalization of the field in general within the larger field of Asian Studies. We can only select for inclusion in the program what we actually get as submissions. So, I would say, Be the change you want to see at the AAS. Submit the types of panels that you'd like us to select, and we're happy, we're always happy to include more marginal subfields on the program.

50:41 [BH]

I think otherwise, we're in a situation of a self-fulfilling prophecy, where people have the understanding that the AAS is such and such a way, that it's only interested in economics, social science, and East Asia modern, and therefore I'm not going to bother applying, but I think Miriam's point is well taken if you have a compelling topic on the early modern or the ancient and you can bring together scholars of note and topics of interest to the community, then make the case and we will do our best to honor it.

51:12 [MEC]

Great. So someone wrote in how does one balance specificity when writing the abstract for a general audience of submission reviewers from different fields and different areas of expertise. So this might be a great opportunity to explain how the sub committees of the program committee work. And they said, if their expertise is, for example, inter-Korean relations, then is it better to write an abstract that makes it interesting for everyone at AAS or do you narrow it slightly to modern Northeast Asia specialists.

51:50 [MKK]

This is definitely an art that comes with time. And the beauty of the program committee is that it rotates. Every every year the the constitution of the program committee is different. Three people will be, two or three people will be reading your abstract, and it will, each year one person will rotate off and another person will rotate on or two people, so you are never working with quite the same committee. I don't think it's necessary to look up the backgrounds of the committee members and try to appeal to them specifically. I think a lot of what makes a good panel is really transcendent in that way. I think just practice, have people read over your abstract, show it to people from different subfields, different disciplines, and see if it makes sense to them, if it appears compelling. And if it does, then there's a good bet that we'll find it compelling as well.

52:53 [BH]

Yeah, I do think you can think of the selection committee in a kind of oppositional mode as if they're only there to, to weed out and cull, but they're also there in translational capacity, I think to make sense of ideas to their fellow committee members and to make the case for panels that to some may not seem immediately compelling, but they'll outline why within my subfield or within this area, this actually is relevant, timely, and, and worth pursuing. So I think it's good to not have this feeling that we're all just there ready with giant red markers to put a big X on top of your proposal and push it away. I mean, we're, we're there looking to see what is bubbling up from researchers in their fields and seeing how they're connecting them. So to the issue of how to, how to write a good proposal, it's kind of [unintelligible] you want to have a sort of big catch if you can show us that you can bring it down into the particulars the granular detail of the, the material your panel will be working with and then bring it out again to make the case for us, to show us why it's relevant and should be included. That's probably one way to think of it.

54:04 [MEC]

Great, very straightforward question. Is the discussion on, I suppose, in an organized session a requirement or an option?

54:20 [BH]

I think it's an option, isn't it? But it's a very good option. I would think, you know, you could always just hope to open up to, to the floor for discussion, I guess but I think a discussant is a vital part of a well oiled panel, right? Because the discussant is there as the first person to really begin getting the

speakers into discussion with one another and come put the papers in conversation. So I don't know that an organized panel could be ruled out, Robyn, on the grounds of no discussant?

54:55 [RJ]

I believe discussant is a requirement on organized panels, and the second is optional. Meaning if you did not put one on the application, you may not be able to move forward. It may be required that there's a name. I would have to double-check.

55:15 [BH]

Yeah, yeah. But I think most organized panels should want to have a discussant. And I think and that is why we make it possible to have as many as two discussants. So we're kind of suggesting that a discussant is a good idea. So I would think if you're, if you have a topic that's really worth bringing to the level of the AAS and you want to engage people, I think it ought to be fairly straightforward and compelling to bring discussants in. So I would think that's, it should be a kind of bar that any good organized panel can cross.

55:50 [MEC]

Great. And in the interest of time, I'm going to sort of blend the last two questions together because they're similar. I'm talking about diversity of rank. So is it possible? Is it okay to have a panel without a faculty member? Or would that submission be at a big disadvantage if it were mostly graduate students? Or is it ... basically, is having that diversity of rank always requirement? Or is it something that's very strongly recommended?

56:25 [BH]

I would consider it a strong recommendation, not absolute requirement. Again, much falls on the the nature of the proposal and its compelling character. But if there's a group of people who are at the level of advanced graduate student or early assistant professor who are working with a new methodology that perhaps has not gained a lot of traction within any particular field or discipline, they may, they just may be just the ones to bring to the AAS as something that we need to see. So if we're compelled by a group of people, we're not going to exclude them just because they don't have. But that may be a good occasion if it's an organized session to bring in a senior person as a chair, who maybe doesn't have work directly in that area, but whose name is associated with the, with the historical period or the geographical region or whatever it might be so that they get add some gravitas. And again, it's that's only just going to be a benefit to the junior people who may have organized the panel. I don't know. Miriam, does that sound right to you?

57:30 [MKK]

Oh, yes, I was also going to say if you're unable to secure diversity of rank, then at least make sure you have institutional diversity. A panel comprised of all grad students from one institution is not likely to be competitive, for example. So I would suggest that if, if, if your panel doesn't meet all of the measures of diversity that we've suggested, that still can be a competitive panel, but the more that you are able to hit, the more successful you're likely to be.

58:03 [BH]

And it may be at the level of some of the digital technology panels that this is a place where some people working at the same rank are involved in the same kind of initiatives around a certain kind of technological tool that may be relevant. So there, there may be a case there for bringing those people

together. So yeah, but diversity of institution, diversity of gender, again, would be a valuable part of that picture.

58:29 [MEC]

Great. Well, thank you all so much, I really appreciate it. And thanks to our audience for participating in this first AAS Digital Dialogue. We will have more sessions throughout the summer so just keep an eye on our website. And if you're an AAS member, you'll also be receiving email communications with the topics and the dates and the times of upcoming sessions and you'll be able to register for those when they're available. So we're really excited about this new program, and we're so thankful that all of you were able to join us today and thanks to our panelists as well.

59:08

Thank you. Thank you very much. Good luck, everyone.