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**Board Chair, 2000-2001**

Since I was on sabbatical in India in April 1998 and had thus missed my first ASIANetwork board meeting, I was not expecting the telephone call I received from the Nominating Committee the following September, asking me to consider accepting the post of vice-chair, effectively putting me in line to become the Board Chair. My first response was disbelief (surely there must be *someone* more qualified!), then uncertainty whether I could do the job, and finally a willingness to try. It was with a mixture of delight and anxiety that I took over the chair from Stan Mickel in April 2000. Those were busy days, but very heady, since they allowed me the chance to work closely with talented Board members and with Van Symons, whose enthusiasm for the consortium is matched only by his energy.

As I was quickly informed, one of the Board Chair's primary responsibilities is to arrange the annual conference. The 2001 conference in Cleveland had a strong focus on the arts, which I consider indispensable for interdisciplinary instruction, and for the liberal arts in general. Several conference panels focused on using the arts as part of instruction. These were complemented by a visit to the Cleveland Museum, which has one of country's finest Asian art collections. The arts theme was also evident in the featured speakers, filmmakers Joseph Elder and Regge Life. For many years Dr. Elder was the head of the South Asia Center at UW-Madison, where he produced many documentary films on South Asia, whereas Regge Life's films on Japan and Japanese culture ultimately stem from his personal experience of cultural encounter, dissonance, and integration.

The conference's initial contact with the Cleveland Museum raised the prospect of an arts-related grant project between ASIANetwork and the Museum. After several years of consideration, a joint proposal was finally submitted to various granting agencies. Although this proposal was unsuccessful, for various reasons, this notion of an arts-related proposal has been transformed and borne fruit through the current ASIANetwork initiative, *Asian Art in the*

*Undergraduate Curriculum*, which has been funded by the Luce Foundation.

One of the primary concerns during my tenure as Board chair was the consortium's continuing dependence on "soft" (grant-related) money to pay part of our operating expenses (at that time, around two-thirds of the total). During this time the Board gave considerable thought to how ASIANetwork could become more financially stable, either through finding new funding, or through saving enough money to create an endowment. The efforts to find new funding were spearheaded by the Development Team, which was created at the end of Stan Mickel's tenure as Board Chair, and which began its work during my first months as chair. The Development Team was formed because we realized that Board members were not in the position of undertaking effective development work, given the other demands on their time. Moreover, the turnover of Board members made it difficult to develop long-term relationships with granting agencies. In light of this, the Development Team was initially charged "with articulating a long range developmental strategy, identifying potential funders, and then building strong relationships with those foundations, agencies and individuals."

During that year development moved in fits and starts. Our biggest opportunity came when the Luce Foundation invited ASIANetwork to apply for a million dollar endowment grant that would permanently cover the difference between ASIANetwork's revenue and its operating costs. The grant request, titled "Securing the Future of ASIANetwork," was sent to the Luce Foundation in the spring of 2001. We were disappointed when this grant request was not approved—my understanding is that the Luce Board, on principle, balked at giving money for an endowment—but the Luce Foundation did award ASIANetwork a five-year grant for \$300,000 (\$60,000 per year), with this money explicitly earmarked for operating expenses. While this grant represented another infusion of "soft" money, it dispenses funding for only a finite time period, but we were happy to

receive it, since “soft” money is infinitely better than none! This support from Luce allowed ASIANetwork to bank other funds that would have normally been spent on operating expenses, thus increasing the consortium’s savings, and also created a secure climate for the Development Committee’s subsequent work, during which time it has been quite successful.

Finally, one of the most rewarding experiences during my tenure as vice-chair and chair was the chance to sit on the committee reading the applications for the Freeman Faculty-Student Fellowships. Many of the proposals were a joy to read, and the committee’s lively discussions were an added intellectual delight. These

proposals not only showed the breadth of ASIANetwork faculty interests—and some of the most interesting ones were from fields and regions far removed from my own—but they also showed the care that these faculty invested in their students. This opportunity to give students personalized attention and mentoring is one of the unique features of teaching at small college, and one of the things I treasure in my own work.

More than anything, my experiences as an ASIANetwork board member and board chair have reinforced my faith in the value of small colleges, and in the importance of the work that we do there to foster more effective teaching, learning, mentoring, and living.



**Joel R. Smith**  
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**Board Chair 2001-2002**

Chairing the ASIANetwork board in 2001-02 was among the most challenging, rewarding, and exhausting work I’ve ever done. Working with so many stimulating colleagues from varied disciplines and diverse colleges was certainly the highlight for me. I thoroughly enjoyed the close working relationship with Van Symons, my fellow board members, and our small but fine staff, as well as meeting new and old colleagues at our conferences.

During our 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, 2002, we celebrated at the April conference at Hickory Ridge Conference Center near Chicago. Conference highlights included keynote talks by Susan Napier on “Inside the Labyrinth: Anime Visions of Technology, Modernity, and Apocalypse” and by Henry Rosemont, Jr. on “Confucian Perspectives on Freedom, Human Rights and Justice.” Putting the conference together is an enormous undertaking by the chair—always with Van’s help, of course—and the late cancellation of a keynote speaker due to illness certainly put me in crisis mode until Henry Rosemont generously stepped in to deliver his superb keynote address. Many of the past members of the board, as well as some members of our council of advisors, joined the current board members in a special Friday afternoon session to reflect upon the past and future of ASIANetwork. Some of their ideas were

shared at a Saturday morning plenary panel, “10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reflections.” The sixteen breakout panels addressed the usual wide range of interdisciplinary topics, and an evening *pipa* recital charmed us all with Chinese music. Sunday morning we rounded out our anniversary reflections with a plenary panel on “The Future of Asian Studies.”

Although I had some good administrative experience when I became chair, the administrative work for the board was new and always seemed to involve re-inventing ourselves even as we built on our past success. The Henry Luce Foundation had recently awarded ASIANetwork a generous grant of \$300,000 over a five-year period to sustain a variety of activities relating to program development. The Freeman Foundation had recently renewed its initial million dollar grant for the Student Faculty Fellows Program and the College in Asia Summer Institute. Much of the fun on the board involved brainstorming about new projects, nurturing some of them into a viable focus, procuring funding for them, and inviting faculty to implement them for our members.

More mundane activities included sustaining and increasing our membership, re-structuring the board’s committee system to make it more effective, and exploring ways to give ASIANetwork a firm financial basis. We also established committees to begin the search for a new director