

STRATEGIC PLAN | FALL 2019 – SPRING 2022

Approved by AJS Board of Directors, June 3, 2019

Strategic Priority #1: Increase Organizational Transparency and Improve AJS Board Accessibility

Goal 1: Facilitate the navigation of the Association's structure and governance

Goal 2: Increase visibility and accessibility of board and staff

Goal 3: Improve the membership's understanding of board processes

An informed membership is an engaged membership. Recent events have demonstrated the importance of structural and procedural transparency, not to mention board access. In order to encourage full participation and, especially, to broaden that participation to be as inclusive as possible, the AJS leadership will work to clarify its operations and decision-making processes, broaden and deepen the involvement of its members, and connect members with the Executive Board, Board of Directors, and Staff in meaningful and productive ways throughout the year.

Strategic Priority #2: Cultivate Informed, Active, and Diversified Membership

Goal 4: Serve and engage independent scholars, alt-academic professionals, scholars of color, LGBTQ scholars, scholars with disabilities, and non-US members

Goal 5: Leverage the knowledge, experience, and diverse areas of expertise within the membership to foster mentoring relationships

Goal 6: Support and advocate for contingent faculty

Diversity and inclusion are essential values of the AJS, but they can only be realized through intentional, strategic, and sustained efforts by the Association's leadership and membership. The field of Jewish Studies has become increasingly diverse in both the

subjects it studies and the scholars who are engaged in the work. The Association has an obligation to embrace that diversity, address structures currently in place that, intentionally or not, disadvantage scholars from diverse backgrounds and working in diverse areas, and create the means, conditions, and mentorship that foster broader participation and representation.

As the academy continues to undergo significant structural changes, and with the expansion of contingent faculty positions, it is essential for professional associations like the AJS to serve the distinctive needs—and to advocate for the improved working conditions—of those scholars who find themselves in these precarious roles. Similarly, as more of our colleagues explore alternative careers to more conventional academic positions, the Association must be attentive to, and learn from, these different professional experiences; such so-called alt-academic work will, in turn, enrich the broader field.

Strategic Priority #3: Diversify the AJS's Intellectual Engagement with the Public and with Other Scholarly Organizations

Goal 7: Strengthen and broaden partnerships with other professional societies and cultural institutions.

Goal 8: Serve as a resource for programs and program directors/chairs

Goal 9: Serve as a resource for public discourse on contemporary issues in which our membership has scholarly expertise

Goal 10: Celebrate and extend our work in public humanities

Even as the AJS continues to support Jewish studies programs in institutions of higher learning, calls for more extensive, deliberate public outreach and engagement by scholars both within the academy and outside of it point to important new directions for the Association. Jewish Studies has been at the forefront of this work for many years, through public programs, lectures, exhibitions, TV and radio programs (and now podcasts), and more. There is, of course, more to do, but we have enjoyed early successes that can serve as the basis for future innovations in the ever-expanding media landscape.

Especially in these divisive times, it is crucial for the AJS to help its members to inhabit their roles as qualified experts in specialized fields of knowledge. The Association and its membership are valuable resources for providing informed, nuanced understandings of complex cultural, historical, and social issues, and for creating the conditions for critical conversation and constructive disagreement.

DEVELOPING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

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Having successfully fulfilled many of the promises and expectations of [our last strategic plan](#), which was developed in 2013 by the Association's leadership, and fresh from celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2018, the AJS initiated the formulation of a new strategic plan for the next three years. Spearheaded by AJS President Christine Hayes and Executive Director Warren Hoffman, the strategic planning process began in the summer of 2018 with a comprehensive survey of its membership intended to identify areas toward which the Association should turn its efforts. Building on that survey and a series of discussions within the Board of Directors, a strategic planning committee worked to develop a new set of priorities that will guide the AJS's activities and resources over the next three years. The process also drew upon the valuable work of several [task forces](#) that were convened to address issues pertaining to Sexual Misconduct, Diversity and Inclusion, Professional Development, Membership Engagement, and, as of summer 2019, Contingent Faculty. The priorities of the new strategic plan focus on improving the organization's transparency and encouraging broader participation by its members, embracing and nurturing the diversity of its members, embracing and nurturing the diversity of its members, exercising more deliberate leadership in the future of the field, and taking an active role in broader public discourse.

The Strategic Planning Committee was comprised of the following members of the Board of Directors: Jeffrey Shoulson, chair (University of Connecticut); Jason Kalman (HUC/JIR); Laura Leibman (Reed College); Andrea Lieber (Dickinson College); Michael Meyer (HUC/JIR). We also owe thanks to several learned society and foundation professionals, as well as experts in academic publishing and the state of the humanities. [Please let us know what you think](#) about these priorities; you will certainly be hearing more about these initiatives in the months to come.