December 2011

Reviving Studia Antiqua: Bringing the Journal Back to Life in 2007

Breanne White

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studiaantiqua

Part of the Biblical Studies Commons, and the History Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/studiaantiqua/vol10/iss1/2
The second inception of Studia Antiqua began in a time of both turmoil and excitement for BYU students who studied the ancient Near East. The ANES major had been created—it and MESA taking the place of the extinct NES major—in the fall semester of 2005, and with it came the organization of the Students of the ancient Near East club, or SANE, as we liked to be called. Under Dr. Dana Pike’s direction, SANE began to set up lectures and other activities related to the Ancient Near East. One of the first things on the to-do list was to find out what had happened to the student journal Studia Antiqua, which had been started by Matthew Grey in the fall of 2001, and continue the publication process.

At one of the first SANE officers’ meetings, the question of how to re-initiate the publication process came up, since the journal seemed to have disappeared after the winter semester 2005 issue. No one even knew who the most recent editor in chief was or why publication had stopped. Furthermore, none of us knew where funding had come from for the journal, nor did we even know the process required to produce a student journal. However, we all agreed that with the new ANES major and SANE club, a journal would present BYU students with an incredible opportunity to be involved in the editing and publishing process, preparing them for graduate school and later academic publishing. So with the desire to provide a venue for these opportunities to BYU students, the SANE officers decided to find out if and how we could re-start the journal.

None of us realized, however, what a complicated process reinitiating publication would turn out to be. First we needed to find out what had happened to Studia Antiqua and if there were articles remaining or funding still available from the previous editions, and then we needed to find out the steps required
in preparing an edition for publication. Student articles needed to be written, submitted, and edited, and a staff of student editors and faculty reviewers needed to be assembled. The ever-present problem of funding needed to be solved, and someone needed to spearhead the whole process. This last problem had perhaps the easiest solution: I was the secretary for SANE at the time and was majoring in both English and ancient near eastern Studies. Because of this I was familiar with many editing and publication resources, so I was elected to find out how to restart the publication process.

One of my jobs during the summer of 2005 had been cleaning the old houses across the street from the bell tower, which used to hold university offices but which have now been razed. One of these houses held the student journal offices, and I often vacuumed a room with cupboards holding the materials for many of the student journals on campus. I remembered that one of these was labeled Studia Antiqua, so I figured that this would be the best place to start looking for the remains of the journal.

A visit to the student journal office revealed that the Studia Antiqua cupboard was still full of partially edited but unpublished student articles, submitted to the journal before it had stopped mid-year in 2005. Linda Adams, who was the faculty mentor for BYU student journals at the time and proved to be an invaluable source of information about the former Studia Antiqua as well as how to once again start publishing, mentioned that apparently the former editor in chief had been in an accident mid-semester, and with no one to push for the publication of the journal that semester, the journal had been set on a shelf, both literally and figuratively, and hadn’t been touched since then.

This revelation presented us with both a problem and a solution: with all of these half-edited articles, our workload would hopefully be a bit lighter, and we might even be able to meet our late November deadline in order to publish by the end of fall semester 2006. However, most of the student authors had graduated and were no longer at BYU. I contacted them all with the proposition of publishing their essays in the new edition of the journal, and about half of them consented. Most of them were surprised to hear from me, assuming that since they hadn’t heard anything in more than a year, the journal was no longer being published.

With several articles as a foundation for the journal, two more hurdles had to be overcome: a staff of editors needed to be gathered and new articles needed to be obtained. SANE officers sent out an e-mail and announced in their classes that we were looking for articles about anything related to the ancient world, short or long. For this edition we were more concerned about getting the journal published than we were about specific topics or lengths. I
made a desperate plea in both my English and my ANES classes for anyone that wanted editing experience to please join the Studia Antiqua staff, even if only for a semester. I was more than delighted when seven people, three English majors and four ANES majors, agreed to join the staff and work on editing articles.

With this team of editors, we began the process of sifting through the submitted articles and beginning the editing process. However, the problems of finding funding and faculty reviewers, as well as figuring out the details of designing and formatting the journal and preparing it for publication before finally printing it, proved to be much bigger hurdles than I had imagined. When I started the process, I naively thought that finding articles and editors would be the hardest part, while the actual publishing would be easy. Despite the amount of effort and enthusiasm that I put into reviving Studia Antiqua, however, deadlines weren’t met, e-mails went unanswered, phone calls weren’t returned, and several times people didn’t show up to meetings that I had set up with them.

This process taught me a great deal about the difficulties involved in academic publishing and anything, really, that involves securing funding and coordinating with many different people. Furthermore, while I was enthusiastic about the journal and the publishing process, I was incredibly busy with school and work commitments and was preparing to leave the country for a study abroad. By the end of the fall 2006 semester, I was very disheartened. The articles were nowhere near being ready for publication. The journal hadn’t even been formatted, and I was still unfamiliar with the complete publishing and printing process. More than half of my staff of editors didn’t have time to work with the journal the next semester, and the Jerusalem Center had just reopened after six years of being closed and I was leaving in January to study abroad there. This was great news for me, but I felt that it was a sure death sentence for the journal, as I had been working as editor in chief the past semester and I wasn’t sure if the process would continue after I left.

Thankfully, one of the editors from that semester, Dan McClellan, volunteered to work as editor in chief during winter 2007 and see if he could prepare the journal to be published by April. In all honesty, I was relieved to leave such a source of frustration and disappointment for a semester. I hoped that Dan would be able to find a way to overcome the hurdles that had delayed publication up to this point, but I didn’t actually think that the journal would be published by the time I came back. Four months in Jerusalem with no news confirmed my fears about the unfinished status of Studia Antiqua.
However, when I returned from Israel I was shocked and delighted to see that the journal had indeed been published in April 2007, just a few days before the end of finals. Dr. Pike had graciously assisted with finding faculty reviewers for the articles, and funding had been provided by the ANES major, the Students of the Ancient Near East club, and the Religious Studies Center.

I was informed later that Mel Thorne, the director of the Humanities Publication Center, had offered editorial assistance to help with the publication of Studia Antiqua, and Dr. Stephen Ricks had volunteered to be the faculty advisor for the journal that semester, both of whom provided much-needed insight and direction. Furthermore, in March of 2007, Dr. Dana Pike, Dr. Andrew Skinner, and Dr. Richard Holzapfel had met together to discuss funding options for the journal and had decided that the Religious Studies Center would take responsibility for the continued publishing of Studia Antiqua, offering a paid internship for the editor in chief and permanent funding for the journal. This step ensured that Studia Antiqua would always be available for student publishing without having to worry about the publication of the journal being discontinued because funding ran out or something happened to the editor in chief (as had been the problem before).

Now, several years later, the publication of the journal continues. The Religious Studies Center, Mel Thorne and Linda Adams from the BYU Humanities Publication Center, and Dr. Dana Pike deserve special thanks, as do Matthew Grey and the other student editors that have so diligently worked on a time-consuming and often thankless task. Because of their contributions, Studia Antiqua continues to be a venue for student scholarship about the ancient world, preparing students for graduate work and further research and study. I personally am thrilled to see that Studia Antiqua is celebrating its ten-year anniversary and feel that the journal will only improve, surpassing expectations in its scope and scholarship over the next several years.