

2019 SABR Election Guide

Thank you for reading the 2019 SABR Election Guide.

On the following pages you will find statements of the candidates for the offices of President and two (2) Director's seats, and the candidates' responses to the three questions posed by the Nominating Committee. We hope reading the candidates' own words will allow the SABR membership to get a better idea of who the candidates are and what each stands for. These are grouped by question and by office so you can easily compare the candidates and make a more informed decision. You are also encouraged to contact the candidates directly to ask them any questions that will help you decide your vote. To facilitate this, an e-mail address is given for each candidate at the top of his/her biographical section.

All members who have renewed for 2019 and who have an email address on file as of April 1, 2019, will be registered for online voting and will be sent an invitation to vote on April 9, 2019, and will receive at least one reminder email before April 23. The email contains a unique link to the ballot that allows the Tellers Committee to know who does and who does not vote online (while keeping votes completely anonymous). Any paper ballots received from members who have already voted online will be discarded. **You can vote either online, or with the paper ballot if you do not have an email address on file with us, but not both.**

Printed below are the functions of each office according to the current SABR bylaws.

ARTICLE 3 — OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES

Officers and Directors. SABR's elected officers shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, who along with four Directors shall collectively comprise the Board of Directors. All elected officers and directors shall have been individual members of the Society continuously for four years prior to taking office. No person may hold more than one seat on the SABR Board. Any incumbent officer or director elected or appointed to a second office or director's position shall be deemed to have resigned the first office immediately upon assuming the second position.

President. The duties of the President, who shall be elected in odd-numbered years to a two-year term, shall include: a) Presiding over the annual business meeting and chairing the Board of Directors; b) Working with the Executive Director to ensure that the organization maintains positive and productive relationships with media, funders, donors, and other organizations; c) Signing contracts and letters of agreement approved by the Board of Directors. The President may delegate signatory power, as appropriate; d) Ensuring that the Board of Directors and its members: 1) are aware of and fulfill their governance responsibilities; 2) comply with applicable laws and bylaws; 3) conduct board business effectively and efficiently; and 4) are accountable for their performance; e) Such additional duties as may from time to time be assigned by the Board of Directors; f) Except as otherwise provided by the Bylaws or explicitly delegated by the Board of Directors, the President shall have no greater authority than any other member of that body.

Directors. The four Directors, who starting in 2004 shall be elected to three-year terms, shall serve on the Board of Directors and perform such duties as may from time to time be assigned by the Board of Directors.

***The deadline for your vote to be received is
11:59 p.m. Mountain Standard Time on April 23, 2019.***

For President

Mark Armour

Member Since: 1983

E-mail: markarmour04@gmail.com

SABR Experience: Director, 2018-19; BioProject Committee, Founder/Director 2002-2016; Baseball Cards Committee, Co-Chair 2016-present; NWSABR Vice-President 2001-2002; NWSABR President 2003-2004.

Other Relevant Experience:

Education: Northeastern University, MS Computer Science 1990; Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, BS Math/Computer Science 1982.

Occupation: Software Engineer, Contractor with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration).

Candidate Statement

After one year on the board I have learned that the group is hard-working and congenial, and I intend to work to continue this atmosphere. As President, I would ensure that consensus is reached after all voices have been heard. As one of those voices, I will work to make SABR a better value proposition for more people, and to instill an atmosphere that allows all interested members to fully participate in the SABR community.

I believe that SABR needs to be the essential resource for people who want to understand the game. We have become so for biographies, but the rest of our knowledge remains essentially our secret. A revised web site must address this, which will also provide opportunities for younger members to contribute and remain SABR members for years.

For Director

Chris Dial

Member Since: 1994

E-mail: pfeiffer86@gmail.com

SABR Experience: Director, Board of Directors 2014-present; President – Carolina Chapter 2015-present; Co-Founder of Chartered Communities; President – BTF Chapter 2010-2016; Co-chair - Baseball Card Committee, current; Co-chair – Statistical Analysis Committee, current; Member SABR Defensive Index Committee, current Statistical Contributor (voter) for SDI, current; Convention Presenter 2016-2018.

Other Relevant Experience: Business Operations Analyst, Gold Glove Voting contributor, founding writer at Baseball Think Factory.

Education: BS, Chemistry.

Occupation: Director, Business Development, Clinical Supplies Management.

Candidate Statement

If elected, I will continue to work to strengthen SABR's membership and standing within the baseball community. My work on the Board has always been focused on improving the membership value. Over the last five years, I have introduced votes to lower dues, voted against significant increases in the convention pricing, and pushed for greater perks for members. The Board over the last 8 years has done a terrific job of driving revenues from other sources, and there's room to lessen the burden on membership.

Secondly, I want to seek out more opportunities like Leslie Heaphy brought to the Board last meeting – the IWBC. There are many other worthwhile areas that SABR can drive awareness of beyond MLB, which does just fine. These organizations add diversity and foster research and development in underfunded areas of baseball.

Lastly, I want to extend our branding. There are lots of MLB writers that are SABR members or utilize SABR sources. If these writers regularly alerted their readers to SABR's value to their writing and understanding of the game, SABR would continue to flourish.

These three areas have clear achievable goals and visible paths to achieve those goals. They would make for a stronger SABR, from the ground up.

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For Director

Allison Levin

Member Since: 2014

E-mail: allison.levin@gmail.com

SABR Experience: I am a member of the Women in Baseball and Educational Resources Committees at the National level, I also run the yearly Research Conference for my local (Bob Broeg) Chapter. I have given oral presentations at 3 National Conventions and 1 Analytics Conference and presented 2 posters at the National Convention. I have also encouraged and mentored a college sophomore who received the Yoseloff scholarship for SABR 48.

Other Relevant Experience: I am a Adj. Professor of Sports Communications and Sports Management at Webster University in St. Louis, MO. I run the Sports division at the Midwest Popular Culture/American Culture Conference where I am also on the Board of Directors. I regularly present baseball work at regional and national conferences including NINE, Saberseminar, National Association for Sports Social Scientists, Sports and Society, among others. I mentor college students in baseball related work and have had students attend and present at many local, regional, and national conferences as well as win awards and scholarships. I also sponsor the Webster University Sports Media and Analytics Club.

Education: BA, Economics, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA; BA, Political Science, Grinnell College, Grinnell, IA; MA, Applied Communications, Southern Illinois University- Edwardsville; JD, Washington University in St. Louis.

Occupation: Adj. Assistant Professor, Sports Communication and Sports Management, Webster University, St. Louis, MO.

Candidate Statement

For me going to SABR events is like returning home; I love talking, researching, and learning about baseball. But those factors alone are not reasons why I would be a valuable addition to the Board of Directors. SABR is at a crossroads --we have diehard members who cannot imagine missing a National Convention or local meeting and try every year to make the other great events held by SABR, but these members alone cannot sustain this organization. We must bring in younger members and more diverse members. That is not to say we need to move away from what makes SABR great, but we need to find ways to attract these new members and retain them in our membership. As a professor who has students who regularly attend and present at conferences, I know first-hand how hard it is to engage younger men and women to get involved. I hear from students after every conference they attend what made them feel included and what makes them feel isolated or unwanted. Using this knowledge, as a Board member I will help SABR do its best to maximize the experiences that make younger members feel included, whether it be meet-ups at the convention, or a young members group to facilitate comradery and friendships that can carry-over to the convention and other events. In order to grow and thrive as an organization we not only need to be better at getting younger we must continue the efforts to increase diversity. Although programs exist there is still work to be done to ensure women and minorities feel welcome and accepted at all levels from local to national. As somebody who loves SABR and wants to see it survive and thrive, we need to be bringing in and retaining women and minority members in addition to the younger members. By making sure SABR is seen as a diverse organization from attendees to presenters at chapter meetings through the National Convention and other events, we can make sure the SABR we know, and love is respected and loved by all, not just the diehard members.

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For Director Bill Nowlin

Member Since: 1994

E-mail: Bill.Nowlin@rounder.com

SABR Experience: Vice President, 2004-2016; Director, 2016-present. For about six or seven years, have been in charge of “team projects” for BioProject. I have edited a number of books for SABR. With Mark Armour, launched the Games Project.

Other Relevant Experience: I have served on a couple of other non-profit boards – Club Passim (music and culture enterprise); National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (“the Grammys”) – a chapter “governor.”

Education: Tufts University, AB and PhD; University of Chicago, MA.

Occupation: Retired former music publisher and university professor (political science).

Candidate Statement

SABR has for some years been very central to my life. I don't think a day goes by that I am not working on something related to SABR. For the most part, that is either writing BioProject biographies, writing Games Project accounts, or – increasingly over the past several years – helping edit about three dozen books for SABR's publications program.

In working on both articles and the SABR books, I have often reached out to SABR members for research assistance (often just asking them to look up one thing in their local newspaper) and found most members more than willing to help. That has always made me feel very good about SABR, and I always do the same for other members when I am able to help.

SABR members are passionate about baseball, and it has been wonderful to be part of this community.

On the Board, I am currently second only to F.X. Flinn in terms of tenure. There have been a lot of changes over the years since I first joined the Board in 2004. I do believe there is some benefit for the Board to both have “new blood” but also have some continuity, offering a longer perspective.

With my fellow Board members, I am glad to have been part of the process of SABR's development and growth as a research society. I hope to continue this work, and continue to encourage members who have not yet researched or written for SABR to begin to do so.

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Question 1: In the 2010s, SABR improved and solidified its interactions with MLB. Much of the credit for this strengthened association goes to outgoing President Vince Gennaro. As a member of the Board of Directors, how will you build on the SABR-MLB relationship?

Mark Armour

Going forward, the best person to interact with MLB will be our new CEO, Scott Bush. Although this has not often been the case in the past, the CEO/ED role should be SABR's face, and the go-to person for most external relationships.

As the President of the board, I would of course work with Scott and support him in any way he saw fit. I do not have the MLB relationships that Vince has, but at the recent Analytics conference Scott had already forged relationships with teams and MLB that will serve us well in the future, and Vince himself is still a SABR member and available if we need an introduction or two. The most important aspect of our relationship with MLB teams is with respect to the Analytics conference, and it was a big success.

Chris Dial

In order to build on the SABR-MLB relationship, I would continue to work with the existing contacts that Vince and Scott have been interacting with for the Analytics conference, while probing for other areas to enhance our relationship. This could be in the areas of scouting, Players Association, or their relationship with MiLB. I have a long relationship as an analyst with MLBAM and Rawlings, involving MLB interactions with current and former players, managers, and GMs.

Working with MLBAM, I would focus on having a SABR participant on the Brian Kenny show on MLB Network, as Vince does now, where more publicity will produce a stronger recognition of the SABR brand and expertise. This could also be extended to participation in the "saber-style" game calling that was done the past season.

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Allison Levin

The SABR-MLB relationship allows for credibility and expanded resources for SABR. The overall goal must be retaining the partnership, which like all partnerships requires that each side be adding something of value to the relationship. SABR, thus, must focus on what we can do to provide benefit to MLB, not just what MLB can do to benefit SABR. To that end, I would continue to grow on the relationship by working closely with the diversity office of MLB to figure out ways to bring young and minority fans to the game as well as SABR. By focusing on diversity, we can make sure that the relationship is mutually beneficial since both organizations have put attracting diversity to the sport as high priority. Another way SABR and MLB can continue a mutually beneficial relationship is by SABR continuing to provide resources to MLB. This can be achieved through committee work, but also, and perhaps more importantly for the growth of SABR, at the local chapter level. Local SABR chapters can work with MLB outlets for community service projects, historical research, and local speakers, all of which will improve the overall appeal of the local SABR chapters, again growing membership and baseball fans. It is also important to note that one of the biggest ways the MLB-SABR relationship can be built upon is visibility. Ultimately it is visibility that will bring members to SABR and help establish SABR as a valuable member of the baseball community. When talking to baseball fans at games and events it is surprising how few people are aware of SABR and everything that comes with membership. I feel strongly that the MLB partnership now that it is growing stronger, can be used to bring more baseball fans into the SABR-fold.

Bill Nowlin

Any organization that is thriving needs to build good relationships with other enterprises or organizations in the field. Before Vince, SABR did not have an Analytics Conference, had very little direct contact with MLB, and had an aging membership that seemed stagnant. The working relationship between Vince and past CEO Marc Appleman helped make great progress in all three areas, all of which was strongly supported by the Board of Directors.

As a member of the Board, it is my hope to continue to build stronger relationships with a variety of other organizations, including (but by no means limited to) Major League Baseball. I would like to see us develop closer ties to Minor League Baseball (which new CEO Scott Bush is uniquely situated to help accomplish), the National Baseball Hall of Fame, the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, and other organizations and groups who have demonstrated a passion for baseball, and/or represent certain constituencies with an interest in baseball. Examples might include the International Women's Baseball Center, the Umps Care charity, and the Major League Baseball Players Alumni Association.

Question 2: The effectiveness of SABR Chapters varies greatly. In recent years, the Board attempted to address the situation by hiring a dedicated chapter-relations manager, but that position has now been dropped from the SABR staffing mix. With these facts in mind, how would you improve SABR's procedures for supporting and strengthening its Chapters?

Mark Armour

The strength of SABR chapters is most dependent on its leadership. An energetic leader or leaders willing to engage local members to attend and present at meetings has proven to me more important than the size of the chapter. To that end, I think we should provide better guidelines for how chapters should behave, and have a willingness to replace or supplement chapter leadership with people who have more time to engage more fully. I don't believe this level of management requires a full-time staff person to implement.

Chris Dial

As a Chapter President in a "spread out chapter", this is a critical area I deal with constantly. I would improve SABR's procedures by working specifically around the issues I have as a smaller, burgeoning chapter.

The chapter-relations role was a tremendous help in regular communication around having meetings, supplying ideas, and helping a President stay alert to the needs of the local members. I would work to re-establish this role as soon as the budget allowed.

One of the biggest gaps smaller, spread out chapters like mine, is difficulty in achieving the critical mass needed to garner cooperation with local minor league (or major league) teams. The ideas that drive many of the large successful chapters fall flat without member participation.

I would work with the chapter leaders to establish a process for utilizing the Internet to enhance the quality of your meetings and create a bigger draw for your local members. One of the hardest things small chapters struggle with is putting together a program. When there are 2-5 regular members, things like guest speakers and trivia contests are not practical. For my most recent meeting, when my chapter member presenter fell ill, I had the idea to utilize Gchat as I do for business meetings. After a few quick conversations, we had Mark Armour and Dan Szyborski present and engage the chapter via Gchat, with video. Mark gave a presentation he had shared at the NW Chapter – without utilizing alternative mediums, only the NW Chapter would see it. After working out a few bugs, I believe we can share this process with all the chapters that will allow more chapters to interact with each other. This process could mean having speakers from around the world, allowing greater flexibility, without the travel. We still need to work out a way for chapter members who cannot travel extensively (my chapter range is 200 miles in diameter) to participate remotely.

My experience is once a member can engage at a chapter meeting, even over the Internet, their sense of belonging makes for greater involvement and commitment.

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Allison Levin

I think this is a huge area where SABR can grow and improve. When I see the wide range of what different local meetings entail on the weekly SABR notes I can immediately see why some chapters do better than others at drawing in and maintaining members. While the national events can help maintain membership, it is hard to bring in members if they are disillusioned with their local chapters. I think all the various styles of meetings have value and I believe all chapters should strive to have some meetings that are more talk, others that have chapter members presenting their work, and still others with guest speakers. To achieve more consistency in local chapters I think there needs to be a clear manual with specific requirements that each chapter should strive to meet. After a certain period SABR should identify underperforming chapters and seek to help them reach those base requirements through mentorship and perhaps a sister chapter. An additional area that needs to be improved on is transparency in the local chapters. So often I hear of members who did not know elections happened or don't know how to vote. Further, many chapters make the barrier to entry for proposing topics or a different style of meetings so high that members would rather not attend than try to change things. By providing a uniform approach to how elections are run, agendas are set, how to establish a social media presence, etc., the meetings will be more accessible. The end goal should be uniformity in how things are done chapter by chapter and the removal of the "old boys' network" feel of some local chapters.

Bill Nowlin

More than once, we have tried to have a dedicated person in charge of chapter development. Each time, it was a junior position and the person in charge of the effort found more attractive job opportunities elsewhere. Our most recent hire is, this time, a Director of Development. SABR is on pretty good financial footing, but we know there are many more opportunities for growth in that area – and productive expansion in encouraging research and dissemination of that research, through posting on the website, sharing data with other organizations, the publications program, and now the development of a podcast program.

In my work on books for SABR, I have always tried to work with local chapters to help develop books with a strong regional appeal (e.g., last year's *Mile High Baseball* on the Colorado Rockies and this year's books on the San Diego Padres and Kansas City Royals. In each case, my first step was to reach out to the local chapters, encouraging chapter members in each area to participate, before announcing the book to the general SABR membership.

Recently, the Smoky Joe Wood Chapter (Connecticut) has, on its own, produced a book on Jeff Bagwell. I want to continue to encourage efforts of this nature.

Beyond that, the Board does need to continue to find ways to support and encourage chapter growth. With a new CEO on board now, one who has experience working to build up regional interest and participation, I am hopeful that we will begin – as a Board, working closely with the current staff – to explore a variety of different ways to both support and strengthen chapters.

We are mindful that not every member lives in an area where attending chapter meetings is feasible. For that reason, we also want to strengthen the various research committees. That is one of the reasons I have tried to ensure that we have had publications focused on areas of interest to, for instance, Business of Baseball, Latino Baseball, Nineteenth Century Baseball, Negro Leagues Research, Scouts, Umpires and Rules, etc.

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Question 3: Interest in baseball is rising, yet SABR's membership count remains stagnant. Is that a problem for the organization? What would you propose as the Board's response to address and act on the question?

Mark Armour

SABR membership is not stagnant -- it is shrinking every year. And, yes, it's a problem. What SABR needs to come to grips with is that the value it is offering it is not worth the price to enough people. I believe that SABR needs to address both halves of this exchange.

We need to lower dues, especially for younger people. Once you have been in SABR for a while it becomes more obvious that SABR is a community and this is why you might rejoin every year. But it is hard to make that case to a non-member. To attract young people, who are obviously the future, we need to have more and better content and that content needs to be on-line. We need to have daily content that a young person can read – they don't have to read it every day, just as you don't have to read *The Athletic* every day. But there needs to be enough content so that you often want to read it.

Besides content, the other way SABR can attract people, especially young people, is to provide platforms for them to write. A revised web site, and more blogs, is the best way to do this.

Chris Dial

During my first week on the Board, I asked about membership. At my second Board meeting, I began tracking changes in our membership – which categories were growing, which were declining. My experience as a business analyst helps me focus on problem areas and identifying mechanisms to effect change in said areas.

To address the lack of growth, I would continue to propose motions to increase membership by lower the cost for younger members, as well as adapting the “per month” and auto-renew models that I see around the web. In addition, I will continue to work to make the SABR value proposition match the pricing, specifically for persons under 35. There has been a generational shift in the marketplace, and SABR should move to support that group.

When I look around the Internet, I see sites with baseball content, and I consider their readers as potential SABR members. *The Athletic* is maximum cost of \$60/year and produces constant content. On sale, it is available for \$3/month. Fangraphs only takes “donation memberships” of \$20. It is likely SABR should move in this direction to attract a healthy supply of budding members. *The Athletic* has 500,000 subscribers; if one third are baseball fans (167,000), SABR should be able to capture 5% of them (that's about 8,350 members). SABR needs to be better known on these widely read sites, and we likely need a lower price for the younger generation.

That isn't to ignore our other members. We must maintain rates for seniors and consider **either** providing more value for members 36-64 or consider lowering the annual rate. The Board currently debates these issues, and I will continue to spur them in that direction.

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Allison Levin

I think a stagnant membership is a huge issue for the organization. With stagnancy comes a lack of adaptation and over time an aging membership that cannot support everything that SABR does and strives to pursue. I think the Board can do several things to try to improve membership growth. As noted above some growth can come from the SABR-MLB partnership as well as strengthening all of the local chapters so everyone feels welcome and accepted. From an organizational standpoint many younger people are not as financially solvent so I think that employing a "junior membership" price for those under the age of 30 would remove one barrier to entry for younger members. This addition plus continuing to promote the college and high school SABR groups could provide an easy transition from a high school or college student who pays very little to be a member, to a higher, but not full rate to keep them involved as they are starting out in their career paths, then increasing that rate once they are fully involved in SABR. Another way that SABR can increase membership is by improving its outreach and public-facing promotions. So much of what SABR does is only known by SABR members so by starting at the grassroots level of the local chapters SABR should promote what the organization is and how it can provide what each individual wants from the organization. It needs to be clear that SABR can provide a member fun, historical research, modern day research, academic pursuits, and really what they need to pursue their interests. As noted above, this message is sometimes lost at the local level where chapters are themselves stagnant. Once the chapters are more consistent, we can start reaching non-members at the local level through community service, press from activities the chapter is hosting, social media, open calls for local research conferences, and the like. Only by reaching those who are not already members can we start growing membership again.

Bill Nowlin

The membership count has not remained stagnant. It has declined, and to a significant degree. From a high of around 7,000 members we now work to try to maintain a core of close to 6,000 members. That decline in membership totals has happened over the last 10-12 years. There are indications that the decline may be arrested, and one could argue that the membership count is now more "stable" – which definitely sounds better than "stagnant." There are a number of reasons for this, and I will say that quality is arguably more important than quantity – I believe that we have a lot more active, engaged, and productive members today than a decade ago.

I'm also not sure that interest in baseball is rising. I think there is a healthy interest in baseball, but also real concern about baseball's future – hence all the discussion about pace of play in recent years – the need to speed up games.

The Board has been very concerned about membership levels throughout. That's one of the reasons we kept trying to hire someone to work with chapters. In Board discussions, we strongly believe that stronger chapters are one of our best ways of building membership. We also hope that other initiatives, such as the new podcast program, will help reach a broader audience. A considerable amount of Board energy over the past 15 months has been devoted to the search for a new CEO and the hiring of Scott Bush. The decision to hire a Director of Development represents a step toward providing a stronger base for SABR. We can now begin to work harder to try and strengthen chapters, and to build membership in other ways.

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