

SOCIETY FOR APPLIED ANTHROPOLOGY

January 8, 2008

William Davis
Executive Director
American Anthropological Association


Dear Bill,

We discussed in our meeting in June of last year several possible revisions of the procedures for the Margaret Mead Award which is jointly sponsored by SfAA and the AAA. We agreed to present these suggestions to our separate boards and, upon approval, move to implement them.

I have attached a statement which was reviewed and approved by the Board of the Society at the Fall Meeting on December 1, 2007. This statement incorporates all of the important items on which we agreed. Would you please submit this to the AAA Board at your earliest convenience and for consideration at their next meeting. Would you also notify our Office when the AAA Board has reached a decision.

Please contact me if you have any questions or wish additional information.

Best wishes,


Tom May
Executive Director

Encl.

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SfAA Office

PO Box 2436
Oklahoma City, OK 73101
405.843.5113
fax 405.843.8553
info@sfaa.net
www.sfaa.net

revised 1/8/2008

The Mead Award: Suggestions for Procedural Revisions

The Mead Award was not given in ²⁰⁰⁶~~2007~~ and the leadership of both the SfAA and the AAA agreed to review the principles and procedures under which the competition operates. As a part of this process, the staff of both associations met in June (June 21, 2007) and discussed several pertinent topics.

The statement below summarizes the main themes of the June conversation and represents an attempt to clarify the policies that govern the Competition and the Award. It will be submitted and reviewed by the leadership of both associations.

1. The role of the jurors is absolutely essential to the continued success and prestige of the Mead Competition/Award. Both associations should therefore appoint members to the Committee who have training and experience sufficient to the task. There is a significant time commitment required and Committee members should understand this. The experience and time required precludes the use of students as members of this Committee.
2. The Committee is composed of equal members from both associations with the position of chair alternating annually. Structurally and organizationally, the Committee is advisory to the boards of both associations.
3. An award may be presented annually if the Competition meets the expected standards of quality and when the boards of both associations agree on a choice. The Award may be deferred if both associations do not agree.
4. The current deadline for submissions to the Competition is June 1, and the report from the Committee customarily is submitted in late August. An earlier deadline and Committee report would permit the AAA to publicize the Award prior to their annual meeting. We propose to reach agreement with the AAA by December 31, 2008 on a revised deadline (perhaps March 15). This revised deadline will be effective for the 2009 Competition.
5. The Mead Award, initiated by the Society and now jointly sponsored by both associations, provides an important opportunity for both SfAA and the AAA to expand their exposure to the broader public. We believe that this publicity to the broader public has not yet been fully realized. We agree to work to expand significantly this effort.
6. The Mead Competition was established for young scholars who excelled in using anthropological principles to explain phenomenon to a broader, public audience. In recent years, the submissions have become almost exclusively books. This contrasts markedly to the earlier years of the Competition. Both associations will continue to urge the Mead Committee to give careful and equal consideration to applications based on the original intent of the Award:

"...to a younger scholar for a particular accomplishment such as a book, film, monograph, or service, which interprets anthropological data and principles in ways that make them meaningful and accessible to a broadly concerned public."