



ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

Commission at Halfway Point

JAMES PEACOCK, CHAIR
AD HOC COMMISSION ON THE ENGAGEMENT
OF ANTHROPOLOGY WITH THE US SECURITY &
INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES

A specific question prompted AAA President Alan Goodman and the Executive Board to create the Ad Hoc Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology With the US Security & Intelligence Communities: How should the AAA respond to requests from defense/intelligence organizations to advertise opportunities for jobs and funding in AN?

That question is embedded in many others. A basic one is how anthropology should connect to institutions of the wider society—government, religion, business, the media. Study them, of course, and teach about them—comparatively, critically—but should one work with them, especially if they are perceived as harmful?

History has nurtured ambivalence in anthropology's attitudes about society. The creation of anthropology coincided with the transition from colleges to universities in the US, as a British model gave way to a German in the late nineteenth century. With that transition, an institutional framework emerged for specialized research, and as research universities grew, academics gained some independence from the kinds of social ties sustained by the earlier colleges.

Fieldwork, like other kinds of research in the humanities and social sciences, sometimes nurtured both detachment from and critique of

the status quo, and humanists and social scientists still struggle to discover a proper mode of relationship. The AAA Code of Ethics, adopted in 1998, considered several kinds of engagement, each implying responsibilities. While that code tends toward proscription (Do no harm), the statement formulated by the AAA Committee for Human Rights at about the same time is more prescriptive, instructing: Do good. Specifically, it challenges cultural relativism, suggesting one should not stand aside if one group is attacked by another.



ON ANTHROPOLOGY AND US SECURITY/INTELLIGENCE

With respect to relations with the military/intelligence community, the question of relations between anthropology or anthropologists and institutions becomes focused: these are institutions perceived as doing harm; their target, as someone put it, is human beings at the point of a spear. How could one lend a hand to that spear?

Even here, the question is not simple. As the human rights statement suggests, that spear might defend an attacked group. Furthermore, a complex institution has many aspects; hence one needs to evaluate each. Even if the overall thrust is to do harm, then one still needs to consider whether engagement to diminish that harm is better than detachment or condemna-

tion. AAA ethical guidelines focus primarily on responsibilities to "those one studies," and this is a pillar of anthropological ethics. Further responsibilities are left somewhat vague, giving little guidance to individual anthropologists or the AAA in deciding whether or how to engage with institutions such as military/intelligence.

The commission is now midway in its research and deliberations. Four members are doing ethnographic work on anthropologists actually working with the military/defense and on those institutions. Three members are formulating ethical recommendations.

While collaborating through email and telephone, the group recently had its first opportunity for formal discussion face-to-face and to share ideas with a wider audience. This opportunity was provided by the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University in a meeting arranged by AAA member and Watson Associate Professor Keith Brown, and Paul

Nuti, the AAA staff liaison to the commission. Commission members met and then expanded the discussion in two larger meetings, one with academic colleagues, the other with the wider public. Participants aired questions like those posed above and contributed useful suggestions such as a typology of kinds of engagements by Richard Lobban, of Rhode Island College, which refines the question past dichotomies such as: to engage or not. ■

The commission is now preparing an interim report for the June 1 meeting of the AAA Executive Board. We welcome any suggestions or comments. Please email Paul Nuti (pnuti@aaaanet.org) or James Peacock (peacock@unc.edu).

COSWA Update

KERI VACANTI BRONDO AND CHRISTINA WASSON
COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN
ANTHROPOLOGY

The Committee on the Status of Women in Anthropology (COSWA) is a committee of the AAA whose mission is to monitor gender discrimination. COSWA has engaged in a range of activities geared towards informing the discipline about progress in gender parity within academic employment. However, in recent years COSWA has recognized that less than half of all anthropologists holding a doctoral degree are employed as full-time university professors—a figure reported by the AAA Practicing Advisory Work Group. COSWA has therefore been working to address the challenges faced by practicing anthropologists.

Gender in Practitioners' Lives

In 2004, Wasson began to build bridges between COSWA and the National Association

for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) by speaking to the NAPA Board about COSWA's initiatives. A key "aha" from that meeting was the recognition that neither AAA nor NAPA nor COSWA had collected any information on gender issues in the lives of practicing anthropologists.

Wasson advocated that this lack be redressed along both qualitative and quantitative lines. In term of a qualitative approach, Wasson organized several conference sessions that resulted in *NAPA Bulletin 26*, which presented the auto-ethnographies of 11 women practitioners. With regard to a quantitative direction, Wasson advocated the development of a joint COSWA-NAPA survey on gender and career issues.

In 2006, COSWA stepped up its focus on practitioner issues with two sessions at the AAA meeting. *Critical Intersections: Women Practicing Anthropology Beyond the Ivory Tower* was a double session that celebrated and reprised the *NAPA Bulletin* that had just been published. It was chaired by Christina Wasson and organized by Keri Brondo. The session was fol-

lowed by a workshop that provided advice to students, *Pathways to Becoming a Practicing Anthropologist*, organized by Tara Hefferan and Patricia Wattenmaker.

Furthermore, COSWA members have decided to expand the mission statement to include a focus on practitioners. The committee expects to submit its new mission statement to the executive board for approval in 2007.

Currently, COSWA is working to develop a survey on gender and career issues in the lives of practicing anthropologists. We have a very enthusiastic team of practitioners and applied anthropologists, including Keri Brondo, Annie Claus, Carol Colfer, Micki Iris, Carla Guerrón-Montero, Eve Pinsker and Christina Wasson. In addition to its focus on the gendered dimensions of practicing anthropology, this survey will provide NAPA and the AAA with information about the careers of practicing anthropologists. In this sense it may help the AAA address some of the recommendations

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put forward by the Practicing Advisory Work Group (PAWG).

Other COSWA Initiatives

In 2006, COSWA conducted a survey on academic climate issues, investigating gender disparities in the professional lives of academics. The survey team, led by Wasson, is currently completing analysis of the data. Findings will be shared with the AAA membership in the fall, via a report on the AAA website as well as an article in AN.

We are enhancing our Internet presence as a way of building community. We recently launched a Yahoo! Group, creating a space for women to ask questions or share concerns about issues they may be facing. We encourage AN readers to join this community and begin a conversation thread. To join the group, please visit: <http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/coswa/>.

In addition, we are slowly expanding our web-based tools and links, collecting articles and links on women in academia, sexual harassment, interviewing strategies, feminist interest groups, and other materials of interest. Our committee has committed to begin documenting our activities online to generate a history

of COSWA initiatives. Furthermore, with the speakers' permission, we will post presentations made during COSWA sessions and workshops at the AAA annual meeting, as these presentations often offer invaluable advice.

We are excited to announce that the 2007 AAA COSWA session and workshop will be focused on parenting and professionalism. Oftentimes women and men are faced with choosing between professional development opportunities and familial responsibilities, choices which may impact their advancement and alter their career trajectory. In the session, co-organized by Keri Brondo and Carla Guerrón-Montero, practitioners and academics will use their personal experiences to offer insight into the range of possibilities available to anthropologists seeking a balance between their professional and personal well-being.

The workshop, organized by Tara Hefferan, is designed to provide a relaxed forum for women to come together, connect with one another and share their stories. Barbara Rose Johnston (Center for Political Ecology, UC Santa Cruz) and Rosemary Joyce (UC Berkeley) will facilitate a discussion covering common concerns, coping strategies and suggestions for institutionalizing family friendlier policies within the AAA and beyond. ☐

Please direct comments to Keri Brondo, chair of COSWA at brondoke@msu.edu. COSWA's website: www.aaanet.org/committees/coswa/index.htm.

The AAA Website Redesign Continues

SAM HIMES
DIRECTOR, AAA INFORMATION SYSTEMS

As reported in the December AN, the AAA launched a project in spring of 2006 to redesign its website. Member responses to the survey conducted by the AAA in 2005 made it clear that the association's website would benefit from a new look and feel, improved organization of content and navigation to information sought, as well as enhanced functionality. The aim of such improvements is not only to better facilitate communication among and between anthropologists but to better communicate to the public what anthropologists do.

Given the scope of the undertaking, the AAA hired Cooper Consulting Inc to refine the association's requirements for the project for an RFP that was released in July 2006. The consultants assisted a working group of AAA staff in analyzing the five responses to the RFP. The working group looked for a vendor that not only understood the goals of the project, but was also interested in understanding members' needs and working to meet those needs in the redesign.

The AAA selected Fig Leaf Software (FLS) for the project, in part because of their reputa-

tion for redesigning nonprofit, government and association websites. Fig Leaf's plan for redesigning the website consists of nine phases. In January, they began working with the AAA in gathering information to help their designer draft an architecture and visual direction for the site.

Several extensive meetings were held between Fig Leaf's creative staff and the AAA working group in an effort to identify key elements for the new website. As a result a site map and technical brief for the new site were created to provide a structural foundation to construct mock-ups of what the new website would look like. In the near future, AAA expects to begin working with Fig Leaf in creating HTML templates for the site. Throughout this process the working group and a review panel of knowledgeable members and representative leaders are providing feedback and guidance to Fig Leaf's design and technical staff.

AAA expects to go live with the new site to members and the public in late 2007 or early 2008. All members are encouraged to visit our project status web pages, located at www.aaanet.org/webredesign to keep abreast of the ongoing developments. ☐