

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT

## Where Does the Money Come From?

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NSF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY PROGRAM

In Feb 2006, the director of the Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences Division suggested that I watch the NSF "budget rollout." Curious, I followed her upstairs to a handsome boardroom on the executive 12th floor. There, by video relay, we witnessed NSF Director Ardent L Bement Jr (a materials engineer) go through an orchestrated presentation of the upcoming year's budget request to Congress. The slides were gorgeous and the speech impeccable, but the discussion of Advancing the Frontier, Providing World-Class Facilities and Infrastructure, and Broadening Participation in the Science and Engineering Enterprise programs, seemed to me remarkably remote from the cultural anthropology program.

### Hidden Opportunities

I was wrong. That PR-friendly rubric was an umbrella for a multitude of programs that supported opportunities for anthropologists. The Advancing the Frontier program included money for Science Metrics, which became the Science of Science and Innovation Policy Program to encourage research on how scientists work and make discoveries. The first competition was last spring. Anthropologist Chris McCarty (U Florida) received a grant to study networking among academic and nonacademic researchers. The Broadening Participation program continued support

for the Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), which helps researchers based in states that receive less-than-average federal research money. Anthropologist Thomas Gregor (Vanderbilt U) is continuing his research among the Mehinaku in the Brazilian Amazon partially with EPSCoR funding because Tennessee has been designated an EPSCoR state. (Does your state qualify? Put EPSCoR into the search box on [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov) to see.)

### How Does the Budget Process Work?

NSF is an independent agency; the NSF director reports directly to the president, rather than being part of a department. It is funded directly by Congress, from whose perspective NSF is a mechanism to support basic research in science and engineering. The budget request that Bement presented that Feb day was for \$6.02 billion. After review and public hearings by budget, authorization and appropriations committees in both houses, a compromise conference bill was passed by each, and then signed by the president. It authorized \$5 billion, less than requested, but a 6 percent increase nevertheless.

### Where Do the Specific Requests Come From?

As it turns out, the NSF budget request is a carefully constructed edifice that rests on a foundation of considerable grassroots, science-promoting efforts by program officers and directors. In a nutshell, we look for research needs, on the one

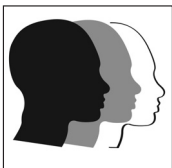
hand, and Congressional preoccupations, on the other hand, and make the former to speak to the latter in support of NSF funding. This dauntingly complicated but utterly fascinating endeavor begins years before the fancy presentations.

Space permits but one example. First, remember that the anthropology programs are in the Directorate of Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE). SBE is currently led by linguist David Lightfoot, who regularly initiates discussions about new directions in social science. Over the past year, I have witnessed fascinating discussions about complexity science (complex adaptive systems, agent based modeling and related areas) and social research. Quite a number of anthropologists and archaeologists are now doing such research. The SBE discussions, which included workshops and conference calls with researchers, have had two outcomes so far. First, the recently announced foundation-wide program Cyber-Enabled Discovery and Innovation (CDI) came to include as one of its focal areas

### GATEWAY TO NSF

Understanding Complexity in Natural, Built and Social Systems. This program is aimed primarily at interdisciplinary teams using computers to analyze large datasets. Second, in a more exploratory mode Dr. Lightfoot has just published a Dear Colleague Letter encouraging social scientists interested in complexity to submit proposals to NSF's regular program competitions (NSF 08-014 at [www.nsf.gov](http://www.nsf.gov)). If the anticipated interest materializes, new funding opportunities for complexity science may appear in coming budgets. Note, however, that they undoubtedly will be disguised by a generic label that appears as misleadingly irrelevant to anthropologists as the Advancing the Frontier program did to me two years ago.

This small example represents similar conversations taking place throughout the foundation. Small in relation to the whole, together they help NSF stay current and funded, and provide hidden opportunities for anthropologists. As always, I am pleased to help you find them. ■



### PROFILES IN PRACTICE

*On the recommendation of the Practicing Anthropology Work Group, in March 2007 AN launched a series of Practitioner Profiles to illustrate the work that practicing anthropologists currently do. Here, Shirley Fiske profiles Jeffrey Altschul, founder and board chairman of the cultural resource management firm Statistical Research Inc.*

## Changing the Face of CRM

SHIRLEY FISKE  
PROFILES IN PRACTICE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Statistical Research Inc (SRI) is one of the largest cultural resource management (CRM) service firms in the Americas, if not in the world ([www.sricrm.com](http://www.sricrm.com)). With over 175 employees and eight offices in North America, the firm has 28 anthropologists with PhDs, 50 with mas-

ters degrees and 62 with bachelors degrees in anthropology or a related discipline. SRI was recently awarded a \$1.1 million Engineering Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP) grant to integrate the predictive modeling of archaeological site location into cultural resource compliance programs at Department of Defense (DoD) installations nationwide, building on three prior grants from the Legacy Re-

source Management Program in the DoD.

Jeffrey Altschul is Chairman of the Board of SRI, which has forged a unique niche in CRM consulting that is changing the face of the way CRM compliance is undertaken. I spoke with Jeff by phone from his home in Tucson. Jeff is also currently the President of the Register of Professional Archaeologists (RPA). The register, founded in 1998, is a voluntary listing of archaeologists who meet specific educational and experience require-

*See Profiles in Practice on page 42*

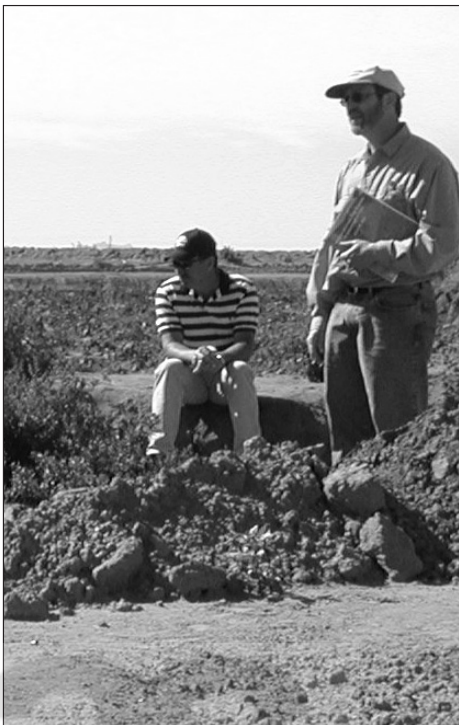
## Profiles in Practice

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ments and agree to abide by set code of conduct and standards of research performance. AAA is one of the sponsoring organizations of the Register.

### From Graduate School to Heading One of the Biggest CRM Firms in the World

While in graduate school at Brandeis, Jeff fully expected he would become a professor. A confluence of factors—Debbie going to graduate school in Tulane, a positive experience with CRM in Louisiana, the paucity of academic jobs for archaeologists—convinced him he could make a career of CRM. When his father died early, they made a bold decision to strike out for Tucson to build a quantitative, broadly based social survey firm. The only problem was, “You can’t have a business where no one wants to buy your services—there was no market for statistical analysis of social science.” So he turned to his background in CRM. Jeff and Debbie spent years building the business. Their beginnings were not auspicious. Jeff wrote 17 straight losing proposals and SRI found itself “on the verge of going under,” facing stiff competition in a region (Arizona) full of well-established CRM firms closely connected with universities and museums. However, California was a different market. SRI secured its first job with the US Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District



Jeffrey Altschul (standing, R) on a archaeological site visit on the Gila River, AZ. Photo courtesy Statistical Research, Inc

in 1984; in more than 23 years, SRI has never lost a contract as a prime contractor with the agency. It would be 1986, three years after they started, before Jeff and Debbie would win a major contract in Arizona.

### Salaries

“We’re competitive,” Jeff stated, “We have to pay people adequately because there’s a labor shortage. There simply aren’t enough archaeologists. Salaries have gone up across the board.” For federal contracts, SRI is bound by the Service Contract Act and pays the crew the prevailing wage of the county (varies from \$12 to \$20/hr). For state and private jobs, they pay what the market demands. They hire crew chiefs, project directors and principal investigators (PIs). The salary of a PI with an MA, MS or PhD varies from \$50,000 to \$100,000 or more depending on experience and other factors.

### Developing a Niche and Reputation

“I wish I could say it was a strategic business decision, but it wasn’t. I always wanted to work on interesting things, to go beyond descriptive statements about the past, to investigate important research questions.” SRI became known for “academic” high quality work, not typical for a CRM firm. Jeff explained that CRM work is typically compliance driven, the goal being to produce a report that allows the client to meet the requirements of the law in the least expensive and least time consuming way. The SRI philosophy is to do what is right for the resource—to ask the right questions, to find the right balance between development and historic preservation. SRI became known as the group that was brought in to handle a situation after a developer hired a CRM firm cheap and got antidevelopment or Native American groups upset. “We’re very good ‘insurance,’” Jeff related, “when a developer is calculating their risk, and when they see opponents to their project and find they are exposed on the historic preservation end.” SRI became known as doing high-end, high-quality work. This is what drove them to be one of the largest CRM firms in the US.

### Growing a Firm

SRI worked on successively bigger and bigger projects including highway and reservoir projects. To do these projects, a larger staff was needed. As SRI developed a good reputation, it was successful in getting successively larger jobs. The infrastructure to perform archaeological investigations required capital investment and that meant marketing the firm to a bank, most of whom rejected SRI. The firm’s original investment funds came from the sale of Jeff and Debbie’s first house. Eventually SRI received a line of credit that helped fund its first big projects, and access to capital has improved since then.

### Changing CRM Compliance

When asked whether SRI faced ethical or professional issues working for the military, such as those that anthropology is currently debating,

Jeff noted the irony of coming of age in the 1960s and currently doing *extensive* work for the Department of Defense (DoD). He recognized that his views have changed over time and exposure and stated, “Our best client is the military. The military has tremendous land holdings in the west; they have the funding to put behind their contracts (compared to other federal agencies); they don’t allow public access to their lands; and consequently, the archaeological resources on their holdings are generally in excellent shape and exciting to work on.” He also noted an important change in the military’s attitude from a sense of legal exemption in the 1970s to a commitment to having a stellar CRM program.

SRI is hoping to change the way the military views historic preservation and complies with the law. I asked whether the result of DoD grants would be that the military is be exempted from site-by-site analysis, and Jeff walked me through the question: “If an installation is tasked to open a tank range, managers generally will look at everything. They will survey the entire area and evaluate *all* sites. It doesn’t matter if the adjacent area has already been studied. This has been their course of action for more than 30 years. Out of 41 million acres, they have surveyed 12 million. As an archaeologist, one has to ask if this makes any sense. Are we learning new aspects of human behavior commensurate with the expense?”

The kind of questions that frame the grant are: “Where do people situate themselves on a landscape?” and “Can we use prior information to make good decisions about what other areas need to be surveyed and what types of sites need to be excavated?” SRI hopes to develop the concept of archaeological site “banks” where the military *doesn’t* dig and where sites are preserved. Banks then become part of the equation about where to put training areas and how much archaeology needs to be performed in developing them. “We also want to advance stewardship, which means not only preserving sites but studying important archaeological sites regardless of their endangered status.” SRI is trying to create a framework and tools so that archaeologists at the installation can “use modeling as a way to engage the stakeholders: Native Americans, the public, the military. ...” He explained, “It’s not archaeologists deciding where to dig, but everybody has a say in these decisions. It stems from the belief that history is a social process and people have different reasons for saving places, all of which are valid.”

### Involving Professional Archaeologists and Practitioners in AAA

As a professional archaeologist, what Jeff wants from AAA is support in learning how to continually become a better anthropologist—how to put theory and methods in a context he can use. He finds networking opportunities to be stimulating and valuable, something AAA could facilitate. He suggests that AAA could improve its public policy and lobbying efforts, and act as a strong public ally for historic preservation. ■