

SOLGA Annual Report 2003
Prepared January 2004

SOLGA, the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists, was founded in 1978 and became an official AAA section in 1998. With a current membership of more than 250, SOLGA is continuing its maturation as a AAA section committed to:

- * Facilitating communications among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and other queer anthropologists and between queer anthropologists and queer scholars in other fields;
- * Encouraging and supporting anthropological research on sexuality (including homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, and more) and gender in all subfields of the discipline
- * Developing materials for teaching about sexuality and gender topics; and
- * Serving the interests of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and queer anthropologists within the AAA.

SOLGA is co-chaired by two persons of differing gender identities. Deborah Elliston (Binghamton U/SUNY) completed her 2-year term at the 2003 Annual Meeting, and Christine Pettett (Yale U) succeeds her for the next two years; Tom Boellstorff (UC-Irvine) is in the middle of his two-year term. In addition to these individuals, other continuing SOLGA Board members include former Co-Chair Deborah Elliston (Binghamton U/SUNY); Todd White (U Southern California), Secretary/Treasurer; Ellen Lewin (U Iowa), chair of the Payne Student Prize Committee; Rudi Gaudio (Purchase U/SUNY), chair of the Benedict Prize Committee; Jeff Maskovsky (Queens College/CUNY) and Christa Craven (American U), 2004 Program Co-Editors; Barbara West (U of the Pacific), Newsletter Editor; and Ken Rowe (California Institute of Integral Studies), Student Board Member. C. Todd White also manages the SOLGA website, located at www.solga.org.

For the 2003 AAA Meetings, David Valentine (Sarah Lawrence C) and Christa Craven (American U) served as Program Co-Editors helping to put together fabulous sessions under SOLGA's sponsoship. The two invited sessions SOLGA sponsored at the meetings were "25 Years of ARGOH/SOLGA: From the Margins (Almost) to the Center" (organizers Ellen Lewin & William Leap) and "Configurations of Conflict and Peace: Sexualities, Genders, and the Institution" (organizer, Joshua Linford-Steinfeld). SOLGA also reviewed and sponsored the following volunteered sessions:

"Out in the World: The Role of Eros in the Tourism of Sexual Minorities" (organizer, Ralph Bolton), "Risk and Practice: HIV/AIDS in a Globalized World" (chair: Lee M. Kochens), "Reproduction Revisited: Feminist Social Theory and New Directions in the Nature/Culture Debate" (Organizer: Ramona Lee Pérez), "Lesbians, Sex Workers, Drug Addicts, Queer Kids, and Gossips, Oh My! The Politics and Ethics of Research on Stigmatized Populations" (Organizer, Karen Nakamura), "Sex Panics: Theorizing the Local and Global" (organizer, Carole Vance), "GLBT Relationships: Cultural Frameworks and Realities" (organizer: Stephen Eyre),

“Still Out in the Field” (organizer, Barbara West), “Intersecting Identities: Sexuality, Gender, Race, Class, Nation...” (chair: Moshe Shokeid), and “Queer Policy in the Bedroom: Some Anthropological Insights Into Sexual Policy and Politics” (organizers, Christine Pettett & Alyssa Cymene Howe). In addition, the panel “Teaching Sex and Sexuality Issues in the Classroom” (organizers, Michael Hernandez and Connie Hoffman) was held as a SOLGA special event.

SOLGA sponsors two annual prize competitions. Awarded annually in two categories (a single author text and an edited volume), the Ruth Benedict Prize recognizes outstanding scholarship that addresses lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer subjects from anthropological perspectives. In addition, SOLGA awards the Kenneth Payne Prize, a cash grant award to a student for a paper of exceptional merit. The 2003 Benedict Prize was awarded to Martin Manalansan (U Illinois, Urbana/Champaign) for *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003). The 2003 Payne Prize was awarded to Susan Bullington (U of Minnesota) for her paper entitled “The ‘Devil Dean’ of Cape Town: Race, Sexuality and the Limits of Nation in Contemporary South Africa” (full text available on the SOLGA website). Our 2003 fundraiser for the Payne Prize fund yielded \$3,255.00.

SOLGA also maintains a Mentoring File that aims to provide a LGBTQ scholarly mentoring network for undergraduate and graduate students. In 2002, management of the Mentoring File passed from the File’s founder, Christa Craven (American U) to Diana Pash (UCLA). The Mentoring File is available on the web at the SOLGA website.

SOLGA’s current work focuses on several areas: 1) building a solid organizational infrastructure; 2) enhancing networks of communication, support, and mentoring among members and allies; and 3) providing a vehicle for the scholarly pursuits of SOLGA members and others engaging LGBTQ scholarship and activism through, for example, SOLGA’s 2003 co-sponsorship of a conference with the Society for the Anthropology of North America and its sponsoring a broad range of scholarly programs related to LGBTQ research at the annual anthropology meetings.

A fourth focus of SOLGA’s current work, consistent with the section’s mission, is monitoring and improving the status of LGBTQ anthropologists within our discipline. During the past year, SOLGA’s work on issues of professional concern to LGBTQ anthropologists has included (1) working with the AAA Executive Board on the policy of not holding meetings in (anti-)sodomy states; (2) revising language on employment non-discrimination in ads placed in the *Anthropology Newsletter*; and (3) developing questions that will address “chilly climate” issues for LGBTQ anthropologists and in teaching and research on LGBTQ subjects.

(1) The Executive Board at its November 2002 meeting, in response to a motion SOLGA brought before the Board in 2001 and acting on proposals SOLGA presented to the Board in 2002 (see SOLGA’s 2002 Annual Report for details), the AAA Executive Board voted to bar future AAA meetings from taking place in any state that has a sodomy law in place at the time of planning and contracting for the meeting. In June 2003, the *Lawrence vs. Texas* Supreme Court decision declared sodomy laws unconstitutional pursuant to privacy protections. While pleased with the *Lawrence vs. Texas* decision, SOLGA shares with the AAA Executive Board concerns about various symbolic attempts to reinstate anti-sodomy laws in certain state legislatures. As a result, SOLGA supports the AAA Executive Board’s decision

to keep its policy of not holding meetings in “anti-sodomy states” in effect for the time being.

(2) In 2003, SOLGA worked with Richard Thomas of the AAA Placement Office to revise the non-discrimination language used by employers advertising open positions in the *Anthropology Newsletter*. Employers listing placement ads in the Newsletter have been required to state (a) whether the employer has in place a policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation/preference and gender identity/expression, and (b) whether the employer offers employment benefits to domestic partners of its employees. (The Executive Board adopted the SOLGA-proposed policy requiring such statements in 1999; see SOLGA’s 2002 Annual Report for details.) A 2002 review of the policy’s effectiveness, however, had determined that the availability of domestic partner benefits seemed to vary widely (whereas almost all employers had a non-discrimination policy in place) and that the language of the statements was confusing to many employers, resulting in “false positives” and “false negatives.” In 2003, the language confusion problem was addressed through the creation of a menu (available on line) that disaggregated the various components of the policy questions. Thomas reported at the November 2003 SOLGA business meeting that confusion about the language is no longer a problem for employers.

(3) In keeping with the findings of the 1999 COLGIA (Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Issues in Anthropology) report, SOLGA has for several years aimed to contribute to the AAA Departmental Survey in the form of developing questions relating to “chilly climate issues” in our discipline: questions that will clarify the status of LGBTQ anthropologists in anthropology departments, and the status of research and teaching on LGBTQ subjects. While the Survey has been delayed by several years, it is set to go forward in 2004, and SOLGA has forwarded the following three questions for inclusion:

(a) Has your department conducted any hiring searches in the last 5 years in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer anthropology was identified as a primary focus of the search?

(b) If your department has a Ph.D.-granting program: How many PhD degrees has your department awarded within the last 5 years for research on a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer topic?

(c) In the past three years, have you had any regular course offerings in which 50% or more of the course content has concerned lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or queer topics? If so, how many undergraduate course(s) per year? How many graduate course(s) per year?

As has been the case with many other AAA sections, in 2003 the SOLGA Board and membership have also been considering the changes to AAA-sponsored publications that will result from the implementation of AnthroSource. While AnthroSource will make anthropological publications more widely and more efficiently accessible, the move to virtual publication and its attendant costs pose some financial hurdles for the small and less formal publications of sections like SOLGA. At the fall 2003 business meeting, the SOLGA membership voted to continue publishing the section’s biannual newsletter, the *SOLGAN*, under the

direction of C. Todd White (U Southern California) for at least one more year. The membership will consider the future feasibility of continuing to publish the newsletter in discussions over the SOLGA listserv and at the 2004 SOLGA Business Meeting.

SOLGA continues to be concerned about homophobia and discrimination against gendered “others,” and is actively working to broaden networks across AAA sections around lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and queer issues. SOLGA members actively address issues of professional concern to LGBTQ anthropologists at the association level, for example, by serving in elected and appointed positions and offices of the AAA: William Beeman (Brown U) is a member of the Executive Board; Scott Morgensen (Macalester C) and Karen Nakamura (Macalester C) serve as SOLGA Liaisons to the Committee on Ethics (Evelyn Blackwood (Purdue U) was a liaison to the Committee on Ethics up to November 2003); Karen Nakamura (Macalester C) also serves on the Long-Range Planning Committee; Evelyn Blackwood (Purdue U) serves on the Executive Board of the Association for Feminist Anthropology; Doug Feldman (SUNY Brockport) serves on the Nominating Committee; and David Valentine (Sarah Lawrence C) serves on the Committee for Human Rights. Frank Proschan (Smithsonian) completed his service as Section Assembly Convenor and Ex-Officio Executive Board Member at the end of the 2003 meetings.

Finally, and centrally to its mission, SOLGA works to provide a network of support for LGBTQ members of the AAA. By 2003 SOLGA’s vehicles for communicating with its core constituency as well as with allies throughout the discipline and beyond included: the SOLGA website (www.solga.org), the section listserv (SOLGA-L@american.edu), and a monthly column in the *Anthropology Newsletter*. Currently, the website hosts the Mentoring File and provides information on SOLGA’s history, its By-Laws and current officers, the minutes of past business meetings, and other information and resources useful to SOLGA’s current and prospective members as well as links to websites of interest. Through the SOLGA website, the SOLGA listserv, the SOLGA *Newsletter* column, SOLGA-sponsored sessions at the annual AAA meetings, and proactive work on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer topics, SOLGA maintains an active life in the AAA.