

Annual Report: Culture and Anthropology Section 2005

1. Accomplishments during the period.

1.a. Membership declined more or less steadily from 291 to 258, November to November. In October, 2005 we began a small membership campaign with a letter from the President to the listserv pointing out the problem, arguing the benefits for membership with and without consideration of the journal *Culture and Agriculture*, and inviting discussion and suggestions. The suggestions mainly revolved around providing more services to members, and more active recruiting of new members. One aspect of the services was an expanded website. One aspect of recruiting was mentoring, particularly of young people just starting in the profession.

1.b. Finances. Like most of the other sections, our finances were a cause of continuing concern. The journal, with the costs of Anthroserve, seemed to us clearly unsustainable so we abandoned the idea of sending hard copies to members. We did so with great misgiving however, and as an interim measure (until we see what the members' reaction is the purely electronic version when it is finally available of Anthroserve) have decided to send out CD versions. This is being done by the Treasurer, Kate Sullivan, with family labor. Starting balances reported to us by the AAA were 17,808.63. Revenues as of the January report (dated November 30) were 8,002.05. Expenses were 11,879.39, so the balance was \$13,931.29. This is clearly not sustainable. There were no revenues from Anthroserve; everything was from membership. We are also very unhappy with our lack of control of expenses (and budget categories).

1.c. Meeting Activities. There were eight panels in the November meetings reviewed by the Culture and Agriculture Section. Of these, three arose from discussions in the Culture and Agriculture Business meeting at the 2003 meetings and had originally been planned for the 2004 meeting. One was assembled out of individual papers by the C & A program coordinator, Lisa Markowitz, and two were independently submitted as complete panels. Scheduling was generally good; only two panels were in conflict with other panels or functions. The main conflict was on Friday morning, between a volunteered panel and a triple panel organized partly on the basis of discussions in previous meetings titled **Transforming** Food and Culture through Globalization: Food Studies in Anthropology. All the panels were well attended. The Transforming Food and Culture panel was in a room seating perhaps 80, which was about half full, sometimes more. The other panels were in smaller rooms, which were usually nearly full.

The Business meeting, Thursday evening, was mainly devoted to the impact of Anthroserve on our finances and the declining membership—and whether they two issues were related. The consensus seemed to be that they were; that with open access to Anthroserve coupled with the increasing cost of AAA dues, members drop sections. We

did, however, also discuss other ways to boost membership, carrying on the discussion from the listserv noted above. It was agreed that members would try to set up some sort of mentoring service, using the website. Also, since all 35 of our institutional subscribers have dropped their subscriptions to Culture & Agriculture, a few members volunteered to work with Kate Sullivan to telephone them to see what their reasons were.

Also at the business meeting, it was agreed that we would elect a President Elect in 2006 to serve a two-year term. We have been electing the President elect in the off-year to serve a one-year term. The by-laws are not absolutely specific, but since they say *all* terms are two years, and this would seem to include the President-Elect, no motion appeared to be called for to amend the bylaws. The members simply agreed without dissent that a two-year term was what they appeared to envision.

The allotted hour was not enough time to complete the discussion. Most importantly, we could not have a full discussion of possible programs for 2006, so we agreed to continue the discussion on the listserv. For 2006, we will ask to follow it with a cash bar or some such social event that we can run over into.

1.d. Website development. The website has been expanded. Previously, it was essentially the website of the journal Culture and Agriculture. Now we have a link to a second home page for the section. This has links to the letter from the president on why one should be a member, a list of all members, a page of links to resources, and the current officers with contact information. We will do more.

1.e. There were no outreach efforts apart from the meetings and website.

1.f. No changes in the bylaws, but we are very concerned about our relations to AAA staff and want some changes there—some flexibility in the way we get our financial reports and some understandings about income and withdrawals for Anthroserve or other AAA functions.

2. Future plans or activities. Apart from planning the 2006 meetings program, our main concerns are the transition of editorship to Culture & Agriculture when James McDonald leaves, which he expects to do at the end of 2006, and the similar but smaller problem of bringing in more people to work with Barbara Dilly on the Newsletter column, with a similar transition in view. Barbara has now served three terms. It was agreed at the business meeting that the best way to handle journal problem would be to delegate more to the editorial board now, and hope that that would evolve into a new editorship—perhaps with more widely shared responsibilities. The solution for the Newsletter column was similar. Two individuals at the meeting volunteered to work with Barbara and, again, see what developed. Otherwise, it is difficult to look past the uncertainties revolving around the impact of Anthroserve.

3. Other items. The most important concern we have is finding ways to increase services to members to compensate for the loss of the incentive to pay dues provided by access to Culture & Agriculture. We appreciate, and want, the wider circulation and access that

Anthroserve will provide, but it would be pointless if the end result is that the journal dies because the Section goes out of business. To assure that this does not happen, we will work to increase recruitment activities, but we also believe that the AAA as a whole has to be prepared to reevaluate its internal membership, dues, and financial policies. On the one hand, from the point of view of the organization of the meetings, we are becoming more and more of a federation than a single society. On the other hand, however, from the point of view of our publications, we are being more and more of a conglomerate selling or offering a package of services. To do this effectively we need better articulation with the other sections and with the AAA board. President Leaf reported on the current AAA efforts to rethink our financial and governance structures. We are very interested in being kept abreast of these developments, and in being consulted as they proceed.

Submitted 6 Feb 06

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Murray J Leaf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with some loops and flourishes.

Murray J Leaf
President, Culture and Agriculture