

Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

2005 Annual Report

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Membership and Dues

The January 10, 2006 report from the AAA stated that SAC has 111 regular, 83 student, 4 Retired, 11 Associate, 1 Joint, 1 Life, and 9 International members, for a total of 224. These figures are very similar to those from one year previously. There were also 1 Individual and 15 Institutional subscribers to our journal.

To increase our member numbers (a stated goal of the previous year), the SAC Executive Board voted to extend our special "Get to Know SAC" dues rate through December 31, 2005 (it was set to expire on April 30, 2005). This decision came about in part because of the San Francisco→Atlanta move, as a result of which we lost an important opportunity to recruit members.

The SAC brochure has been redesigned in a manner that makes it easily possible to change information about upcoming conferences and other news. In 2006, we printed 6,000 brochures, intending to do a mass mailing to several AAA Sections to both notify members of our 2005 Distinguished Lecturer (A.F.C. Wallace) as well as our upcoming spring meetings. Our planning hit a roadblock when we were informed by AAA staff that we were not allowed to purchase the mailing lists of other Sections without prior approval by the heads of those Sections. While this procedure is understandable, we were deeply disappointed because this policy was not made known to us when we first contacted the AAA to inquire about the steps we needed to take to purchase mailing lists. Since our mailing was intended to arrive in members' mailboxes during the first 1-2 weeks of the new academic year, we had planned to do all of the envelop stuffing, addressing, etc. the first two weeks of August. But because several Section Heads did not respond to our request to purchase their lists in a timely manner, this mailing was staggered out over a course of over 3 months, and was not completed until mid-January 2006. This mix-up has led to greater clarity in AAA policies regarding mailing list purchases, and will consequently not be an issue in the future. However, it does provide a cogent example of the types of hindrances the AAA can place in the way of Sections.

In spite of all this activity, our member numbers have changed little.

Communication with Members

To keep our members current on Section activities, the SAC President sent out a printed letter to all members in November 2005 providing information about SAC, its meetings, publication and website, and other information. In addition, periodic emails containing information and announcements are sent to our members.

Finances

The Jan. 10, 2006 Statement of Net Assets showed that as of Nov. 30, 2005, SAC had Net Assets of \$25,332.19. This figure is only nominally below the Net Assets at the beginning of 2005 (\$26,918.33).

Elections

In the spring 2005 elections, Lourdes Giordani, Diane Hardgrave, Antonia Mills, and Mark Shekoyan were elected to the Executive Committee, all for two year terms.

AAA Annual Meetings

The AAA Meetings in Washington featured the following panels invited by or sponsored by SAC:

- Collective Remembering and Forgetting: Contemplating Memory and Amnesia and the Spectrality of the Past
- Asceticism and Its Malcontents – A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Asceticism in Theory and Practice
- Psychedelic Research: From High Desert to Megalopolis
- Cults, Rituals And Child Abuse: A Multidisciplinary Approach
- Spiritual Transformation, Healing and Altruism
- Consciousness at the Periphery

Distinguished Lecture and Awards

The SAC 2005 Distinguished Lecture on “The Consciousness of Time” was presented by Anthony F.C. Wallace on Friday, December 2. In spite of mass mailings announcing the lecture as well as on-site posters, only about 70 people attended the lecture. Wallace, a former AAA President, was scheduled at the same time as the Distinguished Speakers of two other Sections. For this reason, the AAA may wish to consider spacing out the Distinguished Lectures of its Sections over all of the days of the Annual Meeting.

Because of the publication history of *Anthropology of Consciousness* during the last two years, the award for best paper for both 2004 and 2005 will be announced at the 2006 meetings.

Spring Meeting

SAC held its annual spring meeting in Amherst, MA from April 13-17, 2005, with the theme: “Expressions of Consciousness”. Approximately 50 people attended the conference, which was our first on the East Coast. The conference continued our tradition of papers during the day and experiential events in the evening.

SAC Web site

SAC continues to maintain a rather large web site that includes several .pdf copies of the journal that preceded *Anthropology of Consciousness* as well as several “Occasional Papers” that may be downloaded by anyone. The web site is also used to post registration and proposal forms for the spring meeting, and for the preliminary program when it becomes available. We are considering several enhancements to the site that may be made available only to members as a way to offer our members benefits in addition to our journal (which is now available on-line on AnthroSource and hence accessible to all AAA members).

Anthropology of Consciousness

Our journal, *Anthropology of Consciousness*, completed the transition to production through the University of California Press in 2006. As part of this process, the journal was redesigned, and now has a very professional look. Due to the hard work of the editorial team, both the two issues of Volume 15 (2004) and the two issues of Volume 16 (2005) appeared in 2005. With this, *AoC* is now completely on schedule again. In addition, work on Volume 17(1) is almost completed.

In addition, issue 16(2) included our first ad by a publisher. It is hoped that we can continue this and build ad content as time goes by.

FUTURE PLANS

The Spring 2006 meeting will be held at the Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, California, from April 12-16, 2006. Conference theme is: “So What? Now What? – The Anthropology of Consciousness Responds to a World in Crisis”. This conference will be the first in several years to take place in a retreat setting.

The Spring 2007 meeting will take place from April 4-7, 2007 at the Handlery Hotel in San Diego, California. The conference theme has not yet been determined.

CONCERNS

SAC is very concerned about membership numbers. In spite of a massive advertising push and our special “Get to Know SAC” introductory rate, our member numbers remain at essentially the same level as a year before.

Informal discussions between the SAC President and other Section heads at the Section Assembly in Washington, D.C. indicate that these concerns are shared by other sections. As a consequence, **we would like to ask the AAA to consider introducing a new member category** (perhaps “Affiliate Member”) that would allow people outside of the AAA to join an individual Section without joining the AAA. Affiliate Members would receive print copies of the Section publication and would enjoy member rates at the annual Section meetings, but would not be allowed to attend the AAA meetings, nor hold Section Office.

This or some similar step is necessary to allow Sections to grow without raiding the members of other Sections.

We are also concerned about the burdens that recent AAA decisions have placed on AAA staff. Although our interactions with AAA staff are not always as smooth and effortless as we would wish (see “Membership and Dues”, above), it is apparent that staff morale is low and that staff have received a great deal of criticism because of the move to Atlanta and the shift to AnthroSource (with the associated uncertainties this has meant for individual Sections).

SAC supports some type of recognition system over and above that which may be currently in place for recognizing and honoring the hard work and efforts of AAA staff.

Submitted by John Baker, President, on January 23, 2006

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