

# Society for the Anthropology of Work Annual Report for 2005

## *1. Accomplishments during the period covered*

### *A. Membership numbers*

There were 280 members as of October 2005 (last tally available)

The membership numbers fluctuated between 280 and 300 during the year. There has been a gradual membership erosion over several years. This may be attributed in part to not meeting a regular publication schedule for the journal. Over the last year, the beginning of a concerted outreach effort probably was offset by the fact that few members could participate in the 2004 annual meeting. The main factors affecting membership seem to be participation, interaction, flow of information, and monetary costs—matters, apparently transcending this particular section.

### *B. Financial balances*

Overall SAW budget:

|                                 |            |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Net assets at beginning of year | \$8,678.24 |
| Revenues through October        | 7,131.54   |
| Expenses through October        | 2,827.91   |
| Change in net assets            | 4,303.63   |
| Net assets as of end of October | 12,981.87  |

NOTE: Amounts budgeted for the entire year totaled \$8,120.00 for revenues and \$10,830.00 for expenditures

Anthropology of Work Review budget:

|                          |          |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Revenues through October | 522.78   |
| Expenditures             | 3,023.16 |

NOTE: Owing to delays in the publication of issues submitted for publication in June and August, two of the three scheduled issues had not appeared or been charged as of the end of October. It must be stressed that the new editorial team galvanized the production of the journal, submitting materials on schedule and upgrading its quality in various ways, but that the Univ. of Calif. Press was disappointingly inefficient in following through (see item 3B below).

### *C. AAA meeting activities*

A total of six organized session proposals and ten individual paper proposals were submitted to the SAW program editors, and all were accepted by the AAA program committee. Of these, SAW sponsored one invited session alone and shared the sponsorship of two invited sessions with the Society for the Anthropology of North America. The individual papers were presented in two sessions, so the total number of sessions reviewed and/or sponsored was eight.

SAW also held its annual business and board meetings, and executive board representatives participated in meetings of the treasurers, journal editors, program

editors, Section Assembly, section presidents' breakfast, Labor Relations Committee, Understanding Race and Human Variation Committee, and others.

#### ***D. Spring meeting activities***

Not applicable.

#### ***E. Website development***

Website information was completely updated, with changes in the composition of the executive board, a new student representative taking over the Mentor Program, and a more precise specification of the Arensberg Award, Forsythe Prize, and Wolf Prize.

#### ***F. Outreach efforts***

SAW has been collaborating with the Society for North American Anthropology on invited sessions at the annual AAA meeting, the spring SANA meeting, and on responses to issues of public concern.

Members of SAW found themselves in a distinctive position in relation to the hotel strike/lockout that led to the postponement and rescheduling of the 2004 AAA meeting in San Francisco. By holding sessions in a different hotel there as the originally scheduled time, SAW joined with the Council for Anthropology and Education and fragments of other sections in witnessing the labor actions and meeting with labor leaders. Because of this experience and our specialization in work, two SAW members were placed on the newly formed Committee on Labor Relations (see also 3A below).

SAW was approached about a possible merger by the Committee for the Anthropology of Computing and Technology (a committee under the General Anthropology Division). There is a substantial overlap of interests and membership, the two groups co-sponsor the Diana Forsythe Prize, and that group is small and seeking ways to enhance its presence in the AAA. It was decided not to proceed with a merger, but rather encourage members specializing in work and technology to join both groups.

#### ***G. Changes in bylaws or governance structure***

Not applicable,

### ***2. Future plans***

#### ***A. Projects underway***

Mentor program: The program was initiated by one of the student representatives in 2001, continued by that person's successor, and taken over in turn by a new student representative who joined the board in December. She has updated information about current mentors and is soliciting new mentors. Mentoring is particularly apt for SAW, since a self-conscious approach to our own professional practice and employment is fostered by our research interests.

Membership drive: This has become a compelling focus of attention. On the one hand, many potential members already are doing the anthropology of work without being fully aware of it. On the other hand, and more importantly, SAW expenditures have taken a leap upward with the switch to having the University of California Press publish the *Anthropology of Work Review*. Pertinent facts and implications affect other sections and were a topic of discussion at the Section Assembly, in other fora, and among individuals, so they need not burden this report (but see items 3A and 3B). SAW executive board members have pooled their ideas and a multi-pronged recruitment strategy is being implemented. Results will appear in next year's report.

Changes in bylaws or governance structure: Under consideration as ballot items for 2007 are changes in the bylaws (1) to create the office of President-Elect and, correspondingly, reduce the term of Past-President from three years to two; (2) to make the General Editor of the *Anthropology of Work Review* an office appointed by the executive board, as it originally was, rather than an elected position. The rationale for the first is to formalize the preparation for taking office as President and lengthen the learning curve to a full year. The rationale for the second is enable the negotiations required to find a person both capable and willing to assume the tremendous responsibility of inspiring, managing and completing the production of the journal.

### ***B. Collaboration***

SAW will continue to work with the groups mentioned in item 1F and other groups, such as the Society for Economic Anthropology, with which it has collaborated in the past. Especially with the proliferation of sections, committees, etc., arrangements for sharing information and increasing the size and therefore clout of functioning groups become ever more necessary (see also item 3B).

## ***3. Other***

### ***A. Issues for Long Range Planning Committee***

To follow from the remarks under item 1F regarding the 2004 AAA meeting and the formation of a Labor Relations Committee: Major concerns among SAW members—and, for that matter, throughout the AAA—are not only the ethics but also the credibility of professional anthropological practice. Certainly, there always have been anthropologists who espouse scientific and/or other forms of scholarly detachment. Especially through their “work with workers,” however, most members of SAW recognize that such a stance is not economically or politically possible. We unavoidably support the institutions under whose auspices we operate, whether in carrying out fieldwork, teaching, or engaging in other professional and individual activities. Arrangements involving employment, research funding, meetings, and so forth create financial ties and endorsements, whether explicitly or implicitly. The consequences are imminently practical for the functional integrity of the discipline—not to dismiss the sense of moral obligation that is a vocational attribute shared by so many anthropologists. For all these reasons, and because the anthropology of work entails reflexivity as well as the objectification of its subject matter, this section will continue to contribute and advocate relevant ideas to AAA policy planning.

### ***B. Issues for Executive Board***

There are two related matters to stress at this juncture and in conclusion. One is the shock, especially to small sections, of the implementation of the AnthroSource initiative. The past president of SAW immediately made the executive board aware of the increased journal costs that entering into a contractual agreement with the University of California Press would entail. He wrote a letter in August of 2004 to then-president Brumfiel, emphasizing that our budget surplus would disappear over a short period unless revenues increased. We agreed to proceed, with the decisive consideration being that publication—and perhaps our very existence as a section—probably would not be viable outside of this new regime. The U. of Calif. Press was harsh in (1) requiring that our publication process conform strictly to their procedures, and (2) informing us after we had signed on that, because of the irregular appearance of the journal in recent years, new issues (a) would not be entered into AnthroSource and (b) any decision to do so would not be made until 2008, based on our performance over the intervening period. Making things worse, the next issue submitted in June, with complete materials, was not processed and mailed out until October—they admitted the lapse was theirs.

The second matter, following from the first, is that the AAA staff and AAA sections must honor their interdependence. How often AAA members express their primary identification with one section (or a cluster of sections) and a corresponding alienation from the AAA as a whole! With all due respect for the burdens and accomplishments of the paid staff in the DC-area offices—and these are gratefully acknowledged—we members-at-large serve the organization on a voluntary basis. We do the “cultural production” of research findings, papers for meetings (and their review for inclusion), articles for journals (and their review for inclusion), etc. What individual members and sections (especially small sections) need is an institutional structure that helps us bear the rising financial burdens. Herein lies the survival and success of the AAA.

Elements of one specific and relevant proposal have emerged from discussions among SAW executive board members. Given that section memberships are foundation blocks of the AAA, that multiple section memberships are the means through which individuals participate in the AAA, that the annual dues for these memberships continues to rise, and that affordability is an increasing problem for many individuals, please consider the following proposal: For each additional section that an AAA member joins, the price of the membership of all sections and the AAA as a whole be reduced by 5%. Thus, full price would be paid for membership in the AAA and one section, but for membership in, say, four sections, all would be reduced by 20%. What would be lost in any one payment would be more than offset overall, and incentives would be in place for enhancing the work of the sections—and therefore the AAA as a whole.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jim Weil, President