

Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

2006 Annual Report

STATUS, ACTIVITIES, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Membership and Dues

The November 30, 2006 report from the AAA (the most recent available) stated that SAC has 111 regular, 87 student, 8 Retired, 7 Associate, 1 Joint, 1 Life, 6 International, and 1 Introductory Rate Student member, for a total of 222. There was also 1 Individual subscriber to our journal. The overall membership level is similar to that of the previous year. However, in 2005 we had 15 Professional subscribers, whereas we now have 0. This is likely due to the increased acceptance of AnthroSource. We hope that the revenue that we will be receiving because of AnthroSource will be enough to offset both the losses of the Professional subscriptions and the costs to our Section associated with AnthroSource.

During 2006, our membership numbers ranged from a high of 253 to a low of 222. Past trends indicate that our membership numbers peak around the time of our spring conference, and then valley around the time of the AAA meetings. While the spring peak clearly seems to be related to the outreach and new memberships that result from our spring meetings, at this time I cannot offer an explanation for the reasons for the valleys that occur around November.

Since the number of our members hovers around 250 but is often slightly below this figure, SAC is concerned that we will lose our voting rights in the AAA if some of the organizational changes currently being discussed by the Executive Board (such as the "proportional representation" scheme currently being considered for the Section Assembly election of Executive Board members) are put into place. For this reason, at the 2006 AAA meetings in San Jose, we initiated discussions with several other small sections to pursue a possible AAA by-laws change concerning the minimum number of members that are necessary for a Section to have voting rights within the AAA.

Communication with Members

To keep our members current on Section activities, the SAC President sent out a printed letter to all members in September 2006. This letter contained information about SAC-sponsored sessions and events in San Jose and a Call for Papers for our upcoming 2007 Spring Meeting in San Diego. It also contained announcements about searches to fill several open positions: a new Editor for our journal, *Anthropology of Consciousness*; a new Contributing Editor for our column in the *Anthropology Newsletter*, and a new Webmaster.

Other periodic emails were also sent out, but because our membership email list is incomplete, these do not reach as wide an audience. It is for this reason that the President sends out periodic mailings.

At the San Jose meetings, Lawrence McBride was appointed to serve as the *Anthropology Newsletter* Column Editor, replacing Constantine Hriskos, who had held the position for years. Lawrence will now be responsible for representing SAC to the other members of the AAA through the *AN*.

Finances

The November 30, 2006 Statement of Net Assets showed that as of that date, SAC had Net Assets of \$18,372.24. This figure is below the Net Assets at the beginning of 2005 (\$20,273.25), indicating a drop in our net assets of \$1901.01 from the beginning of the year. This drop appears to be due to the increased costs of journal production (including AnthroSource) and reduced revenues as compared to previous years. We hope that this trend will not continue.

As submitted, our 2007 budget is a little over \$1000 in the red. The 2007 budget was cut as much as possible in an attempt to create a balanced budget, but the projected expenses for AnthroSource are so high and the revenues so far below projections that our budget could not be balanced. Thus, we anticipate a further reduction in our fund balance during the upcoming year.

Due to wise economic decisions made over the past few years, SAC remains financially secure at this time. However, the uncertain costs and revenues associated with AnthroSource continue to represent a point of serious concern for our longer-term viability.

At the present time, we have no intention of raising our dues. Our plan is to wait and see how the current AAA dues restructuring and the changes due to AnthroSource affect both our and other Section membership numbers. Will members begin to drop some of their Section memberships as AAA costs go up (for some) and Section dues go up as well? This is one of the reasons why SAC has been suggesting that the AAA create an “affiliate membership” category for all Sections (see below; “Other Items and Concerns”).

Elections

In the spring 2006 elections, John Baker was re-elected to serve as President-elect, and Amy Smith was re-elected to serve as Secretary/Treasurer. Marlene Dobkin de Rios, Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Sara Lewis, and Bryan Rill were elected to the Executive Committee, all for two year terms.

AAA Annual Meetings

The AAA Meetings in Washington featured the following events that were either invited by or sponsored by SAC:

- Ritual, Emotions and Modernity (invited session; co-sponsored with the Society for the Anthropology of Religion)
- Imagined Community and “Intelligent Design”: Studies of Collaboration and Consciousness

Distinguished Lecture and Awards

The SAC 2006 Distinguished Lecture on “Advances in the Study of Spirit Experience: Drawing Together Many Threads” was presented by Edith Turner on Friday, November 17.

The Best Paper awards for the past two volumes of *Anthropology of Consciousness* were announced in the AAA Annual Meeting Program: Michael Winkelman (2004) and Christopher Dana Lynn (2005).

Spring Meeting

SAC held its annual spring meeting at the Asilomar Conference Grounds (near Monterey, CA), April 12-16, 2006. Conference theme was: “So What? Now What? – The Anthropology of Consciousness Responds To A World in Crisis”. Approximately 60 people attended the conference. 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).

At the San Jose meetings, David Xanatos was appointed the new SAC Webmaster, replacing John Baker, who had held the position for several years. Xanatos, an experienced web designer, will work with Baker to determine which material to retain on the next generation of the SAC website, which is being redesigned to make use of current technology and to create a “members only” area of the web site (a value-added component for our members, who can now access our journal through AnthroSource without being a member of SAC). We intend to include discussion boards on the new web site, and create an email broadcasting service for our membership.

Anthropology of Consciousness

Our journal, *Anthropology of Consciousness*, continues to be published on schedule. Almost all past issues of the journal are now available through AnthroSource. SAC continues to be a strong supporter of AnthroSource, but also adheres to a policy of providing members with print copies of the journal as an extra advantage of membership.

In May 2006, Grant Rich tendered his resignation as Editor after shepherding issue 17(1) to completion. Charlie Flowerday stepped in, and has served as (interim) Editor for issue 17(2). A search was announced for a new long-term Editor, and in early 2007, Bonnie Glass-Coffin was selected to serve a three year term as Editor. Because she is currently on sabbatical and is spending considerable time in the field, Bonnie will formally take up her duties with issue 18(2), the second issue of 2007. Charlie Flowerday and other members of the *AoC* production team will assist Bonnie in the transition. Issue 18(1) is a guest-edited issue that is almost ready to be sent to the UC Press as this is written.

FUTURE PLANS

Spring 2007 Meeting

The 2007 Annual SAC Spring Meeting will be held from April 4-7 at the Handlery Hotel & Resort in San Diego, California. The theme of the meeting is “Thresholds of Consciousness”.

Negotiations are currently underway concerning the venue for the 2008 Annual Spring Meeting.

SAC “Renewal”

In Spring 2006, I (as President) initiated a movement to “renew” the Society. My letter to the Executive Board noted several areas of concern as well as ways to address these concerns:

- 1) Structural & Organizational Improvements – SAC needed to make some changes to our by-laws to bring them into agreement with those of the AAA. The language of these changes was worked out in the Fall, and the suggested changes were approved by the Executive Board in San Jose. These changes will now be submitted to the SAC membership as part of the AAA elections process this spring. This year (2007), we intend to revisit the SAC Handbook that was adopted several years ago to see which changes need to be made to reflect changes in the way we do such things as publish our journal and oversee our annual spring meeting.
- 2) Personnel & Recruitment Changes – For too long, SAC has been relying on a relatively small core group of members for carrying out many of its operations. Many of the current leaders were officers of the Society when the first discussions about a possible transition to AnthroSource took place, and it was fortunate that we have had dedicated and consistent leadership during this time. Now that this process is essentially complete, we have begun to actively recruit a new group of leaders to stand for positions on the Executive Board. In the past few months, we have also appointed a new journal Editor, a new *Anthropology Newsletter* Column Editor, and a new Webmaster (all mentioned above). We hope that these changes will bring new vitality into our leadership and our Section as a whole, and will help us to attract new members for the future.
- 3) SAC Image Rebranding – We have also been holding discussions about our current mission and vision statements, and have constituted a sub-committee to suggest appropriate changes so that these statements will both guide us into the next phase of the Society’s existence and help us to consider how we can “rebrand” our image. Following the adoption of new and updated vision and mission statements, we will announce a call to individuals to take part in developing a new logo for the Society.

OTHER ITEMS AND CONCERNS

SAC remains very concerned about membership numbers. In spite of a massive advertising push in the past two years and the introduction of a temporary special low “Get to Know SAC” introductory rate, our membership numbers remain at essentially the same level as in previous years.

Informal discussions between the SAC President and other Section heads at the Section Assembly in San Jose indicate that these concerns are shared by many other Sections. As a consequence, I would like to reiterate a suggestion that was made in last year’s annual report to the AAA and raised again at the 2006 Section Assembly: **we ask that the AAA 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, would not be able to vote in AAA elections, and could not hold Section Office. I am repeating this suggestion again because of comments from heads of other Sections at the San Jose meetings that they too would welcome the creation of some such “affiliate membership” category.

This or some similar step is necessary to allow Sections to grow by recruiting outside of the ranks of current AAA members, thereby expanding the potential outreach of the AAA as well. Recognizing that overseeing the membership accounts of such “affiliate members” would result in increased activities of the AAA staff to serve any Sections that might adopt such a membership category, we suggest that the dues for affiliate members include a small amount (perhaps \$10) to offset the costs of paying AAA staff to complete the necessary paperwork.

This year, I noted with concern the attrition that has occurred in the AAA staff. Last year’s report noted a substantial decrease in morale among the AAA staff, which may be at least partially responsible for the loss of several experienced individuals in 2006. We hope that further declines in morale and personnel numbers can be avoided. Our Section has regular contact with our Section Liaison as well as with Member Services and other AAA staff. Their well-being is important to the smooth and effortless functioning of our relationship with the AAA.

Submitted by John Baker, President, on January 30, 2007.

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