

**Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition  
Annual Report 2006**

**Submitted by Miriam S. Chaiken, President  
On Behalf of SAFN Executive Board**

**Accomplishments for 2006**

In many respects 2006 was a rebuilding year for the Society for the Anthropology of Food and Nutrition. In the previous annual report we outlined the dilemmas we faced, and noted that we were at a bit of a crossroads, as we needed to think about new ways of doing business as an organization. Some of our shifts in direction have been accomplished, and many others are in process, so we believe our organization is on firmer ground than we were 18-24 months ago. Among our accomplishments we should note the following:

- **Budget and Financial Outlook** - We ended the year in sound financial condition, in large measure due to the careful research and decision making of the Executive Board, and the wise counsel of our Treasurer, Daniel Sellen. We instituted a modest increase in our dues that was effective in June 2005, and represented our first dues increase in fourteen years, and only the second dues increase in the 30 year history of the section. This has allowed us to grow our budget and provide a nest egg that will permit new initiatives, including a substantially more significant internet presence.
- **Membership** has remained relatively stable, especially “regular” membership (numbers of student members has dipped slightly), which we believe reflects the long-term commitment that most of our members have to the section.
- **AN Column** - Publication of our column in *Anthropology News* has been consistent and of high quality, under the editorial direction of Contributing Editor Janet Chrzan. In addition to summarizing section business, the *AN* column has been used to write about substantive issues in the field of nutritional anthropology, such as the effects of new USDA policies on food and hunger, and the long-term consequences of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and adjacent cities. Ms. Chrzan will be relinquishing her role as column editor fairly soon, and she has done an excellent job of recruiting and collaborating with her future successor, Dr. Rachel Eden Black. We believe our presence in *Anthropology News* remains in excellent hands.
- **List serve** - We have established a new electronic means for agile communication with members through the formation of SAFN-list which has a secure host at the home institution of one of the executive board members. This has already been used to communicate to members concerning publications of interest, breaking news issues, calls for papers and meeting notices, and other appropriate professional information. While we encourage our subscribers to be members of the AAA and SAFN, we recognize that some professionals in cognate disciplines could benefit from participation and that our members in turn profit from their contributions, so we have opened subscriptions for the time being to anyone who

- wishes to participate. We believe that this will, in the long run, contribute to improving visibility.
- **AAA Meetings Participation** - We had robust participation in the 2006 Annual Meetings in San Jose, CA, in large part thanks to the effective organization of our Program Chair, Dr. John Brett. All of the SAFN sponsored sessions had strong attendance and participation. Included in our programs at this meetings, was a panel discussion in memory of Christine Wilson, one of the founding mothers of nutritional anthropology, for whom our annual award is named. This session was well attended and allowed many to reflect on her contributions and legacy in our field, as well as a chance to honor her spirit and our personal connections to Dr. Wilson. In addition the business of the section was conducted at the annual meeting of the Executive Board, and the Business Meeting.
  - **Distinguished Lecture** - We hosted a keynote Distinguished Lecture, by Dr. Thomas Marchione that was held at the conclusion of the Business meeting. Dr. Marchione's compelling talk drew from his career as one of the US government's leading policy makers in the field of international development assistance. His talk was steeped in a political economy and ecological framework and challenged all present to think about the implications of US foreign policy on global issues. One of the positive outcomes of Dr. Marchione's talk included ambitious plans for a session at next year's annual meetings that has been submitted for review as a possible Presidential session in 2007.
  - **Christine Wilson Award** -- We honored Ms. Lindsay Marshall with the Christine Wilson Award for excellence in student papers in nutritional anthropology. Her paper, entitled "Dietary Transitions in Dominica: Optimal Foraging Theory and Sexual Selection" was especially noteworthy as it was an undergraduate paper, and she was selected from a strong, competitive pool of submissions including from advanced graduate students. Her paper examined food choices in the Caribbean and was able to examine these patterns while testing a number of theoretical paradigms. We found this to be a quite sophisticated entry for a fledgling anthropologist.

## Challenges and Future Plans

One of our major transitions last year was the cessation of publication of *Nutritional Anthropology*. The decision to cease print editions of this journal was necessitated by the increased cost of publication that resulted from a shift to AnthroSource, and from inadequate resources and support from our section to sustain the publication. As a consequence we have begun several new initiatives:

- **Web Site Revision** - We worked for a number of months with Dr. Alex Golub in his capacity as a member of the AnthroSource task force, to identify ways to continue with electronic publications. We were told that this was a new effort by the AS Task Force to assist small sections in this transition away from traditional media. In the fall of 2006 we were informed that this effort was no longer supported by AAA and we lost some ground as we essentially had to reinvent

some of the plans we had put into motion with our collaboration with Dr. Golub. We have regained some ground as we made the revision of our web presence our primary focus of decision making at the 2006 Executive Board meeting. We have now hired a high quality web site designer, and with his assistance we are in the process of registering domain names that will link to our new web site, and that will be highly ranked when search engines such as google are used with logical key words (e.g. nutritional anthropology, food anthropology). We have designed the structure for the new web site, and task forces are in the process of generating new content. We will soon identify a new secure location to house our web site and move it off of the AAA system in order to permit us greater flexibility and a larger web presence. The redesigned web site will include many of the functions of *Nutritional Anthropology* and many of the newsletter services will be handled by our list-serve, SAFN-list. We envision the web presence providing opportunities to highlight programs of study in nutritional anthropology, sharing emerging research findings, identifying sources of funding, linking with organizations with complementary goals, including a roster of food and nutrition-related web sites, providing syllabi for courses in nutritional anthropology, highlighting the Wilson Award competition, and many additional resources that our current site lacks.

- **Standing Committees** - We have undertaken a revision of the charges and composition of our standing committees. The committees will be more involved with generating content materials for our web site, and this will be a means to generate greater volunteerism among our SAFN members.
- **Bylaws Revision** - We will be asking our members to vote on bylaws changes that reflect new organizational structure within SAFN, especially redefining the position of Vice President who was formerly the editor for *Nutritional Anthropology*. These revisions will appear in the spring 2007 ballot materials.
- **Link with other organizations with complementary interests** - We will try to increase visibility, and hopefully membership by reaching out to other AAA sections and non-AAA organizations which share interests in our professional activities. Our first effort in this direction was to invite free subscriptions to SAFN-list to non-members in related organizations, so they gain greater familiarity with the activities and interests of our section. We have enrolled approximately 50 new members on the list serve in the past year.
- **Resolve remaining problems with AnthroSource** – between 2003-2005, in preparation for the implementation of AnthroSource, we worked with the AAA Publications Office to ensure that a full print run of issues was available to be scanned and included in the AS archive. During that time period we located all but one of the issues published during the past 30 years, and many members sent their own copies to AAA to be scanned for inclusion in the archive. We were informed in mid-2006 that none of these old, scanned issues appears in the archive and we are, according to the records provided by the current Publications staff, the most incomplete of virtually all AAA publications, with 22 issues missing. This is obviously very distressing, given that we believed this to have been resolved some time ago. We have not received satisfactory responses from the current publications office as to whether all avenues to locate these scanned

files have been explored. If necessary, we will again try to locate back issues and share them with the AAA office in anticipation of having them re-scanned if the staff can identify which specific issues are missing, we are awaiting their response.

## **Other Items**

Some of the decisions that were made at the 2006 Annual Meetings about patterns of governance for the AAA appear to be important moves in the right direction, and are particularly important from the point of view of small sections, such as SAFN. Although our numbers are small relative to some sections, we have a large proportion of our members who are actively engaged in service to AAA and our section in one capacity or another, and a high proportion of them attend our business meeting and participate in shared governance. We believe this reflects the commitment of our members to our professional organization. We recognize that the resources and staffing of AAA are finite, and have been especially strained given the long-term financial impacts of cancellation of the San Francisco meetings in 2005, but we hope that the needs of sections such as ours will not be discounted in favor of larger units of the AAA.

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