

Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness Annual Report 2004

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Membership and Dues

The November, 2004 report from the AAA stated that SAC has 118 regular, 77 student, 12 Associate, 1 Life, and 11 International members, for a total of 219. This represents an approximately 18% increase over the 186 members reported in November 2003, and a return to the member numbers of early 2003. There were also 15 subscribers to our journal.

In late 2004, SAC launched a membership drive with the stated goal to increase membership by at least 20% over our April 2004 number of 189. As part of this drive, the SAC Executive Board voted to introduce a special "Get to Know SAC" dues rate of \$20 for all new members and all returning members whose memberships had been lapsed for at least one year. This special rate applies to the first year of membership only, and is available until April 30, 2005.

The Executive Board also agreed to lower dues rates for most domestic members by \$5.00 per year, and to establish a new "Retired" rate. Previous dues had been relatively high for AAA Sections so that SAC could build up its fund balance in anticipation of joining AnthroSource and so that SAC would have a firmer financial footing. This has been accomplished. Now we are concerned that the shift to AnthroSource may lead to losses in Section member numbers, particularly in view of the increases in AAA dues that have taken place already and are being discussed for the future. As a result, SAC did not want to be the "most expensive" Section, and risk having members leave for a less expensive Section while still being able to access SAC's journal through AnthroSource.

SAC has also undertaken efforts to increase our visibility by redesigning our brochure, and mailing the new brochure to approximately 450 Anthropology Departments, all of our members, and another 240 individuals identified by their interests as noted on the membership area of the AAA web site.

Communication with Members

To keep our members current on Section activities, the SAC President sent out a printed letter to all members in December 2004 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. However, the email system is not as effective as we would like it to be, as the AAA does not always respond to the President's requests for current email and address lists. In fact, several emails are often necessary before we receive a response.

In early 2004, our members were sent a survey to assess the reasons for joining SAC, which benefits of membership they think most important, what new benefits they would like to see, etc. Among other results, this survey found that respondents gave their main reason for being a member of SAC the journal *AoC*, closely followed by a desire to support scholarship in this area, and a desire for intellectual interaction with others in this field. The survey also revealed that many members have a strong desire for teaching materials (syllabi, course outlines, etc.), a feature that we would like to add to our web site.

One interesting finding is that almost half of the respondents indicated that they had first heard of SAC through the AAA membership form. This demonstrates how important it is to Sections that the form be kept up-to-date (for example, reflecting our special "Get to Know SAC" rate).

Finances

The Nov. 30, 2004 Statement of Net Assets showed that SAC had Net Assets of \$28,854.24. This number was somewhat higher than projected due to delays in the publication of our journal. These delays are being addressed as part of our discussions concerning AnthroSource. While our decision to lower our dues somewhat may result in a decline in revenues for 2005, we hope to counterbalance this by increasing our member numbers.

We are hoping that AnthroSource will generate additional revenues for SAC, and are watching this development closely. It is our sincere hope that as AnthroSource becomes established, the AAA will continue to take the concerns of small Sections with publications (like SAC) into consideration when discussing changes in sharing the revenue generated by AnthroSource.

Elections

In the spring elections, John Baker was (re)elected President, Amy Smith was (re)elected Secretary/Treasurer, and Jenny Blain, Lee Gilmore, Matthew Bronson, and Jeffery MacDonald were elected to the Executive Committee, all for two year terms. Baker and Smith specifically ran for reelection to provide continuity of leadership as SAC makes the transition to AnthroSource. Gilmore, Bronson, and MacDonald are also returning members of the Executive Board, and will also provide continuity during this critical period.

AAA Annual Meetings

At the AAA Meetings in Atlanta, only one of SAC's sessions took place:

“Re-Imagining Rebirth, the After-life and Karma” – this panel had two speakers present, and a third paper was read by the panel organizer. One of the discussants was present, as were perhaps 15 other people.

The following sessions were all cancelled:

“Asceticism and its Malcontents – a cross-cultural comparison of asceticism in theory and practice”

“Storming the Ivory Power: Anthropology in the Re-imagination of the Academy”

“Psychedelic Research: From Forest to Megapolis”

“Against Belief”

Most of the members of these other panels indicated that they would likely resubmit their proposals for the 2005 AAA meetings.

The lack of attendance at the AAA meetings was very unfortunate for SAC, as we had planned a major membership push at the meetings, with the centerpiece to be a very distinguished lecture.

Distinguished Lecture and Awards

Our original distinguished lecturer had to cancel because of health concerns. Another person graciously agreed to step in, but had to cancel when the AAA meetings were moved to Atlanta.

The 2004 winner of the award for best paper in the *Anthropology of Consciousness* will be announced at the 2005 AAA meetings; we decided to postpone this announcement as well because of the lack of a Board meeting or distinguished lecture in Atlanta.

Spring Meeting

SAC held its annual spring meeting from March 24-28 in Berkeley, CA, with the theme: "Altered Bodies, Altered Minds". 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 will soon be available on-line on AnthroSource and hence accessible to all AAA members).

FUTURE PLANS

SAC is currently preparing for full AnthroSource participation, subject to approval by the SAC Executive Board. We had hoped to be able to become an ongoing part of AnthroSource in early 2004, but the costs that were estimated at the time indicated that SAC would become financially unviable in just a few years. This was one of the reasons for the decision to have a membership drive. More recent cost estimates presented to SAC at the 2004 AAA meetings have changed the picture considerably.

As part of the transition to UC Press and their services, our journal will be redesigned by someone who has already worked with UC Press.

SAC also intends to complete a redesign of its web site in 2005, with new features to be added.

The Spring 2005 meeting will be held at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. This will be the first SAC spring meeting to be held on the East Coast, and we hope that this will increase our visibility and membership.

CONCERNS

SAC is very concerned about the impact that AnthroSource may have on small Sections with journals, such as SAC. As the AAA continues to raise its own dues, we fear that many AAA members might reduce their Section membership to just one, with a main consideration being the cost of the dues of that Section. This concern was raised at the 2004 Section Assembly meeting in Atlanta, and was also the subject of an informal discussion in Atlanta between the SAC President and the representatives of several other small Sections with journals. It is our hope that the AAA Long-Range Planning Committee will remain aware of the potential impact that AnthroSource may have on our membership numbers.

SAC is also concerned about the increasing number of restrictions being placed on meeting sites. As a small Section with an annual spring meeting, one function of which is to earn revenue, SAC must always work through the AAA when signing contracts for venue space. Thus, SAC does not have the option that other Sections do of not involving the AAA in arranging for space and carrying out advance registration.

Submitted by John Baker, President, on January 26, 2005

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