

Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness
A section of the American Anthropological Association



2007 Annual Report

STATUS, ACTIVITIES, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Membership and Dues

The October 30, 2007 report from the AAA (the most recent available) stated that SAC has 122 regular, 80 student, 16 Retired, 11 Associate, 1 Joint, 1 Life, and 8 International members, for a total membership of 239. This represents an increase of 9 members over the previous October.

During 2007, our membership numbers ranged from a high of 239 to a low of 218. Since our member numbers usually hover just under 250, SAC is concerned about the recent proposals to change the AAA by-laws that were approved by the EB and sent to the general membership for voting in spring 2008. As President, I have been urging our members to reject these proposals, as I feel they would create a new (and disadvantaged) status for SAC and several other small sections simply because we do not represent an "historically-underrepresented" constituency.

At this time, we have no intention of raising our dues. We are waiting to see how recent changes to the AAA dues structure as well as potential shifts in section membership numbers may affect our member numbers and financial status.

Communication with Members

To keep our members current on Section activities, I mailed out a letter to all members in September 2007. This letter contained information about SAC-sponsored sessions and events in Washington, D.C. and a Call for Papers for our upcoming 2008 Spring Meeting in New Haven, CT. It also included a call for members to submit a new logo design as part of our "SAC Renewal" efforts.

I received an email list of current SAC members (as of Dec. 2007) from the AAA, and am now using that email list to "blast" out periodic emails concerning topics of interest, news, etc. to our members.

Finances

The November 30, 2007 Statement of Net Assets showed that as of that date, SAC had Net Assets of \$19,975.21. This figure is above the Net Assets of November 30, 2006 (\$18,372.24).

As submitted, our 2008 budget is a little over \$1000 in the red. Although we continue to maintain a healthy fund balance, the ongoing lack of clarity regarding the expenses associated with AnthroSource continue to present hurdles in our financial planning. Although we were told by AAA staff that the transition to Wiley-Blackwell would result in greater transparency about both our publishing costs and our future revenues, we have already experienced our first 'reality check' in both regards. Bonnie Glass-Coffin, the editor of our journal, went through training on the Manuscript Central software that will make it possible to have a fully electronic submission program. Only after this training was she informed that there were previously unknown fees

associated with the electronic submissions management system, and that these fees had not been a topic of conversation when the AAA was negotiating the agreement with WB. AAA staff initially suggested that SAC pay the \$1330 set-up fee from the “windfall” we were receiving through the new WB agreement plus all manuscript processing fees and reconfiguration expenses (\$663.93 this year). Over the course of subsequent discussions, it was decided that AAA would absorb the set-up fee and that SAC would be responsible for the manuscript processing fees and reconfiguration expenses. While we can afford this, I mention this to point out to all readers that the transition to WB will not be as easy or transparent as hoped, and that individual sections and the AAA may encounter other unanticipated expenses as the transition from UC Press to WB continues.

The following anecdote demonstrates why we continue to see uncertainties in our publishing revenues. During the AAA meetings in Washington, D.C., Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Annette Grove (her editorial assistant), and I meet with Oona Schmid and Dion Dears to discuss how the transition to WB will be affecting our section finances. While the picture that was painted seemed rosy indeed, we were unable to learn whether the AnthroSource revenue that has been promised to SAC for this year includes our share of the “signing bonus” that WB paid to the AAA. At issue is not the size of the signing bonus, but whether it was included in the revenue figures we were given. If it was, it would be useful to know the amount of this one time bonus. If it was not, it would be helpful to know what our share is so they we could potentially budget the bonus for other purposes, including one-time equipment purchases, marketing efforts, etc.

These two examples illustrate the on-going lack of transparency concerning the costs and revenues associated with AnthroSource. The resulting fiscal uncertainties continue to impede our abilities to make both mid-term and long-range financial plans.

Elections

In the spring 2007 elections, Stephen Galzier, Beth Hagens, Peter Jones (Student Position), and Jeffrey MacDonald were elected to the Executive Committee, all for two-year terms. SAC members also voted to approve changes in our section by-laws that bring them back into conformity with AAA by-laws after these had been changed in recent years. There was some lag time between the AAA by-laws changes and our response; **I would suggest that in the future the AAA be more proactive about alerting sections to any changes to AAA by-laws that affect section by-laws, and perhaps suggest some boilerplate language that the sections could then adopt to bring their by-laws back into line with those of the AAA.**

AAA Annual Meetings

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

- Writing Shamanism Today in Theory and Practice
- Caribbean Religions and their Interpenetration/Creolization/Symbiosis: Papers in Honor of Leslie G. Desmangles
- Cognitive Theory of Religion
- Redefining Ritual and Consciousness

The SAC 2007 Distinguished Lecture was presented by Stanley Krippner, who spoke on “Answering the Call to Heal: Psychological and Psychophysiological Studies of Brazilian Spiritistic Healers.”

Spring Meeting

SAC held its annual spring meeting at the Handlery Hotel & Resort in San Diego, CA from April 4-8, 2007. The theme of the conference was: "Thresholds and Consciousness". Lourdes Giordani served as Conference Chair, and John Baker as site coordinator. Approximately 60 people attended the conference, which continued our tradition of papers during the day and experiential events in the evening.

SAC Web Site

Although we have several changes and enhancements planned for the SAC web site, these have not yet been realized.

Anthropology of Consciousness

Our journal, *Anthropology of Consciousness*, continues to be published on schedule. 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 August 2007, Bonnie Glass-Coffin formally took up her duties as editor of *AoC* with issue 18(2), the second issue of 2007. Charlie Flowerday and other members of the *AoC* production team assisted Bonnie in the transition to editor. Bonnie is now in the process of revising the process for submitting and soliciting manuscripts and in ensuring that manuscripts are reviewed in a timely manner. She is also reconstituting the Editorial Advisory Board of the journal and introducing other changes in the editorial process.

FUTURE PLANS***Spring 2008 Meeting***

Our **2008 Annual Spring Meeting will be held at the Yale Divinity School from March 19-23, 2008**. This meeting, our second on the East Coast, is being co-sponsored by the Yale Divinity School Initiative in Religion, Science & Technology. The theme of the meeting is "Consciousness and Spirit".

Negotiations are currently underway concerning the venue for the 2009 Annual Spring Meeting. It will likely be held in the Portland, Oregon area.

SAC "Renewal"

In Spring 2006, I (as President) initiated a movement to "renew" the Society. At that time, I wrote a letter to the Executive Board in which I noted several areas of concern as well as ways to address these concerns. These included:

1) By-laws changes – 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 Fall 2006, and the suggested changes were approved by the Executive Board in San Jose. These changes were then approved by the SAC membership during the AAA elections in spring 2007.

2) SAC Image Rebranding – In 2007, members of the Executive Board drafted a new set of mission and vision statements. After a vigorous email discussion among the members of the Executive Board as well as other active members, the following statements were adopted by the Executive Board:

VISION STATEMENT

The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness is dedicated to the study of consciousness and its practical application to contemporary issues.

MISSION STATEMENT

To realize this vision, the mission of SAC is to

- publish the peer-reviewed journal *Anthropology of Consciousness* ; convene an Annual Spring Conference that consists of individual papers, panel discussions, and experiential sessions; and host sessions at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association.
- value interdisciplinary perspectives, respect diverse traditions, and prioritize inclusiveness and open dialogue in the study of consciousness.
- support rigorous and empirically-based inquiries into consciousness that utilize diverse methodologies – including ethnographic, scientific, experiential, historical, and alternative ways of knowing.
- reflect on how consciousness and human transformation can be made relevant to the challenges of our age, with the aim of a praxis to catalyze a shift toward a more just world.

Following the adoption of these new vision and mission statements, we announced a call for members and others to submit proposals for a new SAC logo to replace our current Medusa logo. To date, no appropriate design suggestions have been received.

OTHER ITEMS AND CONCERNS

Membership Issues

SAC remains very concerned about our membership numbers, especially in light of the proposed AAA by-laws changes that would effectively create a new and “special” status for sections that have less than 250 members and do not represent a “historically underrepresented” constituency.

In spite of massive advertising efforts in the past several years, our membership numbers remain at essentially the same level as in previous years. My conversations with other section heads indicate that many of them share our concerns about membership numbers. This is one reason why I have been asking (since 2005!) that the AAA **create a new member category (perhaps “Affiliate Member”) that would allow people outside of the AAA to join an individual section without joining the AAA.** Although the details would need to be worked out, I am proposing that Affiliate Members could receive copies (print and/or electronic) of the publication of their section and would enjoy member rates at the annual meetings of their sections, 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 believe that this or another 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 work for the AAA staff, I also suggest that the dues for affiliate members include a small amount (perhaps \$10) to offset the costs of paying AAA staff to process the necessary paperwork.

AAA Staff Morale and Attrition

During the past few years, I have noted with concern the attrition that has occurred in the AAA staff. In my 2005 report, I 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 and 2007. It is my hope that the reasons for the poor morale and staff attrition have been addressed and 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, and all of these individuals provide us with important support. It is my opinion that the well-being of the AAA staff is a barometer that reflects the overall state of our organization.

Submitted by John Baker, President, on January 26, 2008.

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