American Anthropological Association
Committee Annual Report
Annual Meeting Executive Program Committee

Submitted By:
- Dana M Davis - danaaindavis@yahoo.com

Question 1
Please report on the activities your group undertook during the year. Indicate how these activities correspond to the group’s charge (objectives and responsibilities, provided above). If there has been any shortfall in accomplishing those objectives, please explain.

Our group undertook several activities:
1) Developing the Call for Papers and the Program Theme
2) Expanding the scope of the meetings to include a new feature, Installations and a pre-conference event: The Anthropologists Back to School Initiative (see annex for a full description of this event)
3) Reviewing both the Executive Sessions and the Installations
4) Developed a plan to have the Executive Program Committee write columns about the host city and related stories for AN

These activities fulfilled the objectives of the EPC to provide a broadly inclusive program that also engaged public audiences in new ways. The program theme: Future Publics, Current Engagements set the tone for more novel presentations of anthropological research and dialogues within the anthropological community.

Question 2
Please indicate your group’s plans for activities in the coming year. If they represent significant modification or elaboration of the stated objectives and responsibilities, please explain.

The Executive Program Committee and the Chairs worked collaboratively with the department heads of Chicago based Anthropology Departments to develop working relationships in advance of the AAA 2013 meetings. This resulted in more local participation in the meeting, especially in the Back to School event and the installations.

We also worked with the Field Museum to develop a pre-conference event, Back To School, which involved inviting Chicago Public School teachers and their classes to visit 4 host sites in Chicago, where guest anthropologists (including Ph.D. students and professors) would do presentations on the discipline, across the subfields.

Initially we worked with the Chicago Cultural Alliance in the above endeavor, to include community based arts organizations as presentation sites, but lack of adequate coordination by the CCA together with resource constraints, resulted in our falling short of this goal.

Question 3
This question refers to any specific tasks or activities in the current Strategic Implementation Plan. They are briefly reported separately so that they can be reviewed by the appropriate staff. If your unit was not assigned any activities in the current SIP, please skip Part II.

Please briefly report on how you have fulfilled, or plan to fulfill, those specific tasks or activities, whether new or ongoing, that appear in the current Strategic Implementation Plan. Please refer to each one by their item number.

7.1.2.2 AAA staff and Executive Program Committee will work to ensure that the annual meetings are open to and welcoming of all member constituencies, with an emphasis on increasing the participation of students and professionals in community colleges, undergraduate and graduate students, anthropologists with Master’s degrees (whether or not in doctoral programs), anthropologists employed outside academia, and anthropologists living and working outside the United States.

To achieve this goal, we opened up the meeting to a range of constituents including the public. The fact that we had a program that modeled and fostered both creativity and offsite events, could be one reason that 40% of the registrants were students. The Back to School Program explicitly invited graduate students to participate in sharing about the discipline with young people. We made sure that our EPC included someone from the World Council. Our efforts were realized in that 64 countries were represented and 18.9% of the attendees were from outside the U.S.

7.1.2.3 The goal of increasing annual meeting participation by community college professional and students was achieved primarily through the Back to School event. We provided SACC a venue to distribute information to teachers and students about Anthropology at Community Colleges.
SACC undertook the development of marketing materials, specifically buttons that read: Ask me about Community College. Further the Back to School event was open to students. In other words Ph.D. candidates made presentations at the Field Museum to grade and junior high school students.

7.1.2.4 The Program Chairs did utilize waivers, extensively.

The Co-Chairs provided 40 waivers for a range of individuals including participants in the Back-To-School event; Installation participants and those who participated in sessions who were non-anthropologists.

7.1.3.2 The goal of encouraging program activities that bring together journal editors and publishers’ acquisition editors with graduate students and scholars early in their careers was not one that fell under the purview of the EPC. However, knowing something about the programming of some Sections, we believe it may be useful for the Association to work with sections’ that have mentoring activities (i.e. ABA), to achieve this goal. It may be possible to connect the mentees and journal editors and publishers at an event. Or possibly a list of graduate students’ and young scholars’ abstracts are distributed in advance so that publishers can contact students for appointments during the meetings. This could just be a database project that facilitates acquisition editors’ ability to become familiar with potential authors.

7.1.4 Promoting the teaching of Anthropology was achieved through the Back to School Project.

7.1.5.1 The expansion of various program elements showcased the relevance of anthropology in relation to contemporary issues, such as race, technology, and labor organizing among others. The other way this goal was accomplished was by having some of the programming off-site and in communities. For example there were several events on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago, at The Field Museum, and at an arts incubator space near the University of Chicago. Further, the Co-Chairs and EPC selected Executive Sessions that clearly had relevance to contemporary issues, for example Global Warming and Sustainability, and there was one session that spoke directly to a major news issue, the Dozier Project in Florida that involves a USF based team of Anthropologists (For more information about the project go to: http://www.cas.usf.edu/news/a/486/)

Question 4

Please comment on any issues or recommendations you would like to bring to the special attention of the Executive Board. These might be problems in fulfilling group objectives and responsibilities or in fulfilling tasks listed in the SIP, the need for additional resources, recommended changes to the group charge (objectives, responsibilities, products/outcomes), and recommended changes to the committee structure or membership. Any problems or recommendations listed here will be discussed by the Association Operations Committee and then considered at the EB meeting for possible action.

We found great success in the overall structure of the EPC. For example we invited the subsequent year’s Chair to joining the EPC. This meant that she had a training period, which facilitated her knowledge about managing a Program. The Co-Chairs did experience some communication challenges with the PR department. We recognize that our initiatives made things challenging, however, we believe that some issues would have been resolved with greater ease had there been regular updates. During one of our initial meetings we were informed that we would receive updates, but had to request them. We believe that if the AAA is going to engage in programming beyond the conference site, marketing and public relations activities should be planned earlier with outlines and timelines for the Chair or Co-Chairs to weigh in on.

We organized aspects of the conference to embrace broader publics than anthropologists. Thus, near the time that the conference was to begin, we developed a community outreach strategy inviting people from 40 community based Chicago organizations.

Drawing on the previous years’ structure, we also continued the Plenary component of the program. What was different, however, was that we made the Plenary a public event. The plenary was associated with the “Anthropologists Back to School” event, and titled: “Reimagining Education: Integrating Culture into the Curriculum”. It was moderated by Dr. Johnnetta Cole and featured four panelists: 1)Dr. Sofia Villenas, a member of the Anthropology and Education Task Force; 2) Lila Leff, Founder of the innovative Umoja Student Corporation in Chicago; 3) and Malcolm London, young Chicago author and performer. London wrote a poem for the plenary and also presented a group of his students from a local high school who also performed a poem. The plenary, attended by over 350 people, also was interactive, inviting people to submit their vision for improved education.

Addendum to the Program Co-Chairs Annual Report:

“ANTHROPOLOGISTS BACK TO SCHOOLS INITIATIVE”

Background

At the suggestion of Dr. Johnnetta Cole, co-chairs for the Chicago meetings agreed to undertake the first major public outreach effort to public schools in conjunction with the annual meetings. The AAA Executive Board approved the initiative, with the strong support of President Leith Mullings. Subsequently, with the assistance of the Executive Program Committee the initiative was structured as a multi-sited event, with the participation of local museums and University campus venues where anthropologist conference participants planned to be stationed and interact with school children and their teachers, showcasing the diversity of anthropological approaches and sparking interest in our subject matters among young people and teachers.
To insure maximum participation, the co-chairs convened several meetings with local anthropology department chairs (or representatives), who responded positively to the initiative and provided many helpful suggestions, including that we target middle school and high school students/teachers.

Additionally, there was an enthusiastic response from the Education Department of The Field Museum, which helped to organize the event. The program was also positively received by the Chicago Humanities Festival, which offered to help recruit teachers, and by the Social Science specialists of the Chicago Public Schools who also offered to help recruit teachers.

Finally, both the Council on Anthropology and Education (CAE) and the Section for Anthropology in the Community Colleges (SACC) signed on to be active participants.

**Planning and Process**

The Back to School event took place on the morning of November 20th, prior to the official start of scientific paper sessions. The co-chairs, together with the AAA meetings department developed publicity materials for the program, including columns in the Anthropology Newsletter, blog posts, posts on social media, and recruitment through personal networks. Anthropologists attending the meetings pre-registered for participation through a format developed by the meetings office of the AAA. Meeting participants could select a site, and were encouraged to develop an interactive program on a site-specific theme that was appropriate for the age range of the targeted audiences. They were also encouraged to work in teams, bringing together the sub-disciplines.

The Field Museum Education Department together with co-chair Alaka Wali developed recruitment materials for the Chicago teachers. The FM Education Department tapped its network of educators and featured the Back to School initiative at its annual Educators Open House, attended by over 500 teachers. However, neither the Chicago Humanities Festival or the Chicago Public Schools recruited teachers.

**Selected Sites**

Initially, 10 sites agreed to host the Back to School event:

1. Field Museum offered nine different locations in the Museum’s exhibit halls.
2. Loyola University offered to organize a Biological Anthropology lab
3. Northeastern Illinois University planned to focus on Race
4. Northern Illinois University Anthropology Museum offered to recruit teachers from local DeKalb Township schools.
5. The Latino Cultural Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago offered to host a program for up to 45 students with teachers.
6. The Chicago Cultural Alliance, a non-profit coalition of ethnic and heritage based museums and cultural centers recruited four members to act as sites:
   - Chinese American Museum
   - Casa Michoacan Center
   - National Hellenic Museum
   - Southside Community Art Center
7. The Oriental Institute at University of Chicago offered to host up to 280 students (250 in the auditorium and 30 in another classroom).

**Funding**

In the spring of 2013, The Chair of the UIC Anthropology Department, John Monaghan informed us that he had obtained $1,500 from UIC for the project. We hoped to use the funds for the smaller museums that were hosting the event. However, soon after this, Professor Monaghan went on sabbatical and his replacement was not able to deliver the funds. Costs for recruitment materials, meetings, and other small expenses were subsidized by the Field Museum Education and Anthropology Departments.

**CAE and SACC participation**

The Council on Anthropology and Education worked with The Field Museum Education Department to organize a series of sessions and plenaries for Saturday, November 23rd to which they hoped to attract teachers who will be able to obtain professional development credits for attending. The CAE worked with the Education Department to recruit teachers. Our understanding is that although not as many teachers attended as hoped for, the sessions and plenary were successful.

The local representatives of the Society for Anthropology in the Community Colleges met with Co-Chair Wali to help organize programs for selected sites in the summer of 2013. They also planned some longer-term initiatives to promote cross-fertilization between high school teachers and community college faculty to encourage students to pursue anthropology in the community colleges. The SACC members, for example, developed postcards to hand out to teachers with local contact information of SACC members.

**Major Accomplishments**

Overall, the Anthropologists Back to School event achieved its major objective, which was to “give back” to the host city and showcase the excitement and breadth of anthropological production to a diverse public audience. We estimate that over 1000 students, teachers and general public visitors to the sites encountered over 50 anthropologists who registered to participate. The AAA registration system worked very well, and the blog posts and AN pieces generated enthusiasm from AAA members.
Anthropologists from all five sub-disciplines participated and offered highly interactive programs that held young students’ attention and opened minds to new ways of thinking about the human experience. Some highlights:

- Dr. Anne Grauer ran a half-day biological anthropology lab at Loyola University for 77 fifth graders from Calmeca Academy—a public school on the Southwest side that serves predominantly Latino and African-American children. Dr. Grauer wrote after the event that it was a great experience and that the students were among the most engaged and best behaved she had ever hosted.
- Dr. Rachel Watkins used material from the AAA RACE: Why are we so Different website to engage students and visitors to the Field Museum in tracing human dispersal from Africa.
- Dr. Andrew Petto (SACC member) asked students to “reconfigure” human anatomies to design their “ideal” human.
- Dr. Johnnetta Cole and Dr. Kamela Hayward presented slides of stereotypes of Africa and then asked students to think about why these emerged.
- A team from Michigan State set up an “African marketplace” and showcased the diversity of Africans’ lives and cultures. Students were asked to write what they learned new about Africa, and the comments included such things as: “Africans have cell phones!” “There are a lot of languages”, “My ancestors came from Africa”.
- Dr. Carlos Velez-Ibañez, and Dr. Juan Valdez engaged students and teachers in a conversation about migrations through the Americas.
- Dr. Michael Nunley and Dr. Rosa Cabrera engaged young undergraduates at the Latino Cultural Center on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago in a discussion of human physical variation and racialization.

The feedback we have received to date from participating anthropologists was that it was a very positive experience and that they very much enjoyed talking with students and visitors. The Field Museum Education Department reported that teachers were also pleased with the event, and there is some discussion of continuing this as a regular offering at The Field Museum with local anthropologists.

Lessons Learned

In hindsight, the major lesson we learned is that we were overly ambitious in planning the event. Ultimately, of the ten initial sites that offered to host, only three actually held the program—The Field Museum, Loyola University and The University of Illinois at Chicago. The other University sites withdrew because they could not get adequate faculty participation. The Chicago Cultural Alliance members were unable to recruit teachers and there was a lack of coordination between the CCA and the Co-Chair Wali so that the potential host sites were not adequately prepared or able to deliver the program. This was a major disappointment as some anthropologists had registered to participate at specific sites, and when sites withdrew, they were left disappointed. Most were able to adjust their programs and offer them at The Field Museum, which became the principal venue.

Another lesson was that recruitment of teachers to participate needed to be better organized and more concerted. We relied heavily on The Field Museum’s network and worked through emails and e-blasts. However, because of the budgetary crises facing Chicago Public Schools, fewer teachers had dedicated resources to organize field trips. As a result, we had very few teachers who actually signed up for the Back to School event specifically. Most of the school groups who encountered the anthropologists at The Field Museum were there as part of previously scheduled field-trips and were surprised to encounter the anthropologists. As a result, some of the feedback we received from the participating anthropologists indicated that the teachers and docents were not really prepared to participate. Some of the anthropologists also felt that they could have been better prepared if they had been better informed of teacher interests or curriculum needs.

Recommendations

- Simplify the event—choose only one or two venues and concentrate efforts there.
- Work more closely with targeted schools and insure that teachers are well-informed of the event and specifically choose to come for the event.
- Garner more publicity for the event with the local media so that there is recognition of the innovation for the AAA.
- Develop recruitment notices for conference participants and teachers
- Develop media and PR strategy
- Determine logistics coordination for the event
- Determine post-event follow-up

Finally, we hope that AAA will be able to encourage more electronic/virtual poster sessions.