American Anthropological Association

Committee Annual Report

Association Operations Committee

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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.

A. In 2013 the AOC members for 2013 were Susan Gillespie (chair to November 2013), Alex Barker (SA Convenor; in November 2013 he became chair of the ACC), Margaret Buckner (AAA Secretary), Rayna Rapp, Karen Nakamura (became chair in November 2013), Cheryl Mwaria, Sandra Lopez Varela, David Himmelgreen, Bernard Perley (beginning November 2013), Elizabeth Briody (beginning November 2013), and the AAA President and Vice-President/P President-Elect ex-officio. Elaine Lynch is staff liaison.

B. In 2013 the AOC accomplished the following, according to its stated responsibilities:

1. Reviewed IG reports and recommended re-authorization of two existing Interest Groups (Human Sexuality and Anthropology IG and Anthropology of Children & Youth IG) at the May 2014 meeting. Reviewed applications and recommended approval of two new Interest Groups (Anthropology of Tourism IG and Anthropology of Corporations IG) at the May 2014 meeting. There were no new section applications, and there is currently a moratorium on the creation of new sections based on a recommendation of the SAEC approved by the EB in May 2014.

2. At its May meeting the AOC reviewed and discussed all available annual reports from standing committees and task forces. Based on that review the following recommendations were made to, and approved by, the EB: a one-year re-authorization of the EPC until its charge could be reviewed based on recommendations of the Annual Meeting Task Force (see #3 below); the Awards Committee was asked to re-examine their charge in light of new responsibilities being asked of it; the CoE was giving authorization to hire a student intern for their blog (non-compensated by the AAA); the Global Climate Change TF was granted an extension of its authorization through May 2014; and the EB pledged to work more closely with the RDC (and its charge was later modified as a result, see #3).

Following the May meeting, thank you letters were sent to all committee and task force chairs for their service, signed by President Leith Mullings and AOC Chair Susan Gillespie.

3. At various times throughout the year the AOC chair and members drafted and/or reviewed proposed changes to committee charges for the following committees: CLR, CMIA, EPC, RDC, AOC, and ACC. The revised charges were approved by the EB.

4. At its May meeting the AOC undertook to revise the annual reporting process, including incorporating the five-year report into the annual report process, and to improve the web portal for online submission of the report. Over the summer a questionnaire was sent to all standing committee and task force chairs to gauge areas of dissatisfaction with the existing process. Based on their responses and the needs of the AAA staff and EB in assessing information in the report, a new explanation and report template was drafted and approved by the AOC to be implemented for the 2013 reports. (This report thus follows that new template.) The new template has a special set of questions for five-year reports for reauthorization, as well as a special section to report on the new SIP-mandated tasks. The new “dashboard” for inputting the portions of the report was beta-tested by Susan Gillespie and Karen Nakamura.

5. Five-year reports for the following committees were reviewed at the May meeting, and re-authorization recommended, which was approved by the EB: CoPAPIA, CBR, and the Nominations Committee. The AOC was also up for re-authorization in 2013; however, following the stated procedure, the AOC five-year report was reviewed by the ACC, and that committee recommended re-authorization (which the EB approved).

6. The first draft Strategic Implementation Plan was created at the May 2014 EB meeting. In order to communicate its contents and intent to committees and sections, the AOC chair and the SA Convenor (Alex Barker) worked closely with Vice-President/President-Elect Heller to coordinate those communications. The AOC asked for a Committees list-serve to be created, in imitation of the Sections list-serve, to facilitate communication with all committee and task force chairs. Committees, task forces, and section presidents were asked to provide feedback on the draft SIP; their feedback was taken into account in finalizing the plan that was approved in November. This is one example of improving the linkages among the various entities of the AAA.

Another example of enhanced structural communication, initiated by Vice-President/President-Elect Monica Heller, was a conference call in October among the incoming and outgoing chairs of the AOC and ACC, with the incoming President. The purpose was to pass on knowledge and suggestions from the incoming to the outgoing committee chairs, but it also served to facilitate communication between the two committees, something not done before to our knowledge. Heller suggested that such conference calls among the two committee chairs and President and Vice-President/President Elect become a regular occurrence.

C. The following responsibilities were not brought to the AOC’s attention and were not acted upon:

7. Review AAA member dues and benefits

8. Review projects and initiatives of the AAA and the financial resources necessary to carry them out (see Part III)
9. Review external relations of the Association (see SIP item 10.2 in Part II)

10. Review Association personnel policies that need action by the Executive Board (no such policies required action by the EB in 2013)

D. Plans were put into place to accomplish the following new responsibility added in 2013:

11. Review annual reports of the Annual Meeting Executive Program Committee, discuss their recommendations for change and forward them to the Executive Board; receive and review reports from Annual Meeting participant questionnaires; discuss, support, and/or initiate moves to improve members' experiences of the meetings. This responsibility was not added until late in the year, so it will first be carried out in 2014. For that purpose, at the November 2013 meeting a standing subcommittee of the AOC (Subcommittee on Annual Meetings) was formed to provide special scrutiny for the EPC and questionnaires reports and to develop expertise on AM issues, to be able to monitor changes to the meeting and respond to problem areas. This subcommittee (SAM) will want to coordinate with other entities working on AM concerns, such as the new Disability and Access Working Group (DAWG).

E. Other accomplishments:

Finally, because the AOC sometimes takes on tasks that are outside its stated purview, the 2013 AOC reviewed the report on the This Is Anthropology website, which since its origin had been taken under the AOC’s wing. The AOC moved (with the acquiescence of the ACC) to shift oversight of the website to the ACC, because it has a “communication” rather than an “operations” or “review” function.

**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.

1. In addition to be given oversight of the EPC and the Annual Meeting in general (D11 in Question 1), several new responsibilities were given to the AOC in the 2013 Strategic Implementation Plan; these are discussed in Section II. Although the latter are new tasks, most are short-term, requiring the attention of ad hoc subcommittees. They fall within the overall “review” function of the AOC.

2. An important issue discussed at the Wednesday November 19, 2013 EB meeting had to do with the work of the Nominations Committee. Questions were raised regarding how the Nom Com slates candidates. A decision was made to review the procedures of the Nom Com. AOC would take responsibility for that review. The Nom Com is chaired by the Secretary, who is a member of the AOC.

3. On its own initiative, in response to the growing complexity of the association, at its November 2013 meeting the AOC informally discussed ways to improve communication among the EB members and with staff, and to maintain better institutional memory. For example, there are now more subcommittees and EB members serving as liaisons to other entities. We need a way to keep track of all their duties and communicate this information within the leadership and staff. It would also be useful to have a database on all EB approved motions, so that these can be referenced topically when the same issues (committees, problems) arise again. The AOC will continue to explore ways to make the association operate more effectively.

**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.

Because the SIP was approved late in the year, none of the tasks have been fulfilled, but plans were made to carry out each one, as noted below:

Item 5.1.1 regarding using recommendations from the TFRR to determine how to collect information on diversity (in AAA journals and participants at AMs): The tenure of the TFRR has been extended until May 2014 so there are no recommendations to act upon until that time. At its November meeting the AOC discussed broadening the vision of this charge, to include such facets as diversity in nominations and prizes as well as publication authors and meeting participants. Should section spring meetings also be included? The AAA needs long-term institutional research data on this information. There is also the difficulty of determining what constitutes a minority category and how to get members (or most members) to self-identify. The AOC proposes to take a more holistic approach about how these data can be obtained. Decisions on action await receipt of the recommendations of the TFRR, expected for the May 2014 meeting.
Items 5.2.1, 5.2.1.1 and 5.2.2 all refer to the CMIA. At its November meeting the AOC moved to appoint an ad hoc subcommittee to deal with these three issues (new criteria for the minority dissertation award, a plan for evaluating the impact of the award, and plans for other mentoring programs). The subcommittee will report back to the AOC in May. Rayna Rapp was suggested as a member because she is the liaison to the TF. Bernie Perley offered to be on this subcommittee, and Lynn Bolles (from ACC) will also be on it, as liaison to the CMIA, with Karen Nakamura ex-officio. Karen will organize the subcommittee and appoint a chair.

Item 9.5.2 concerns a review of the Leadership Fellowship Program. At its November meeting the AOC moved to appoint an ad hoc subcommittee to coordinate this review. Cheryl Mwaria and Sandra Lopez Varela offered to serve on this committee, as did Lauren Griffith (one of the current fellows). Lynn Bolles should be made a member of this committee because she is in charge of the Program. Karen Nakamura will serve ex-officio, organize the subcommittee, and appoint a chair. Elaine Lynch will coordinate staff resources to carry out a survey of fellows and their mentors. Among the suggestions for the subcommittee were to ensure there are explicit criteria for the award and investigate whether the targeted audiences were getting publicity about the program. It was also suggested to create a list of past mentors and mentees (if one does not already exist).

Item 10.3 (10.3.1, 10.3.2) has to do with strategic partnerships with other organizations. It does not involve the entire AOC, only the AOC chair in a consulting capacity. At the November meeting the AOC members were asked to send their recommendations for any such associations to be considered for partnerships to Karen Nakamura.

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.

The AOC is concerned that it is not fulfilling all of its responsibilities, as noted in Section C of Question 1.

First, the AOC has not reviewed AAA member dues and benefits in the memory of the current chairs. The last time dues were changed, this was initiated by the Finance Committee and brought to the full EB for a vote, without review first by the AOC.

Second, the AOC is charged with reviewing projects and initiatives of the AAA and the financial resources necessary to carry them out. However, the Strategic Implementation Plan—which creates new projects requiring financial resources to carry them out—was created with no input by an AOC member, nor was it given to the AOC for review prior to being presented to the entire EB for approval in May 2013. Certain problems resulted; for example, having to do with not fully assessing whether new tasks given to committees were within their charges.

The AOC is the association’s “review” committee. It is essential to have a subgroup of the Executive Board devoted to review, including investigating in detail all aspects of changes to operations before the EB is asked to approve such changes. If it is the case that that AOC has been unintentionally sidestepped in the decision-making process in these matters, then procedural changes or changes to relevant Committee charges need to be made to ensure that the AOC can fulfill all of its responsibilities and appropriately serve the association.