ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

AAA 2014 EXECUTIVE BOARD

President
Monica Heller (2013–15)
monica.heller@utoronto.ca

President-Elect/Vice President
Alisse Waterston (2013–15)
awaterston@jay.cuny.edu

Secretary
Margaret Buckner (2012–15)
mmbuckner@missouristate.edu

Archaeology Seat
Sandra Lopez Varela (2011–14)
slvarela@uaem.mx

Biological Seat
David Himmelgreen (2011–14)
dhimmelg@usf.edu

Cultural Seat
A Lynn Bolles (2012–15)
lbolles@umd.edu

Linguistic Seat
Niko Besnier (2011–14)
l.besnier@uva.nl

Minority Seat
Bernard Perley (2013–16)
bcperley@uwrm.edu

Practicing/Professional Seat
Elizabeth Briody (2013–16)
elizabeth.briody@gmail.com

Student Seat
Karen G Williams (2012–15)
kwilliams2@ge.cuny.edu

Undesignated #1
Cheryl Mwaria (2012–15)
cheryl.b.mwaria@hofstra.edu

Undesignated #2
Mark Aldenderfer (2013–16)
maldenderfer@ucmerced.edu

Undesignated #3
Fran Mascia-Lees (2011–14)
fr masciales@anthropology.rutgers.edu

Undesignated #4
Rayna Rapp (2012–15)
rayna.rapp@nyu.edu

Section Assembly Convenor
Alex W Barker (2012–14)
barkeraw@missouri.edu

Section Assembly EB #1
Karen Nakamura (2012–15)
karen.nakamura@yale.edu

Section Assembly EB #2
Ramona Perez (2013–16)
perez@mail.sdsu.edu

AAA Treasurer-Ex Officio
Edmund T Hamann (2012–15)
ehannm2@unl.edu

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Opening a Conversation on AAA and Israel/Palestine

Monica Heller
AAA President

As some of you may know, several US-based academic associations have recently undertaken debates or passed resolutions with respect to Israel/Palestine. Related issues have been discussed in recent years in a variety of panels at the AAA annual meeting, and within section conversations. In the past few months, some members have approached the Executive Board and the Executive Program Committee for the 2014 AAA Annual Meeting to discuss how to open up these matters to association-wide conversation.

The Executive Board’s view is that the debate over Israel/Palestine is historically important and anthropologically relevant. We believe the association is well placed to offer AAA members a chance to gain an anthropologically informed perspective on the region and on the broader questions it raises, and to participate in productive conversations about them. Many of us have particular knowledge of both the region and its past, and many of us have deep knowledge of the anthropological questions that the region raises for all of us. Our members can provide us with a diverse and rich set of lenses through which to explore and understand these questions.

Just as important, we have an opportunity here to develop modes of mutually respectful exchange on controversial anthropological topics that will serve us well now and in the future. After all, anthropologists work at understanding multiple perspectives for a living—indeed, it is one of our signature strengths. If we are able to have a focused conversation in which opposing views can be expressed and complexities can be acknowledged and understood, we will have made progress in exploring how to make dialogue work despite—or maybe because of—difference. We believe this is a worthy goal in and of itself.

We know that this subject is controversial and has the potential to be divisive, but we think our approach can actually strengthen the association. Our job as an Executive Board, as we see it, is to facilitate exchange in ways that allow members to feel they have had a chance to learn what they want to learn, and say what they want to say, in ways that respect the integrity of anthropology and the legitimacy of our members’ perspectives. We think it is important to take the time to have this conversation well, and with all interested members—recognizing that while some of us have been thinking about some of these issues for a long time, others may well be relatively new to this set of topics, and deserve to have the chance to inform themselves to their satisfaction. Some of our sister associations have devoted years of conversation to this topic; certainly we feel it should be given due, unhurried consideration.

We hope it is evident that we will not pre-empt activities our members might want to propose, but we also want to offer some of our own. In this spirit, we started in May with a column on the Anthropology News website open to members, for circulation of information and for moderated discussion. If you have not seen it, you can find it at (www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2014/04/30/towards-an-informed-aaa-position-on-israel-palestine). Let’s be absolutely clear on one matter: at this moment we do not take any position for or against a boycott or any other form of statement or action. Instead, we offer space on the website to facilitate open dialogue about the many issues concerned, and to help the AAA think through those issues, especially as they relate to anthropology, anthropologists and the association. More information is accumulating all the time, and we plan to maintain a place online on an ongoing basis to provide links to this growing body of resources. We will not close it until we feel we have run out of things to say (that is, no one posts any more comments) or unless the space is abused. It will, however, remain archived on the AAA site.

The Executive Board is also considering appointing a task force. Our membership has considerable expertise on the Israel/Palestine issue and related questions, and any position we take as an association will benefit from the wisdom of this expertise. The Executive Board and Executive Program Committee are also engaged in working with the membership to provide concrete, workable spaces of dialogue at the meetings. Some members have already proposed panels and round tables, and the EPC is organizing a screening of relevant documentaries. There will be an open forum early in the meeting for association-wide conversation. While at time of writing the format has not yet been fixed, the event is likely to start off with a small number of presentations of a range of perspectives, followed by a moderated discussion. We will probably take a page from our sister associations’ books, and ask those who wish to speak to put their names in a hat. Names will

An extended version of this column, co-authored with Alisse Waterston, Hugh Gusterson and Ed Liebow, was published on April 30, 2014 at www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2014/04/30/towards-an-informed-aaa-position-on-israel-palestine.

See Opening on page 18
How Are We Doing at Implementing Our Strategic Plan?

ED LIEBOW
AAA Executive Director

It is mid-year, and a good time to take stock of how well we are doing at living up to our self-imposed expectations. As you know, AAA’s Long Range Plan sets forth 12 general objectives to guide us in fulfilling our mission. At a greater level of detail, the Strategic Implementation Plan drives the association’s annual revision of priorities, closely linked to staff work plans and the budget process. How are we doing so far this year? On the whole, pretty well.

The 12 general objectives involve: (1) publishing; (2) policy; (3) teaching; (4) ethics; (5) diversity; (6) governance; (7) annual meeting; (8) practicing and applied anthropology; (9) academic relations; (10) international and interdisciplinary collaboration; (11) public engagement; and (12) finance and organization.

I reported the results of a recent staff review in each of these areas to the Executive Board. Each of these areas could be assigned one of three grades: (a) implementation is meeting or exceeding expectations; (b) there is cause for concern about timing and/or resources allocated to meet expectations—schedule and/or scope adjustments may be required; or (c) we have experienced an implementation failure that requires significant corrective action.

In none of these areas have our activities received a failing mark. In eight of the 12 areas, we are right on target, although we know from experience that we must be diligent in monitoring our publishing, policy, ethics, meetings, practicing/applied, academic relations, collaborations, and finances.

Now I am normally not a glass half-empty sort. But part of my job is to be concerned on our members’ behalf that the association is living up to expectations. So it is to the remaining four areas where we turn our immediate attention for improvement.

Teaching
Our planning objective in Teaching is to promote the quality and effectiveness in teaching of anthropology and anthropological research at all levels. We are excited to receive the report of the Anthropology and Education Task Force, and will be taking a close look at recommendations this report contains. The task force’s work was extended by six months to take advantage of an exciting opportunity to develop recommendations for including anthropological concepts into the “College, Career, and Civic Life” curriculum for social studies. We maintain the AnthroGuide (annual listing of anthropology departments, programs and more), regularly publish columns in *Anthropology News* on teaching strategies, have nicely integrated outreach to local educators into our annual meeting program, are investigating best teaching practices around the world through the Committee on World Anthropologies, and offer an annual teaching award thanks to the generous sponsorship of Oxford University Press. However, submissions to our online Teaching Materials Exchange are nowhere where I’d like them to be, and to date the impact of our activities to publicize this potentially valuable resource is not yet discernible. In addition, the annual AnthroGuide, a rich data resource about academic departments and their capabilities, needs to be reimagined so that its value is more fully realized.

Diversity
Our planning objective for Diversity is to “foster inclusion in the discipline of persons from socially underrepresented categories: advocate improved understanding of diversity in society; and promote the equitable treatment of all anthropologists.” We are eagerly awaiting the recommendations of the Task Force on Race and Racism in Anthropology, which we know will provide a rich, evidence-based guide to future actions. We are somewhat hampered in measuring our trajectory towards inclusion because of data limitations; we are hoping to see recommendations about how to collect monitoring and evaluation data that will help us assess whether interventions in this area are having the intended effects.

Goverance
Our objective in this area is to “strengthen internal working relationships among its Sections and Committees and the Association Office by effectively communicating its organizational structure, its Long-Range Plan, and its financial and programmatic activities.” As many of you know, our Membership Services Department suffered a setback in the first half of 2014 due to the loss of key staff. We have been able to cover basic services, but have been required to delay strategies for membership growth and inclusiveness until we are back at full strength. With our recent staff additions, I expect to see considerable improvement in the second half of this year.

Public Engagement
The final objective where implementation falls somewhat short of my expectations is in Public Engagement. This may strike some readers as odd, in that we have poured considerable effort into having anthropological insights more effectively integrated into the public conversation on important social issues. And indeed, we see considerable progress in earned media coverage, effective use of social media channels, and advocacy efforts. Our This is Anthropology and *Anthropology News* websites have attracted a good deal of positive attention. However, we have pledged to build up a member expertise database, and the proportion of our members who have complete profiles (most easily updated when you renew your annual membership) remains sub-par. We have a sense, anecdotally, that our Race: Are We So Different? initiative has been terrifically successful, but we need to refresh the educational materials that are part of this initiative, and we are behind in our plans to conduct a formal evaluation that will confirm this hunch. We are also quite excited about the prospects for the next public education initiative on migration and displacement, World on the Move. Our collaborative agreement with Smithsonian is in place. A part-time project manager is on-board, and a core team is actively proposing projects for which external funding can be sought. Potential partnerships to complement in-house capabilities are being explored. Although this is still in the developmental stage, we are hoping to replicate the Race initiative’s success.

I don’t mean to sound too much like I think the glass is half-empty. In fact, I am quite optimistic about the ambitious plans we have set for ourselves. On the whole, as an association, I hope you will agree that our glass is half-full and getting fuller.

Opening
continued from page 17

then be drawn randomly, and speakers will be limited to two minutes at the microphone. I imagine we might need a donation or loan of a large hat.) If any resolutions are introduced for the AAA membership to consider at its business meeting, AAA staff will be available to provide assistance. Any credentialed reporters will be given access to cover the 2014 Annual Meeting. We will do our best to make sure that members are aware in advance of the range of opportunities available to inform, listen, learn and converse.

We look forward to a deliberate, considered and educational dialogue. Those of you who follow this column (that would be all 12,500 of you, right?) might remember my opening remarks from my first column—disagreement is fine with me, in fact I think it is healthy. But I am Canadian, so it has to be polite. Merci infiniment, et au plaisir d’échanger avec vous toutes et tous.

Comments can be directed to me at AAAPresident@aanet.org.