SOLGA, the Society of Lesbian and Gay Anthropologists, was founded in 1978 and became an official AAA section in 1998. With a current membership of more than 250, SOLGA is continuing its maturation as a AAA section committed to facilitating communications among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and other queer anthropologists and between queer anthropologists and queer scholars in other fields; to encouraging and supporting anthropological research on sexuality (including homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, transsexuality, and more) and gender in all subfields of the discipline; to developing materials for teaching about sexuality and gender topics; and to serving the interests of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and queer anthropologists within the AAA.

SOLGA is co-chaired by two persons of differing gender identities. Frank Proschan (Smithsonian) completed his 2-year term at the 2002 Annual Meeting, and Tom Boellstorff (UC-Irvine) succeeds him for the next two years; Deborah Elliston (Binghamton U/SUNY) is in the middle of her two-year term. In addition to these individuals, other continuing SOLGA Board members include former Co-Chair Sandra Faiman-Silva (Bridgewater State U); Todd White (U Southern California), Secretary/ Treasurer; Evelyn Blackwood (Purdue U), chair of the Payne Student Prize Committee; Ellen Lewin (U Iowa), chair of the Benedict Prize Committee; David Valentine (Sarah Lawrence C) and Christa Craven (American U), 2003 Program Co-Editors; Barbara West (U of the Pacific), Newsletter Editor; and Ken Rowe (California Institute of Integral Studies), Student Board Member. C. Todd White also manages the SOLGA website, located at www.solga.org.

At the 2002 AAA Meetings, SOLGA sponsored two invited sessions: "Homophobias: Lust and Loathing, Past, Present and Future" (organizer, David A.B. Murray) and "Unimaginable Disruptions: Sexuality Research Moves Out of the Margins" (organizers, Kaila Kuban and William Gordon Jr.). SOLGA also reviewed two volunteered sessions: "Hooking Up: Unimagined Relationships in the 21st Century" and "Queer Identities in the Public Sphere." David Valentine (Sarah Lawrence C) and Heather Levi (Lake Forest C) served as Program Co-Editors for the 2001 and 2002 Meetings.

SOLGA sponsors two annual prize competitions. The Ruth Benedict Prize is awarded annually in two categories, a single author volume and an edited volume, for scholarly anthropological works that address gay and lesbian subjects from an anthropological perspective. A student paper prize, the Kenneth Payne Prize, is a cash grant awarded for a student paper of exceptional merit. The 2002 Benedict Prize was awarded to Hector Carrillo (UC San Francisco) for The Night Is Young: Sexuality in Mexico in the Time of AIDS (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). The 2002 Payne Prize was awarded to Alyssa Cymene Howe (U New Mexico) for her paper entitled, "Queers and Televisionaries: The Strategies of Sexuality in Nicaragua" (full text available on the SOLGA website).

SOLGA also maintains a Mentoring File that aims to provide a LGBTQ scholarly mentoring network for undergraduate and graduate students. In 2002, management of the Mentoring File
passed from the File's founder, Christa Craven (American U) to Diana Pash (UCLA). The Mentoring File is available on the web at the SOLGA website.

SOLGA’s current work focuses on several areas: 1) building a solid organizational infrastructure; 2) enhancing networks of communication, support, and mentoring among members and allies; and 3) providing a vehicle for scholarly pursuits for SOLGA members and others engaging LGBTQ scholarship and activism through, for example, co-sponsorship of conferences, and sponsoring a broad range of scholarly programs related to LGBTQ research at the annual anthropology meetings.

A fourth focus of SOLGA's current work is monitoring and improving the status of LGBTQ anthropologists within our discipline. Over the past year SOLGA's proactive work on issues of professional concern to LGBTQ anthropologists has included engaging (1) the AAA's policy on holding meetings in sodomy states; (2) the Committee on Ethics' call for ethical guidelines on sexuality and fieldwork; and (3) gauging the availability and sufficiency of domestic partner benefits offered by University employers.

(1) At the November 2001 Executive Board meeting, SOLGA had presented a motion to the Board that the AAA return to its policy of prohibiting meetings in states with sodomy laws, closing the loophole that allowed meetings in such states where the host municipality had pro-active GLBT ordinances. The Board had requested that SOLGA prepare revised language, and position papers in support of revising or maintaining the AAA policy. In 2002 SOLGA members presented two different proposed resolutions to the AAA Executive Board, each supported by a position paper: one proposal advocated returning to the strict policy against meeting in sodomy states; the other proposal advocating strengthening the compromise position by devising more specific criteria for evaluating the sufficiency of local ordinances. At its November 2002 meeting, the AAA Executive Board adopted the language developed in the first proposal, effectively barring future AAA meetings in any state that has a sodomy law in place at the time of planning and contracting for the meeting.

(2) In the wake of the El Dorado controversy and the Committee on Ethics' call for position papers to help the COE develop a special set of ethical guidelines for sexual relations during fieldwork (as previously requested by the AAA Executive Board), numerous SOLGA members developed and submitted position papers on the issue. Most of those position papers critically interrogated the rationale for separating out sexuality as a special area of ethical concern, arguing instead that general ethical guidelines for fieldwork relations should suffice. The COE concurred with this consensus, reporting to the AAA Executive Board that it did not believe that sexuality warranted particular ethical scrutiny or attention, but should instead be considered within the general realm of the relations between anthropologists and the communities in which they work.

(3) In 1999, the AAA Executive Board adopted a policy proposed by SOLGA to require employers listing placement ads in the Anthropology Newsletter to make statements as to (a) whether the employer has in place a policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation/preference and gender identity/expression and (b) whether the employer offers employment benefits to domestic partners of its employees. In a 2002 review of the policy's effectiveness it was determined that while almost all employers had a non-discrimination policy
(a), there was significant variability among employers with respect to the availability of domestic partner benefits (b). In addition, the language of the statements was found to be confusing to employers, resulting in "false positives" and "false negatives." SOLGA has begun working with Richard Thomas at AAA to identify other mechanisms that will produce more accurate information about the availability and sufficiency of domestic partner benefits, and foresees proposing to the AAA Executive Board a revised procedure that will address the concerns that motivated the 1999 decision.

SOLGA and its members continue to address issues of professional concern to LGBTQ anthropologists as members of the AAA, with several active SOLGA members serving the Association in AAA-wide offices: Evie Blackwood (Purdue U) and Karen Nakamura (Macalester C) as SOLGA Liaisons to the Committee on Ethics; Doug Feldman (SUNY Brockport) on the Nominating Committee; Karen Nakamura (Macalester C) on the Long-Range Planning Committee; Frank Proschan (Smithsonian U) as Section Assembly Convenor and Ex-Officio Member of the AAA Executive Board; and David Valentine (Sarah Lawrence C) on the Human Rights Committee.

SOLGA continues to be concerned about homophobia and discrimination against gendered "others" and SOLGA is actively working to broaden networks across AAA sections around lesbian, gay, transgender, transsexual, and queer issues, and to provide a network of support for LGBTQ members of the AAA. The SOLGA website (www.solga.org), the SOLGA listserv (SOLGA-L@american.edu), and the SOLGA column in the AAA Newsletter constitute SOLGA's key communication vehicles. Currently, the website hosts the Mentoring File and provides information on SOLGA's history, the Society's By-Laws and current officers, the minutes of prior business meetings, and other information of interest to SOLGA members and prospective SOLGA members, including links to websites of interest. Through the SOLGA website, the SOLGA listserv, the AAA Newsletter SOLGA column, AAA sponsored sessions, and proactive work on gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer topics, SOLGA maintains an active life in the AAA.