2002 Annual Report - Society for Medical Anthropology

Members of the SMA Board Newly elected Ad Hoc Board Member Standing to Board

Mark Nichter, President
Craig Janes: President Elect
Suzanne Heurtin-Roberts
Mark Luborsky, Secretary-Treasurer
Linda -Anne Rebhun
Carolyn Sargent
Kari Olsen (Student Representative)
Cheryl Mattingly Pam Erickson 1
Paul Farmer Nancy Vuckovic2
Wenda Trevathan Janelle Taylor 2
Vincanne Adams
Linda Hunt
Catherine Panter-Brick
Sabrina Chase

President's Report

The 2002 year has been an exiting one for the Society for Medical Anthropology, In addition to the regular program at the annual meeting, the SMA held a very successful joint meeting with the Society for Applied Anthropology in Atlanta, GA, March 6-10, 2002. The SMA meeting opened with a well attended plenary session on "Individual Agency in Health: A Search for Instrumental Self-Determination" followed by a discussion panel on "Institutional Agency in Health: A Search for Collaboration". Representatives from various health agencies reflected on the integration of anthropological perspectives in health policies and programs, and outlined strategies to forge stronger partnerships among institutions and between agencies and communities. Other highlights of the conference were: 1) a double session on "Research Methods in Medical Anthropology: Old Problems and New Solutions" which demonstrated how new methodologies blending qualitative and quantitative techniques can illuminate relationships among culture, health and healing and 2) an intensive double session on "Confronting Global Challenges to TB and HIV: The Politics of Responsibility." The first part of the program examined global TB issues such as drug resistance and disparities in treatment access, while the second half spotlighted projects intended to address health care inequities. In addition to these featured sessions, SMA members in attendance could select from a rich program featuring more than four dozen sessions focusing on health issues. While SMA attendance was not tracked, the SfAA Business Office reports a total joint meeting attendance of nearly 1000 registrants, and indicates that a significant percentage were drawn by the medical anthropology sessions Several new initiatives were also undertaken this year. The first entailed building community. This required reframing the charge of the SMA from being a society which held a meeting and sponsored a journal and prizes to becoming a network of medical anthropologists. In support of this network, a new interactive and resource rich SMA web site was developed (www.medanthro.net). The site was launched just prior to the 2002 AAA meeting in New Orleans and is a terrific source of information for teaching, research and funding as well as a hub for scholarly exchange. As of Jan 1, 2003 over 9,000 people had visited the site although its existence had not yet been publicized. Funds were allocated to develop and maintain the web site and a quarter time web master, Betsy Brada, was hired to update the website weekly. A second initiative was to choose a yearly topic for intensive SMA deliberation, a topic having important
policy implications. A "SMA takes a stand" process was initiated to educate the SMA about the topic and invite discussion about anthropology's role in addressing it. The topic chosen for the year was the ethics and politics of clinical trials. A third initiative involved the SMA reaching out to practicing as well as academic based anthropologists. SMA president Mark Nichter joined an AAA/SFAA commission looking into how practicing anthropologists might be better served by the AAA and he has attempted to use the SMA as an exemplar toward this end. New SMA awards were approved by the SMA board for both best mentor (to reward teaching) as well as for an engaged anthropologist who best exemplifies the practice of medical anthropology in solving of real world problems. A fourth initiative was to increase communication with the federal government and non-profit foundations as a means of increasing our visibility and ability to compete for resources. Toward this end an ad hoc commission was set up by Suzanne Heurtin-Roberts a former SMA board member and a member of the AAA public policy commission.

Financial Affairs
The budget of the SMA is sufficient to meet all of its current activities. Except for the 25% time web developer, expenditures for 2002 are consistent with past years. The new MAQ Editorial costs will be lower by about $12,000. Projections for 2003 suggest that the budget will balance. To meet expected rises in the cost of maintaining an active SMA web page, the SMA Executive Board raised dues by $8(regular) and $5 (students).

Membership
Membership in the SMA is steady. SMA currently has about 1,500 members.

The Medical Anthropology Quarterly
In the past year there were a total of 69 submissions to MAQ, of which 15 were accepted for publication, 32 were rejected, and 22 were revise and resubmit. The average time from submission to notification of the author was just under 70 days. A new editor has been selected for the journal (Pamela Erickson of the University of Connecticut) and an editorial transfer commenced on 1 September and was completed by 31 December 2002. The editorial office at the University of Iowa continued to deal with manuscripts and journal issues in process through December, with all new manuscripts after 1 September handled by the U-Conn office and all other responsibilities and files transferred as of the end of the calendar year.

Annual Meeting
Sixteen organized sessions were formally submitted to the AAA. All were accepted by the Section Editor for SMA. Of these, 14 were scheduled by the AAA and two were not. The SMA sponsored four invited sessions, two were co-sponsored. The SMA used all of its allocated 7.5 hours for invited sessions on the programs.

One hundred seventy-seven (177) individually volunteered papers were submitted. These were organized by the Section Editor into 12 sessions and forwarded to the AAA. Three of these sessions were not scheduled for a total of 21 individually volunteered papers that were not scheduled.
Prizes and Awards
Student and professional awards - The judges for this year's SMA prize competition coordinated by Vinecaane Adams included 1) Polgar prize: Gay Becker, Charles Briggs and Mac Marshal 2) Hughes Graduate Student Prize: Kamran Ali, Jean Langford and Matthew Kohrman and 3) Rivers Undergraduate Prize: Michele Rivkin-Fish, Lili or Nana Owusu Darkwa and Leslie Butt. Submissions for prizes were up. For the Rivers Prize, we received eleven submissions and the Hughes Prize 19 submissions. This year's winner of the Rivers undergraduate Prize was China Star for her essay entitled "You aren't the first and you won't be the last: Unmarried Motherhood in Contemporary Rural Ireland". This year we had two winners of the Hughes Graduate Student Paper Prize: Michael Oldani (Princeton) for his essay "Thick Prescriptions: towards and Anthropology of Pharmaceutical Sales Practices" and Sylvain Perdigon, for essay is entitled: "Words around an infamous woman". the winner of this year's Polgar Prize for the best essay in volume 15 of MAQ goes to Kenyon Stebbins, for his essay "Going like Gangbusters: Transnational Tobacco Companies "making a killing" in South America."

Eileen Basker Memorial Prize
We received 7 nominations for the 2002 competition, from both the USA and the UK. The winner is Rhoda Ann Kanaaneh, for her book Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel, published by the University of California Press (2002). Two honourable mentions (but no cash prizes) were given to Elisabeth Croll for her book Endangered Daughters: Discrimination and Development in Asia (Routledge 2000) and to Ellen Gruenbaum for The Female Circumcision Controversy: An Anthropological Perspective (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

Nominations and Elections
Craig Janes became our new President-Elect, Carolyn Sargent and Linda -Anne Rehbun were elected to the SMA Executive Board and Kari Olsen became the new Student Member of the Executive Board. Election procedures were modified for the student representative. The period of tenure for this position has been changed to three years with the occupants third year in office being used to mentor a newly elected student board member. Sabrina Chase remains on the board in this mentorship capacity till 2004.

Anthropology News Column
Nancy Vuckovic and Janelle Taylor became the new co-editors of the Newsletter this fall taking over from Anne Miles and Fred Bloom. Given the column's meager allocation of space, provisions have been made to shift much SMA discussion to the SMA web site. In 2002 the SMA News column focused on Society news, especially awards and prizes, short commentaries, conference announcements and reports, and it featured a vision statement by the SMA President.