Annual Report 2004-Society for Medical Anthropology
January 31, 2005

Submitted by Craig Janes, SMA President

Members of the SMA Board from Jan 1, 2004 to Nov. 19, 2004
Ad Hoc Non-voting Board Members Pam Erickson, Editor MAQ
Craig Janes, President Nancy Vuckovic, News Column Co-Ed.
Mark Nichter, Past President Janelle Taylor, News Column Co-Ed.
Arachu Castro, Secretary-Treasurer Sabrina Wooley, Gov't Liaison
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Lesley Sharp New Ad Hoc Members: Joao Biehl Lauren Wynne,
Webmaster Wenda Trevathan Vincanne Adams Retiring Ad Hoc
Members: Linda Hunt Betsey Brada, Webmaster Helen Lambert
Kari Olsen, Student Representative New Board Members, starting
Nov. 19, 2004: Marcia Inhorn, President-Elect Elisa Sobo Doug
Feldman Katherine Timura (student representative) Retiring Board
Members: Mark Nichter, Past President Wenda Trevathan Vincanne
Adams Kari Olsen (student representative)

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Given the last-minute rescheduling of the annual AAA meetings,
this was anything but a "normal" year. During the crisis, and on
behalf of the SMA board, I surveyed the membership of the SMA.
The membership indicated very low turnout at the rescheduled AAA
meetings in Atlanta, and authorized the board to meet to conduct
Society business in San Francisco on November 19, 2004. All other
official SMA activities, including our annual business meeting, were
cancelled. Many of the activities essential to the
continuation/development of SMA initiatives did not occur, and this
is reflected to some extent in this report.

Subsequent to the cancellation of SMA's activities at the AAA
meetings, arrangements were made with the leadership of the
Society for Applied Anthropology (Erve Chambers, Linda
Whiteford, and Tom May), to transfer sessions originally scheduled
for the AAA to the spring 2005 SfAA meetings if presenters were
unable to attend the rescheduled 2004 AAA meetings. In all, 9
sessions, 4 individual papers/posters, and one roundtable-type
discussion sessions were transferred to the SfAA from the 2004
AAA schedule.

It is important to note that neither we nor the presenters considered this to be a "protest" move. Rather, and given our close relationship with the SfAA, we saw this as an alternative venue for some of those wishing to present and discuss research, and who could not attend the rescheduled meetings in Atlanta. The number of papers/symposia transferred to the SfAA were relatively small in number, and represent a minority of SMA sessions originally scheduled for the 2004 AAA meetings. Several of the invited sessions will be re-proposed for the 2005 AAA meetings.

As this suggests, our relationship with the SfAA continues to be a positive one. Our joint, bi-annual meetings have been a great success. We bring in several hundred additional attendees and presentations, which enhance the scholarly breadth and content of the conference, while at the same time generating revenue for the SfAA. On our part, we have the opportunity to hold a Spring meeting at virtually no cost to the Society. [The SfAA handles all logistics and local arrangements. The SMA reviews and organizes SMA-sponsored sessions.] Our next (planned) meeting with SfAA will be held in April, 2006, in Vancouver, British Columbia.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS -- Narrative

Upon taking office as President last year, I indicated to the membership (in the AN News Column) that I had several items on my agenda. Briefly these were to:

* Continue to build the website and other means of electronic communication, which Mark Nichter began in earnest when he became president.

**Accomplishments:** Website development has been considerable (see detailed report below). We have established a permanent budget and payment mechanism for the SMA webmaster; we continually add to the number, diversity of pages accessible from the website (Mark Nichter is to be acknowledged for continuing his efforts in this regard); and we established a moderated, medical anthropology list-serve through H-Net (H-Net Medanthro). List moderation needs to be further organized so that we have a larger pool of editors willing and able to take on stints as moderators, and a lead editor willing to organize a moderation schedule and act as the SMA liaison with H-Net. With over 400 hits per day, the website is proving to be a valuable resource for members and other interested publics. The list-serve has come on a bit more slowly, but postings are consistent,
* Enhance the public policy presence of the SMA.

**Accomplishments:** Mark Nichter developed the "Takes a Stand" initiative, where current topics are debated in electronic and conference venues, ideally with the product of external publications, white papers, etc. The Board is evaluating this initiative; so far one "stand" has developed sufficient steam to "go public" - the debate over the ethics of international clinical trials, especially exploitation of people from poor countries by transnational pharmaceutical corporations. Kate MacQueen and Mark Nichter have been the primary energy behind this initiative. We are currently working to take on a second issue - that of explaining, and addressing, health disparities. Our interest here is to insure that medical anthropology contributes to the ongoing, and growing, conversation on this topic. Our first public event was to occur at the 2004 AAA meetings; this has been rescheduled to the SfAA meetings in April. Additional events are planned for the 2005 AAA meetings.

* Develop a more active and visible SMA board.

**Accomplishments:** The SMA board has traditionally met just once per year during the AAA meetings. Except for the month or two running up to the AAA meetings, there has been relatively little communication amongst the Board. During the AAA meetings, the Board is busy preparing for the annual business meeting, which involves developing reports of the past year's activities. Relatively little time is spent on future initiatives. These practices have impaired the Board's ability to take on policy initiatives, or do much beyond the normal conduct of business. I have thus proposed a Spring retreat - to be held in conjunction with the SfAA every even year, and in the town/on the campus of the SMA president in odd years. This proposal was accepted by the Board, and an initial budget of $10,000 was established to fund the Spring meeting.

Other accomplishments include the following:

**Joint Meetings with the Society for Applied Anthropology, 2004.**

The Society for Medical Anthropology meets bi-annually with the Society for Applied Anthropology. The SfAA provides the meeting space, and makes all local arrangements. The SMA board appoints a program committee to review proposed SMA-sponsored sessions. In April, 2004 we met with the SfAA in Dallas. Mimi Nichter and Kathy Oths were appointed by the Board to head the program
committee. The committee reviewed and approved 22 official SMA sessions, including a formal SMA plenary and reception. The meetings were well-attended and by all reports, successful. Our next official joint meeting is in 2006, in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Financial Affairs

The SMA fund balance was $135,127.83 on December 31, 2003, and $134,414.48 on November 30, 2004. The Basker Prize (maintained as a separate fund) balance was $10,593.54 on December 31, 2003, and $10,988.50 on November 30, 2004. Revenues for 2004 were projected at $74,017 and expenditures were projected at $82,819; thus, the projected deficit for 2004 was -$8,802. By the end of November our revenues had fallen about $4,000 short of projections. Expenditures were on target, so we expect that once December expenditures are calculated, the end of the year will show the SMA in considerable deficit (perhaps as much as $12,000). Partly this is due to a substantial and significant decline in membership. At the end of November we had 1,370 members. This is down from 1,438 one year ago, and 1,508 in November, 2003. While membership normally fluctuates over the year, I am a bit concerned with the November downturn. Some of this may be attributed to the moving and rescheduling of the AAA meetings, though the introduction of AnthroSource (with all MAQ issues now on-line) may have had an impact on membership as well. This bears watching.

Outlook for 2005: The Society will continue to maintain a fund balance at the end of the year and into the immediate future. However, we anticipate cost overruns due to increased MAQ expenses (mainly due to publication and UCP management fees), enhanced web services, and the potential of declining income due to falling membership numbers. New costs related to AnthroSource will likely affect our membership and have budget implications. We have been assured that given the strength of MAQ, new revenues will begin to flow into the Society's coffers. However, it is too early to tell exactly what the long-term budgetary impact of AnthroSource will be. With declining revenues from membership (should this trend continue) coupled with increased costs for the MAQ and other SMA activities, we will need to realize increased revenue from MAQ subscriptions if we are to avoid excessive deficits.

The Medical Anthropology Quarterly

The Medical Anthropology Quarterly continues to function smoothly under the leadership of Pamela Erickson. Pam's term ends
at the end of next year, and so a search for a new Editor will need to
begin in earnest in the Spring. This will be one of the main items on
the Spring 2005 Board Meeting agenda.

Since November 2003, the MAQ processed 109 manuscripts: 46
new submissions, 20 revised and resubmitted manuscripts, and 43
manuscripts that were still in process in 2003. Of the 46 new
submissions, 11 are in process (i.e., have not yet been read by the
Editor) and 35 had dispositions: 27 were rejected (77%), two were
publish with revisions (6%), two were revise and resubmit (6%),
four were withdrawn by the author (11%), and none were given the
final clearance for publication. The acceptance rate for new
manuscripts submitted this year will be about 14%.

For all of the manuscripts dealt with during this reporting period, the
average turn around time from submission to decision was about 4.3
months. For manuscripts that went out for review, the average time
from submission to decision was 7 months. The average age of
manuscripts still in process is 5 months. The main problem in
reducing the turn-around rate is in the process of finding reviewers,
getting their commitment to review, and receiving reviews in a
timely manner.

In 2004 the total costs of producing the MAQ, including UCP
management fees, were projected to total $107,779. As of the end of
November, 2004, total costs were $95,603.39. The costs of the
editorial office at the University of Connecticut are projected to
come in at just over $45,000 for 2004, slightly above the projected
figure of $44,109. Dues revenues flowing into the MAQ budget
were projected to be $63,819 in 2004. With total dues revenues of
just over $70,000, this leaves few funds for other SMA activities,
though our large fund balance will keep us solvent for the near
future. I have to confess that I do not understand how revenues will
be redistributed to the publication-sponsoring sections as
AnthroSource comes fully on-line and begins to erode section
membership numbers.

Future Activities: Planned for 2005 is the implementation of an
internet-based manuscript workflow/peer review system that will
handle tracking, follow-up, and correspondence and will be
implemented at no monetary cost to SMA or MAQ as part of the
Mellon Foundation grant to AAA. However, the editorial office
staff will need to invest the time to learn the software and set up the
system.

Susan Skomal of AAA would like the SMA to consider charging a
manuscript processing fee for authors who are not members of SMA and submit manuscripts to MAQ in 2005. Currently only two AA journals do so - AA and AE. AA will charge $100 per submission from non-members in 2005. The Board voted in 2004 to table this item for the near future.

**Website Development**

During 2004, the SMA site received 163,320 visitors, with an average of 445 per day. The average visitor visits three pages and stays on the site for slightly under three minutes. While the summer months saw a slight decline in the number of visitors, the site received more than 10,000 during every month of 2004. The months of March and December saw the highest numbers of visitors, with about 16,000 each. The pages visited most frequently are the front page, the main page of the Academic Resources section, the main page of the Jobs section, the main page of the Special Interest Groups section, and the Graduate Programs index page in Academic Resources. A vast majority (103,537) of the site's visitors came without online referral. The most frequent referring pages were Google, Yahoo, and the AAA's Sections and Interest Groups and Careers pages.

We have expanded our topical resources section to include twenty topics. Recent additions to that section include Aging, Gambling, and Migrant Health pages. Our collection of syllabi has expanded to include links to hundreds of downloadable files and instructor or institution webpages, all organized under forty topics. A special Tsunami section was created in early January 2005 and features two pages: one with links to various non-profit organizations and their relief efforts and a second that features health-related news from affected areas.

In October of 2004, Lauren Wynne, a Ph.D. student at the University of Chicago, took on the Webmaster position from Betsey Brada.

**Future Activities:** Plans for the site in 2005 include creating a section for practicing anthropologists; building a database of films relevant to medical anthropologists and other health social scientists; expanding the History section to increase the collection of SMA documents and to maintain records of members filling leadership positions; maintaining an up-to-date collection of MAQ abstracts; and building a database to link scholars to students with similar interests for research internships.
The SMA was allocated 7.50 hours (450 minutes) for Invited Sessions and 16 poster presentations. We received 95 individual paper submissions and 32 organized session submissions. We organized nine sessions thematically from individual volunteered papers. We selected five of the organized session submissions as invited sessions.

Of the total submissions, the AAA program committee ultimately accepted 27 sessions, including the invited sessions, and rejected 21. Five of the sessions composed of individually volunteered papers and organized by the SMA program chairs were accepted. Of the 16 posters submitted, we rejected four and accepted 12, which we organized into a poster session entitled "Representations of Health and Human Suffering."

The high rejection rate resulted in the loss of a number of highly ranked SMA organized and volunteered sessions. Late in the process (August 27), we were informed that the SMA had been allotted an additional two sessions. We added two that had been highly ranked and rejected; these are counted among the 27 sessions accepted. A message to the AAA section leadership from Tanya Luhrmann reported on meeting scheduling, reasons for session rejection, and the necessity for scheduling more sessions on Wednesday and Sunday. Large sections such as the SMA were assigned especially numerous sessions at these less popular times.

In contrast to 2004, in 2003 there were 29 SMA sessions submitted and 25 accepted. There were 106 individually volunteered papers organized into eight paper sessions and one poster session.

**Considerations for the Future:** The process of creating volunteered sessions composed of individual paper submissions seems inherently problematic. This year, the procedures involved first grading the individual papers, then compiling them in sessions by theme, and finally, grading the sessions. This process results in sessions comprising papers with a range of grades; one "A" paper might be thematically placed in a session with four "C" papers. The session would then not be ranked highly enough to be accepted. When the SMA raised this issue with Lucille Horn at the AAA office, she suggested organizing the volunteered papers by quality, rather than by theme. Attendance would then be based on individual papers, rather than by session topic. No sections seem to have adopted this approach, which would make it difficult for meeting participants to select a session to attend. This issue merits discussion.
by the SMA Board to determine whether we can suggest a more equitable process for placing individual submissions in sessions.

**Special Interest Groups**

Most of the special interest groups did not meet this year. We did receive, via e-mail to our interest group liaison, Joao Biehl, the following brief reports:

Elisa Sobo reported on progress in organizing a new interest group devoted to infant and child health. The following is their proposed Mission Statement:

The Council on Infant and Child Health & Welfare (CICH) is a special interest group (SIG) of the Society of Medical Anthropology (SMA) of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). The purpose of CICH is to provide a forum for the communication and interaction of persons interested in all aspects of child health (broadly defined), including researchers, parents, and providers. Members share information and ideas at the yearly AAA meetings as well as through a website maintained by SMA and at other meetings and through other media when possible. Members also organize and present child-health sessions for the AAA and other anthropological meetings.

Doug Goldsmith reported on the activities of the Aids and Anthropology Research Group (AARG):

AARG was disappointed not to meet in San Francisco, where we had hoped to begin work on several acknowledgement projects, including 'AIDS Memorial Squares' and a memorial page on our website. We did hold a small meeting at the Atlanta AAA 'meeting' where a half dozen AARG members met several interested prospective members, and where our Clark Taylor Professional Paper Prize winner was announced. She is Kathleen Erwin, PhD, and her submission was "The Circulatory System: Blood Donation, AIDS and 'Gift' Exchange in China." We have great hopes for resuming our work at the Santa Fe SfAA meeting, where we will meet at noon on Friday to present that award, and are very excited about that evening's Wine-and-Cheese reception where AARG will honor both the paper prize winner, and Clark Taylor for whom the prize was newly re-named.

**Graduate Student Activities Report**

The graduate student representative, Kari Olson, reported the
following accomplishments for 2004:

*Listserve and Directory:* The SMA Student Affairs Committee has come together as a group this year. We are connected by way of an active list serve with 132 members. We also created a membership directory that includes each student's university affiliation, contact information and research interests. We will update the directory annually.

*AAA Special Event:* In 2003 Hannah Gilbert, a graduate student at McGill and a member of the SMA Student Affairs Committee, organized our annual student sponsored Special Event on Theoretical Research: Making it Matter in the Public Realm. The event was held on Thursday evening and participants included Sharon Kaufman, M. Catherine Maternowska, Mimi Nichter, Noel Chrisman and Linda Bennett.

*2004 Annual Meeting:* We were unable to hold a SMA Student Affairs Committee meeting this year. Next year Catherine Timura, our newly elected SMA Student Representative will convene a meeting.

*New Student Representative:* This year, Catherine Timura was elected as the new SMA Graduate Student Representative. Catherine is a PhD candidate at Yale in Cultural Anthropology. She is currently conducting dissertation research on Indigenous Identity and Therapeutic Decision-Making in Children's Illnesses in Salasaca, Ecuador. She has interned and worked at the Department of Traditional and Complementary Medicine at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. Catherine has already been active in our group as a member of the SMA Graduate Student Mentor Award selection committee. At this time, I'd like to welcome Catherine and wish her well in her term as student representative.

*First Annual Graduate Student Mentor Award:* In 2003 we established the SMA Annual Graduate Student Mentor Award and on November 19 the first award was presented to Dr. Joan Ablon, Professor Emerita of Medical Anthropology in the Department of Anthropology, History, and Social Medicine in the School of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco. The selection committee included Sabrina Chase, Catherine Timura, Vickie Ramirez, Jill Owczarzak and Kari Olson. We selected Dr. Ablon based on the strength and volume of nomination letters we received from her former students and for evidence of her career-long commitment to mentoring students in medical anthropology.
Nomination materials for the five other award nominees will be held by the committee and they will be considered for the award for the next two years.

**Prizes and Awards**

The SMA gives seven awards: The Polgar award is given to the "best" article published in the preceding volume of the MAQ. The WHR Rivers and Charles Hughes prizes are given to outstanding undergraduate and graduate essays, respectively. The Eileen Basker award is given for an extended case study on gender and health. This year we added three new awards: the SMA Career Achievement Award, which honors career-long contributions to medical anthropology; the Practicing Medical Anthropology Award, given in recognition of contributions in applied medical anthropology; and the Annual Graduate Student Mentorship Award, given in recognition of excellence in graduate student mentorship (described above).

Board member Vincanne Adams led the committees to select the Polgar, WHR Rivers, and Charles Hughes prizes. The committees included, for the Polgar prize, Pamela Erikson (our current MAQ editor), Lorna Rhodes (U of Washington), and Peter Guarnaccia (Rutgers); for the Hughes graduate student award, James Pfeiffer (Case Western), Steve Ferzacca (Canada), Joao Biehl (Princeton); and for the Rivers undergraduate award, Paul Brodwin (Univ. of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), Simon Lee (National Cancer Institute), and Adriana Petryna (New School).

This year's winner of the Rivers undergraduate Prize was Tiffany Star Behringer, from the University of Pennsylvania, in recognition of the excellence of her essay, "Changing paradigms of the one-child Policy: Exploring the Cultural Model of Reproduction and Gender Role of Chinese Immigrant Women." The winner of the Hughes Graduate Student Paper Prize this year went to Benjamin Hickler for his essay "Sexually Violent Predators and the Truth about the Future." The winner of this year's Polgar Prize for the best essay in volume 17 of MAQ goes to Charles Briggs, for his essay entitled: "Why Nation-States and Journalists Can't Teach People to be Healthy: Power and Pragmatic Miscalculation in Public Discourses on Health".

Entries for the Eileen Basker award were judged by a committee composed of: Virginia Dominguez, Sarah Franklin and Helen Lambert. An Honorable Mention was given to Anne Line Dalsgaard's ethnography, *Matters of Life and Longing: Female*

The First Career Achievement Award was selected by a committee which included Linda-Anne Rebhun, Linda Hunt, Robert Rubinstein, and Lawrence Cohen. The award was given to Cecil Helman, a physician who is well-known for his contributions to clinically-applied medical anthropology.

Linda-Anne Rebhun also led the committee to select the recipient of our first Practicing Medical Anthropology Award. The committee included Nora Groce and Kitty Corbett. The Award was given to Merrill Singer.

Hickler, Ablon, and Helman were able to attend an informal awards ceremony, Nov. 19, 2004 at the Canterbury Hotel in San Francisco.

SUMMARY

To summarize, our annual accomplishments include the following:

* Sustaining the business of the SMA throughout the AAA crisis
* Significant progress on SMA initiatives:
  o SMA "Takes a stand" on public policy issues
  o Website development has been successful
* We launched the H-Net Medanthro list-serve
* We concluded a successful Spring meeting in conjunction with the SfAA
* Three new awards acknowledging career contributions, practicing medical anthropology, and graduate student mentorship were launched. *

The Society has several concerns and faces significant challenges. These include:

* Declining membership, coupled with markedly increased costs (13% for 2005) of producing the MAQ (these are management and publication costs over which the SMA Board has no control) appear poised to produce significant deficits by the end of next year. Projections are that we will overspend revenue by over $26,000 next year. If deficits are not corrected, we will expend our fund balance in short order. *
* The cause of our decline in membership is unknown, though we suspect it is related to the AAA meeting crisis and the launching of AnthroSource. The Board will consider the membership question during its Spring meeting. Information from other sections suggest that membership decline was not consistent across the Association.

* Budget deficits will have a significant impact on our other activities and initiatives: awards, website maintenance and development, and our efforts to enhance SMA's public profile.

* The process of creating volunteered sessions out of individually-submitted papers is inherently problematic. The SMA and AAA need to figure out a procedure to handle individual paper submissions so that papers of high quality are not rejected because the panel to which they are assigned is deemed, overall, to be of lower quality.

Our **future plans** include the following:

* The SMA board will meet for the first time in what we hope is an annual Spring retreat. We intend this meeting to provide the Board greater opportunity for creativity in meeting the challenges that face the SMA and making the SMA a more public player in national and international health arenas.

* We will organize a joint meeting with the SfAA in Spring, 2006 in Vancouver, British Columbia

* We will begin a search for a new editor of the MAQ.

**Needs for consideration by the AAA Executive Board:**

We would like the Board to help us address the future impact of AnthroSource on the SMA budget. Our long-range planning is seriously impaired by budgetary uncertainty and the projection of large and increasing budget deficits. With a projected deficit of nearly $27,000 in 2005, driven by declining membership and increasing UCP management fees charged to the MAQ, the Board is concerned about the future financial health of the Society.