1. Status, Activities, and Accomplishments

Membership Numbers: As of October 2007, ALLA’s membership was at 195, including 103 regular and 92 student members. Since membership stood at 190 in December 2006, these figures show relatively stable membership numbers over the course of 2007. This represents a membership plateau, so to say, that will quite likely subsist for the immediate future.

ALLA’s structural and disciplinary position, representing a racialized academic constituency whose recruitment we do not control but also a relatively emergent body of knowledge in the AAA as well, have generally circumscribed the section’s ability to draw members. ALLA officers and members are both conscious and concerned about membership, not the least because numbers have unfortunately taken center place in recent AAA governance debates. The section participated in the membership drive that AAA staff organized in the meeting’s exhibition hall. Our goal was to gain exposure but also stress inclusiveness through a flyer proclaiming, “You don’t have to be Latino to join ALLA” and “Support Diversity in the AAA.” Our restructuring of the Executive Board, allocating a position to a graduate student representative, should facilitate outreach and recruitment among rising cohorts.

The pending proposition to “grandfather” ALLA and exempt it from the bylaws’ minimum membership requirement as a “historically underrepresented” constituency is for us a welcome development given our strictures. Yet the section is strongly invested in collegially supporting other small sections that are similarly essential for the AAA’s intellectual vibrancy. Our concern about the need to protect the AAA’s intellectual ecology led me, as ALLA’s president to become involved in the SA subcommittee that will presently be considering governance issues.

Finances: ALLA’s finances are generally adequate, yet index its status as a modest AAA section. Michael Montoya’s treasurer’s report showed net assets of $15,562.33 at the end of October 2007. Expenses mostly amounted to supporting our graduate student representative’s meeting attendance. As a non-publishing section, ALLA is not directly affected by the complications and controversies that Anthrosource
appears to have visited upon publishing sections. The possibility of initiating special publishing projects was discussed at both the board and the business meeting, not so much for its financial aspect, but for the visibility it would bring the section and the means it would give members to disseminate their scholarship.

Meeting highlights: ALLA activities at the 2007 meeting were as follows:

ALLA-Sponsored Panels:

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<tr>
<td>0-046</td>
<td>Boundary Construction, Activism, and Disciplinary Mediations</td>
<td>Wed. 11/28, 2:00-3:45 PM</td>
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<td>1-059</td>
<td>Making Sense of Latino/Latin American Popular Culture: (Alternative) Modes of Knowing &amp; Communicating in a Multicultural World</td>
<td>Thurs., 11/29, 10:15 AM-12:00 PM</td>
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<td>2-119</td>
<td>The Politics of Space and Otherness: Mapping Latina/o Spatial Interconnectedness and Investigative Frameworks Across Transnational Landscapes</td>
<td>Fri., 11/30, 1:45-3:30 PM</td>
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<td>3-123</td>
<td>Anti-affirmative Action Campaigns and the Shifting Terrain of Civil Rights and Diversity Politics</td>
<td>Sat., 12/1/, 4:00 -5:45 PM</td>
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ALLA Special Events:

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<td>Mentoring Events for Students of Color</td>
<td>Wed., 11/28, 6:15-7:30 PM</td>
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<td>1-073</td>
<td>Board Meeting</td>
<td>Thurs., 11/29, 12:15 -1:30 PM</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-166</td>
<td>Business Meeting</td>
<td>Thurs., 11/29, 6:15-7:30 PM</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co-Sponsored Reception (ALLA, ABA, AFA, SANA, SLACA, SOLGA)</td>
<td>Thurs., 11/29, 7:30-9:00PM</td>
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Internal communications: ALLA instituted both a list serve and a website some years ago. Unfortunately, section work over this past year was somewhat hampered by communication issues, since ALLA’s long-time webmaster, former President Rubén Mendoza, had to step down and the section was unable to recruit a new webmaster to reconfigure and update both electronic resources. At the business meeting, it was decided to seek AAA support for setting up a new ALLA list serve as well as a website. Samuel Himes was contacted and arrangements have been made for this purpose. Nevertheless, information concerning section activities and events circulated widely through the list serve and other networks that members belong to.
Outreach and collaboration: ALLA has historically been strongly oriented toward collaborative work. One of our meeting panels was co-sponsored with ABA and the mentoring session for graduate students of color was organized by our Executive Board student representative, Aide Acosta, in collaboration with her CAE and ABA counterparts. Our meeting reception, long institutionalized as a jointly sponsored event with SLACA, was this year co-sponsored by a veritable consortium that included ABA, AFA, SANA, and SOLGA as well. CAE has already approached us to join this consortium for the next meeting.

ALLA’s Executive Board unanimously agreed to support the resolution opposing the U.S. Census Bureau’s classification of bilingual children as “linguistically isolated” that originated in the language rights task force of the AAA Committee for Human Rights. Spanish-speaking Latino children are egregiously affected by this racialization of their communicative competence.

Monica Russell y Rodríguez chaired the 2007 ALLA Book Award committee. Working with members Gina Pérez and Alejandro Gradilla, the committee solicited submissions directly from national presses. The 2007 award went to Sylvia Rodríguez for her book, Acequía (SAR Press); honorable mention went to Christian Zolniski for Janitors, Street Vendors, and Activists: The Lives of Mexican Immigrants in the Silicon Valley (California). The ALLA Book Award is now successfully institutionalized as an annual event after a lapsed period of several years. For the first time since we launched the award in 1999, the AAA meeting program included it among the organization’s awards and previous awardees were duly acknowledged.

Former presidents Paule Cruz-Takash and Rubén Mendoza, who long supported the establishment of a section for indigenous anthropologists, worked closely with American Indian colleagues to achieve it. This year, the AAA Executive Board finally approved the founding of the Association for Indigenous Anthropologists, another instance of our collaboration with other historically underrepresented colleagues.

Section Governance: In 2006, ALLA membership approved the allocation of an Executive Board position to a graduate student representative. Our 2007 ballot included candidates for president, treasurer, the student representative board position, and an additional board member at-large. All of these positions were successfully filled. A 2006 amendment to the bylaws establishing overlapping presidential and president-elect terms as well as the incorporation of former presidents as Past Presidents into the Executive Board went into effect this year. Throughout 2007, Michael Montoya, originally elected to an at-large EB position gracefully
stepped in as acting treasurer when our elected treasurer resigned to preside over a sister section. At our Executive Board meeting, we decided to fill the secretary position that had been vacant for several years and nominations were successfully solicited at the business meeting.

ALLA’s rate of submissions to Anthropology News has vastly improved. The section’s co-editors, Paule Cruz-Takash and Mariela Nuñez-Janes, submitted section columns in all but two issues over the course of the year.

2. Future plans or activities

Future projects: As noted, the ALLA Executive Board is discussing the possibility of developing edited volumes in the subfield. We expect to sustain the impetus that our book award has achieved with the consistency it now has and hope that it reaches the visibility and prestige that other AAA awards now enjoy.

We expect to have solved communication obstacles by drawing on AAA technical resources for our list serve and a website.
3. On-going concerns

In a sense, the membership issue embodies institutional and ideological complexities that are not easily addressed through a membership “drive” as conventionally construed. Although we have begun to discuss whether anything as apparently straightforward—yet highly controversial among many of our members—as changing the section name to de-emphasize “identity,” the fact is that Latino Studies as such remains a relatively marginalized knowledge field, even in anthropology. As much was evident in the reaction that the proposition to exempt it from the membership numbers requirement brought about, particularly among the leadership of other small and medium size sections. However unconsciously, some of the terms in which the debate erupted appeared frankly racializing to us when they could be read as arguing that the sections for historically underrepresented constituencies were somehow getting a free ride through this “grandfathering.”

Given the impasse in which governance issues and changes were mired by the end of the meeting, it is unclear at this point whether ALLA will effectively be exempt from the number requirement. A strict formalist application of the bylaws will certainly impinge upon our ability to retain section status.

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