2007 Annual Report

STATUS, ACTIVITIES, AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Membership and Dues
The October 30, 2007 report from the AAA (the most recent available) stated that SAC has 122 regular, 80 student, 16 Retired, 11 Associate, 1 Joint, 1 Life, and 8 International members, for a total membership of 239. This represents an increase of 9 members over the previous October.

During 2007, our membership numbers ranged from a high of 239 to a low of 218. Since our member numbers usually hover just under 250, SAC is concerned about the recent proposal to change the AAA by-laws that was approved by the EB and sent to the general membership for voting in spring 2008. As President, I have been urging our members to reject this proposal, as I feel that it would create a new (and disadvantaged) status for SAC and several other small sections simply because we do not represent a “historically-underrepresented” constituency.

At this time, we have no intention of changing our current dues structure.

Communication with Members
To keep our members current on section activities, I mailed out a letter to all members in September 2007. This letter contained information about SAC-sponsored sessions and events in Washington, D.C. and a Call for Papers for our upcoming 2008 Spring Meeting in New Haven, CT. It also included a call for members to submit a new logo design as part of our “SAC Renewal” efforts.

I received an email list of current SAC members (as of Dec. 2007) from the AAA, and am now using that email list to “blast” out periodic emails concerning topics of interest, news, etc. to our members.

Finances
The November 30, 2007 Statement of Net Assets showed that as of that date, SAC had Net Assets of $19,975.21. This figure is above the Net Assets of November 30, 2006 ($18,372.24).

As submitted, our 2008 budget is a little over $1000 in the red despite eliminating all expenses apart from those necessary to maintain our core activities. For example, our publicity budget has been reduced to $0 this year, and this will of course severely affect our abilities to actively recruit new members.
We are hoping that the transition of AnthroSource to Wiley-Blackwell and the increased revenues that we have been told will result will put a stop to the continuing erosion of our fund balance. We realize that it will take some time until we can begin to fully assess what the Wiley-Blackwell agreement will mean for our mid-term and long-range financial plans, but we remain concerned. Our Secretary/Treasurer, our journal editor, and I have been actively involved in discussions with both AAA representatives and one another about the implications of this agreement as well as the changes that will result if we shift to a different allocation model than the one currently in place.

**Elections**

In the spring 2007 elections, Stephen Glazier, Bethe Hagens, Peter Jones (Student Position), and Jeffery MacDonald were elected to the Executive Committee, all for two-year terms. SAC members also voted to approve changes in our section by-laws that bring them back into conformity with AAA by-laws after these had been changed in recent years. There was some lag time between the AAA by-laws changes and our response; I *would suggest that in the future the AAA be more proactive about alerting sections to any changes to AAA by-laws that in turn affect section by-laws, and perhaps suggest some boilerplate language that the sections could then adopt that would bring their by-laws back into line with those of the AAA.*

**AAA Annual Meetings**

The AAA Meetings in Washington featured the following panels that were either invited by or (co)sponsored by SAC:

- Writing Shamanism Today in Theory and Practice
- Caribbean Religions and their Interpenetration/Creolization/Symbiosis: Papers in honor of Leslie G. Desmangles
- Cognitive Theory of Religion
- Redefining Ritual and Consciousness

The SAC 2007 Distinguished Lecture was presented by Stanley Krippner, who spoke on “Answering the Call to Heal: Psychological and Psychophysiological Studies of Brazilian Spiritistic Healers.”

**Spring Meeting**

SAC held its annual spring meeting at the Handlery Hotel & Resort in San Diego, CA from April 4-8, 2007. The theme of the conference was: “Thresholds and Consciousness”. Lourdes Giordani served as Conference Chair, and John Baker as Site Coordinator. Approximately 60 people attended the conference, which continued our tradition of papers during the day and experiential events in the evening.

**SAC Web site**

Although we have several changes and enhancements planned for the SAC website, these have not yet been realized.
Anthropology of Consciousness

Our journal, *Anthropology of Consciousness*, continues to be published on schedule. All past issues of the journal are now available through AnthroSource. SAC continues to be a strong supporter of AnthroSource, but also adheres to a policy of providing members with print copies of the journal as an extra advantage of membership.

In August 2007, Bonnie Glass-Coffin formally took up her duties as editor of AoC with issue 18(2), the second issue of 2007. Charlie Flowerday and other members of the AoC production team assisted Bonnie in the transition to editor. Bonnie is now in the process of revising the process for submitting and soliciting manuscripts and in ensuring that manuscripts are reviewed in a timely manner. She is also reconstituting the Editorial Advisory Board of the journal and introducing other changes in the editorial process. To facilitate this, Bonnie organized a meeting of interested individuals who were attending the AAA meetings in Washington.

**FUTURE PLANS**

*Spring 2008 Meeting*

Our 2008 Annual Spring Meeting will be held at Yale Divinity School from March 19-23, 2008. This meeting, our second on the East Coast, is being co-sponsored by the Yale Divinity School Initiative in Religion, Science & Technology. The theme of the meeting is “Consciousness and Spirit”.

Negotiations are currently underway concerning the venue for the 2009 Annual Spring Meeting. It will likely be held in the Portland, Oregon area.

*SAC “Renewal”*

In Spring 2006, I (as President) initiated a movement to “renew” the Society. At that time, I wrote a letter to the Executive Board in which I noted several areas of concern as well as ways to address these concerns. These included:

1) By-laws changes – SAC needed to make some changes to our by-laws to bring them into agreement with those of the AAA. The language of these changes was worked out in Fall 2006, and the suggested changes were approved by the Executive Board in San Jose. These changes were then approved by the SAC membership during the AAA elections in spring 2007.

2) SAC Image Rebranding – In 2007, members of the Executive Board drafted a new set of mission and vision statements. After a vigorous email discussion among the members of the Executive Board as well as other active members, the following statements were adopted by the Executive Board:
VISION STATEMENT

The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness is dedicated to the study of consciousness and its practical application to contemporary issues.

MISSION STATEMENT

To realize this vision, the mission of SAC is to
• publish the peer-reviewed journal *Anthropology of Consciousness*; convene an Annual Spring Conference that consists of individual papers, panel discussions, and experiential sessions; and host sessions at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association.
• value interdisciplinary perspectives, respect diverse traditions, and prioritize inclusiveness and open dialogue in the study of consciousness.
• support rigorous and empirically-based inquiries into consciousness that utilize diverse methodologies – including ethnographic, scientific, experiential, historical, and alternative ways of knowing.
• reflect on how consciousness and human transformation can be made relevant to the challenges of our age, with the aim of a praxis to catalyze a shift toward a more just world.

Following the adoption of these new vision and mission statements, we announced a call for members and others to submit proposals for a new SAC logo to replace our current Medusa logo. To date, no appropriate design suggestions have been received.

OTHER ITEMS AND CONCERNS

SAC remains very concerned about our membership numbers, especially in light of the proposed AAA by-laws changes that would effectively create a new and “special” status for sections that have less than 250 members and do not represent a “historically underrepresented” constituency.

In spite of massive advertising efforts in the past several years, our membership numbers remain at essentially the same level as in previous years. My conversations with other section heads indicate that many of them share our concerns about membership numbers. This is one reason why I have been asking (since 2005!) that the AAA create a new member category (perhaps “Affiliate Member”) that would allow people outside of the AAA to join an individual Section without joining the AAA. Although the details would need to be worked out, I am proposing that Affiliate Members could receive copies (print and/or electronic) of the publication of their section and would enjoy member rates at the annual meetings of their sections, but would not be allowed to attend the AAA meetings, would not be able to vote in AAA elections, and could not hold Section Office. I am repeating this suggestion again because of comments from heads of other sections that they too would welcome the creation of some such “affiliate membership” category.
I believe that this or some other similar step is necessary to allow sections to grow by recruiting outside of the ranks of current AAA members, thereby expanding the potential outreach of the AAA as well. Recognizing that overseeing the membership accounts of such “affiliate members” would result in increased work for the AAA staff, I also suggest that the dues for affiliate members include a suitable amount to offset the costs of paying AAA staff to complete the necessary work.

During the past few years, I have noted with concern the attrition that has occurred in the AAA staff. In my 2005 report, I noted a substantial decrease in morale among the AAA staff, which may be at least partially responsible for the loss of several experienced individuals in 2006 and 2007. It is my hope that the reasons for the poor morale and staff attrition have been addressed and that further declines in morale and personnel numbers can be avoided. I strongly believe that the well-being of the AAA staff is crucial to the overall vitality of the “mother ship”.


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