President’s Report
Society for Cultural Anthropology

SCA activities and accomplishments during 2007

Officers. For the year 2007 (from the end of the 2006 AAA meeting through the end of the 2007 AAA meeting), the officers of the SCA were as follows:

- President: Judith Farquhar <farquhar@uchicago.edu>
- Secretary: Stacy Leigh Pigg <pigg@sfu.ca>
- Treasurer: Brad Weiss <bweis@wm.edu>
- Journal Editors: Kim Fortun <fortuk@rpi.edu>
  Mike Fortun <fortum@rpi.edu>
- Board Members: Ana Alonso <alonso@U.Arizona.EDU>
  Marisol de la Cadena <mdelac@ucdavis.edu>
  Veena Das <veenadas@jhu.edu>
  Michael Fischer <mfischer@MIT.edu>
  Saba Mahmood <smahmood@berkeley.edu>
  Bill Maurer <wmmaurer@uci.edu>

Membership and Budget. The membership & subscription reports provided by AAA show that SCA and its journal, Cultural Anthropology, remain healthy. The Board is, however, attentively monitoring membership trends, given the possibility that membership might drastically decline as more AAA members switch to one-section membership under the influence of AnthroSource.

Background Information: There were 1,665 members in 2002, the largest membership base in 10 years; by 2006 that number had dropped to 1,483. In 2007 we gained a few members back, showing a total of 1,514 members. This was a loss of 11% in a four-year period.

Data provided by the AAA suggests that both our losses and gains have been more moderate than most sections, but we still feel that the membership situation requires attention. In the face of this overall decline the Board has discussed more restrictive policies with regard to manuscript submissions, spring meeting attendance, and access to services through the new Cultural Anthropology website.

After dramatically increasing between 2000 and 2004 (rising from $19,151 to $46,403.94), print subscription income from CA leveled off in 2005 and 2006 and then markedly declined, to $33,799 in 2007 (per November 30 actuals). This decline is worrying, since income from digital subscriptions via AnthroSource has not yet risen to meet even our 2007 budget expectations (the shortfall by November was $4,696). Partly because the new contract with Wiley-Blackwell has yet to be operationalized, it remains difficult to predict the extent to which new digital edition income will compensate for declining print
subscriptions. The Anthrosource revenue predicted for 2008 is $23,094, but since it includes both print and digital subscriptions, this projection represents a considerable shortfall under 2007 revenues. We realize that the revenue allocation data provided at the end of 2007 may not be a real prediction of total income for the journal, but note that the loss of a separate revenue stream from print subscriptions could be a real problem for *Cultural Anthropology*.

In 2007 revenue from royalties and permissions, totaling more than $8800, made up for some of the shortfall in other revenues and the very high charges assessed by the University of California Press. The “publishing royalty” of $10,684 that we received after the WB contract was signed also helped of course, though this was a one-time payment that cannot be budgeted in the future. In general, though, royalty and permissions revenues are declining, so we become ever more reliant on digital subscription income, still an imponderable.

In the recent past, SCA has been able to balance its budget and, in many years, slowly grow its fund balance. This fortunate financial situation was rather dramatically altered by the start-up of AnthroSource, as I argued in last year’s annual report. Fortunately, SCA had maintained a respectable funds balance over the years and was able to absorb some of the unexpected costs of the transition. Net assets on 11/30/07 were $170,728, up $27,728 from the beginning of the year. This gain partly reflects the fact that 2007 was not a conference year for us. This small gain also includes, of course the unexpected one-time-only publishing royalty noted above. We will not expect to do so well next year: the move to Anthrosource means that for the first time, we have had to use SCA dues to subsidize our journal.

*Cultural Anthropology*. During 2007 editors Kim and Mike Fortun did much to streamline and expand the activities of *Cultural Anthropology*. This year CA began appearing with an expanded page count (it is now 768 pages per volume); this has allowed the journal to include 5 or 6 essays per issue, some of them longer than was possible in the past. The position of part-time Managing Editor, funded from the SCA budget, has been crucial to the unusually smooth working of the journal’s editorial office in a time of expansion. The SCA Board agreed to continue funding that position through 2008. Working with the Electronic Workflow System (EWS) provided by UCP, they have transferred more of the work of submission and reviewing to an on-line automated system.

A theme initiative arising from activism within the AAA resulted in a stellar special issue of CA, “The Coke Complex,” presenting a number of papers on the global economy, international labor conditions, and the transnational beverage industry. A similar initiative is now underway on the topic of “Emergent Indigeneities.” The journal has issued a call for papers and received a large number of proposals from potential authors. In addition, an ongoing project of locating and facilitating the publication of valuable scholarship originally published in languages other than English will result in an occasional feature, “In Translation.”
Much creative effort has been devoted to the *Cultural Anthropology* website, where journal archives and information for contributors are now supplemented with headlined articles, lists of published studies organized by topics and world areas, blogposts, news, and links. The editorial board formed in the first year of the Fortuns’ term as editors has been active far beyond serving as reviewers.

Like other publishing sections, we are relieved to be quit of the fee structure of publishing with the University of California Press. Our concerns now turn to the ongoing work that must be done by the AAA in maintaining an appropriate formula for allocating to sections and individual publications the revenue that will flow from Wiley-Blackwell to the AAA.

**Spring Board Meeting.** The SCA held its annual Spring Board Meeting on May 25-26 in Chicago. Much of the time was spent discussing problems with Anthrosource and UCP, concerns now rendered partly obsolete by the new publishing contract. As we understand from colleagues that not all sections have labored to consider recent AAA events, we underline that our Board has been very active in circulating advance copies of all Anthrosource-related and governance documents for lengthy discussion, both online and in our twice-yearly meetings. A slight change in subscription fees was approved. The 2008 budget for *CA* was approved, including $20,000 in salary for a part-time managing editor. We also discussed implications for our publishing in the long term of new Open Access initiatives in scholarship. And we talked about the Governance Commission report and its implications for Section Assembly representation on the AAA Executive Board.

**AAA Annual Meeting.** SCA sponsored our invited Culture-at-Large Session at the 2007 AAA annual meeting, featuring Belgian philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers. We also subsidized the participation of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, of Brazil, as a member of the panel of discussants.

At the 2007 SCA Business Meeting Board member Michael Fischer and a graduate student jury awarded the sixth annual Cultural Horizons Prize to Shao Jing for his article, “Fluid Labor and Blood Money: The economy of HIV/AIDS in rural central China.” The article appeared in the November 2006 issue of *Cultural Anthropology* (vol. 21, no. 4). Shao Jing is on the faculty of Nanjing University in China.

For the third time, SCA, the American Ethnological Society, and the Association for Feminist Anthropology held a joint reception at the AAA annual meeting. The reception was well-attended and enjoyable, much more successful than last year’s event in San Jose.

**Topics of conversation** at the November Board meeting touched on the various ways we could encourage and reward membership in SCA. The 2008 Program Chair (Stacy Leigh Pigg) will work on more outreach at the time of paper and panel submission for the San Francisco meetings, and we began to plan mentoring activities for graduate students to be undertaken at the 2008 SCA Spring conference. The continuing development of our website, thanks to the active commitment of the *CA* editorial office, is also key to achieving a higher profile in the Association and the field. In support of the CA/SCA website, the Board voted to allocate $5000 additional in 2008 for new web-based initiatives.
Considerable time was spent discussing the implications (and the continuing mysteries) of the new publishing contract with Wiley Blackwell; the Board is poised to continue to cooperate with the AAA publishing staff and to sustain an attentive involvement in the ongoing question of revenue allocations. Also in connection with our publishing program, we decided to ask the AAA and WB to restore the option for individual non-member subscriptions to *CA*. After discussions with Oona Schmid about this the individual subscriptions were restored.

We also discussed pending decisions in the Section Assembly that would have altered AAA bylaws to insure voting representation of the Section Assembly on the Executive Board. The proposed changes stemmed from recommendations of the Governance Commission; SCA had participated in on-line discussion during 2007 and taken positions in favor of voting representation for sections and for a proportional voting system in the election of those representatives from the Section Assembly. (This discussion proved moot in the end, as the Section Assembly the next morning voted to table the structural changes proposed.)

**Other Activities.** The SCA Board participates actively in the nomination of scholars for AAA positions. Of the scholars we nominated in 2006, several were elected. Nominees were also put forward for several AAA positions in 2007.

*SCA requests that the AAA Nominating Committee acknowledge the efforts of sections in making nominations by informing them promptly of the decisions of the nominating committee.*

Proposed changes to the by-laws appeared on the 2006 ballot and were passed. These primarily recognized changes in the organization of AAA, but also involved a more flexible provision for extending the terms of the Secretary and Treasurer.

**Future plans**

Bruce Grant, incoming SCA president (2007-2009), attended the 2007 November Board meeting, as did two new Board members, Peter Redfield and Danilyn Rutherford. All assumed their duties at the end of the San Jose AAA meeting. Mary Murrell, the Student Assembly Representative we appointed in 2007, also attended.

Planning is underway for the 2008 SCA Conference, organized by Bill Maurer and Saba Mahmood. The conference will be held in Long Beach, California, at the oceanliner-hotel Queen Mary which is docked permanently on the Long Beach waterfront. (The hotel is unionized.) This plan continues our tradition of holding conferences in affordable, accessible cities and in charming historic venues. The theme of the conference is “Ethics, Aesthetics, Politics.”

We intend to continue to aggressively develop *CA* and its associated website under the leadership of Kim and Mike Fortun. We see the many new initiatives (new themes, new services, new forms of publicity) now underway, and in the planning stages, as crucial to increasing the scholarly impact and financial viability of the journal and the Section. We are
committed to making the most of on-line accessibility in publishing, including the exploration of Open Source options, and we predict that CA can continue to be a leader among anthropology and critical studies journals in showing how a healthy viability can be achieved under these relatively new conditions.

The SCA Board and the journal editors will continue to work with Oona Schmid, Kim Baker, Suzanne Mattingly, and other AAA staff members to clarify the constraints under which we operate and to provide input for planning longer-term procedures. We appreciate the staff’s efforts to improve the flow of more detailed information to the sections and the journal editors. The CA editors and treasurer of the SCA will continue to seek a level of detail in financial information that can inform our own planning for the future of CA.

Viewing the preliminary report of the AAA Governance Commission as a step in the right direction, the SCA will continue to play a part in seeking a more powerful role for Sections in AAA governance combined with equity for both individual members and for the larger and smaller sections. This process is inseparable from the challenges presented by AnthroSource, as membership levels in (high-budget) publishing sections are increasingly affected.

Main items for consideration by the AAA Executive Board and Long-Range Planning Committee:

1. **Finances.** We see the task of refining the revenue allocation formula for AnthroSource income as the key task of the Association now. This financial issue is not easily separated from structural questions of Association governance. Publishing and non-publishing sections sometimes share an interest in policy issues, and sometimes don’t; large and small sections can find common cause or diverge. But the financial crisis that has developed for some sections (ranging from the large publishing to the small non-publishing) has raised the stakes for everyone, as we watch membership patterns change and the old order of print publishing move away from the center of our concerns.

2. **Governance.** The SCA is committed to the achievement of real voting (rather than merely advisory) representation for the Section Assembly on the AAA Executive Board. The present system, in which various subdisciplines have a few allocated EB seats, does not reflect the real interests of the working organizations that make up the Association. Because it is sections that publish journals, convene scholarly conferences, confer most awards, and organize much activism in relation to the wider society, the AAA must have a structured place for Section interests to be expressed and acted upon. This need was recognized by the Governance Commission and reflected in both of their draft reports. The SCA Board is very disappointed that no action on this issue was recommended by the Section Assembly in November 2007, despite the fact that a viable proposal had been made and much discussed on-line. We are concerned that it can take a long time to reach another such moment, when a reasonable change in procedures would be before us and most of the sections could see their way clear to advocating the necessary by-laws changes.
3. American Anthropologist. Prior to Anthrosource, many SCA individual members and board members expressed puzzlement at receiving a weighty journal that was of limited interest to some, and generated environmental concerns about paper to others. However, SCA was more autonomous at that time, and we recognized the mild benefit of a flagship, four-field journal. The situation has now changed. By undertaking the creation of Anthrosource, the AAA has created a new and (we hope, temporary) financially challenging circumstance of interdependence among all AAA sections and their publications. Our members, like many across the AAA express sticker shock at the corresponding increases in member dues.

Under these circumstances, American Anthropologist must be understood as a journal like all others. To make any informed decisions about section futures, we require the exact same financial information about American Anthropologist that we do for all AAA journals. At the very least, we look for all AAA members to have the option of electronic-only receipt of the journal, or decline of the journal altogether. In later stages we look for the journal to become a fee-based subscription publication in order to reduce (or slow the increase of) AAA general dues.

Two related notes on Sections and the Section Assembly

1. Weighted Voting. There are several closely related issues that may be confounding the issue of Section Assembly representation. One is proportionally weighted voting vs voting by a one-section-one-vote method. In 2007 the SCA and several other sections tried to get proportional voting taken seriously by the other sections, but this initiative was not successful for understandable reasons. (It would have had to be approved by a one-section-one-vote method, of course, and it was probably perceived as only in the interest of the large sections.) As far as SCA is concerned, however, any democratic means of selecting SA representatives to the EB, and making other SA decisions, is acceptable.

2. “EB Representation First, Small Section Status Second.” A confounding issue is the definition of “section” mostly in terms of membership levels. A number of small sections and interest groups, those not included in the Governance Commission’s short list of small sections exempt from the 250-member requirement, no doubt perceive themselves as fighting for their organizational lives as AnthroSource and other less obvious trends drive their membership down. This problem needs to be addressed at the same time that the Section Assembly evolves away from being a merely advisory group. The SCA is open to any deliberative process that can propose a workable solution. Any such solution would have to define sections somehow, and the sections thus authorized would be expected to act as an informed and responsible electorate willing to engage in and support the work of the Section Assembly and the EB. But the SCA does not believe that the question of section definition must be resolved before voting representation on the EB is achieved for the Section Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,
Judith Farquhar
SCA President, 2005-07