1. Membership and Budget

During the past year, the Society for East Asian Anthropology (SEAA hereafter) has continued to serve its members by providing a public face and recognition for the anthropology of East Asia and by organizing panels and a conference on East Asian anthropology. The SEAA membership is at 448 as of October 31, 2007, eight members more than last year at the same time, but the numbers fluctuate from month to month. Financially, the SEAA is in a healthy state. As of October 31, 2007, the section had a balance of $16,865.38, three thousands more than last year. The budgeted expenditure for 2007 was $2,400 and for 2008 is $2500, which shows that our expenditures are still well below our modest revenue. In 2007 we again saved the amount ($500) budgeted for an English-Chinese dictionary of anthropological terminology, as most of the work was done by faculty and student volunteers at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (more on this below). The largest items of expenditure thus far are the SEAA awards (the Hsu book award, the Bestor award for outstanding student paper, and the Plath media prize) and then the cash bar at AAA. As a new section that had no reserves, we have been quite successful to save about half of modest annual revenue generated mainly by a low membership fee of $10. Now with the reserve being built up slowly, the section will be able to organize and sponsor more activities in the coming years. For instance, the SEAA board has decided to provide travel fund for the winner of the Bestor Prize of Outstanding Graduate Student Paper to attend the SEAA annual business meeting and claim the award. The SEAA will also cover some expenditure (such as honorarium for keynote speaker) in the upcoming SEAA conference in Taiwan.

2. Executive Board

SEAA Executive Board officers who served during 2007 were:

Laura Miller (Past-president)    lmille2@luc.edu
Yunxiang Yan (President)     yan@anthro.ucla.edu
Laurel Kendall (President-elect)  lkendall@amnh.org
Lisa Hoffman (secretary)  hoffmanl@u.washington.edu
Glenda S. Roberts (Treasurer)  glendar@waseda.jp
Li Zhang (Councilor)    lizhang@ucdavis.edu
Ian Condry (Councilor)    condry@MIT.EDU
Louisa Schein (Councilor)    schein@rci.rutgers.edu
Bonnie Adrian (councilor)  badrian@du.edu
Sara Friedman (councilor)   slfriedm@indiana.edu
Guven P. Witteveen (councilor)  wittevee@umich.edu
Teresa Kuan (student councilor)  tkuan@usc.edu
Shana Fruehan (Student Councilor)   shana_fru@yahoo.co.jp

We held elections in spring 2007. The Nominations Committee was consisted of Li Zhang and Louisa Schein (co-chairs), Lisa Hoffman, and Ian Condry. At the AAA annual meeting in Washington DC in November 2007, the new officers were welcomed into their roles on the SEAA Executive Board:

Jennifer Robertson (President-elect)    jennyrob@umich.edu
Sandra Hyde (Treasurer)    sandra.hyde@mcgill.ca
Anru Lee (Councilor)     alee@jjay.cuny.edu
June Mee Kim (Student councilor)   jkim@fas.harvard.edu

In addition to these new members, continuing members of the Executive Board for 2008 are:

Laurel Kendall (President)   lkendall@amnh.org
Yunxiang Yan (Past-president)  yan@anthro.ucla.edu
Lisa Hoffman (secretary)   hoffmanl@u.washington.edu
Glenda S. Roberts (Treasurer)   glendar@waseda.jp
Li Zhang (Councilor)     lizhang@ucdavis.edu
Ian Condry (Councilor)    condry@MIT.EDU
Louisa Schein (Councilor)    schein@rci.rutgers.edu
Bonnie Adrian (councilor)   badrian@du.edu
Sara Friedman (councilor)   slfriedm@indiana.edu
Guven P. Witteveen (councilor)  wittevee@umich.edu
Teresa Kuan (student councilor)  tkuan@usc.edu

3. Communications

In the year of 2007 Carolyn Stevens and Chris Yano continued to serve as co-editors of the SEAA column in Anthropology News and have delivered a wonderful service to the section. They continued to publish a series of dialogues between junior scholars and senior scholars focusing on where East Asian anthropology has come from and where it is likely going. The series is an important contribution to SEAA’s archiving and recognition of the history of the anthropology of East Asia. Chris Yano will rotate off, and Carolyn Stevens will continue to serve for 2007; at the same time, the board will find another co-editor for the two-person team.

David Wiggins continued as the Webmaster for SEAA webpage on the AAA Website, and the SEAA board is grateful to David Wiggins for his free service. A primary forum for discussion and information sharing for the section continues to be the EASIANTH listserve, which has been managed by Professor Ted Bestor.

4. 2007 AAA Annual Meeting Program
Gordon Matthew served as the program editor, working together with Sonia Ryang, Laura Miller, and Andrew Kipnis. The accumulated experience of the committee helped a lot this year, setting up early deadlines for invited panels and being able to get these submissions earlier. The section was able to have 2 invited sections based on its size, which brought the section a little higher profile in the program. The submissions for the general panels were plenty, and the program committee scrutinized every paper abstract, grading them and also reorganizing the individual papers into thematic panels. A total of twelve SEAA panels were accepted into the AAA meeting this year, which helped to the profile of SEAA. However, nine out of these twelve panels accepted for this year’s meeting were scheduled for the undesirable Wednesday and Sunday slots. To express the serious concern of SEAA board, Yunxiang Yan (SEAA president) and Laurel Kendal (SEAA president-elect) wrote an open letter to the AAA president Alan Goodman, and we distributed the letter to other major leaders of the AAA and program editors of other sections as well. The SEAA has received the initial response from the AAA, explaining the procedures of the Program Committee and expressing the will to improve the committee work next year.

5. SEAA Awards in 2007

The 2007 Francis L.K. Hsu Book Prize, recognizing outstanding work published in the previous calendar year, was presented to Tamara Jacka for her book entitled *Rural Women in Urban China: Gender, Migration, and Social Change* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 2006). The judges for the 2007 Hsu Book Prize were Linda Lewis (chair), James Stanlaw, and William Jankowiak, and they praised the book as the following:

“Migrants presently constitute between one-fifth and one-third of the total population of most large Chinese cities. Tamara Jacka’s lucid, highly readable study of migrant life in the Haidan District of Beijing presents something that has been missing from the literature on China’s “floating population”: an in-depth, careful, cautious and steady probing into the subjective inner lives of female migrants. Characterized by subtle thinking that goes beyond more conventional popular accounts of beleaguered women under siege, Jacka’s work shows us that there are competing images of the rural migrant. One holds that they are backward, low quality outsiders responsible for most urban problems, whereas the other model highlights rural folk as helpless victims in need of pity and an occasional hand out. By focusing on individual lives, Jacka resists the temptation to collapse the variation in order to make a broad, sweeping sociological point. This study is about social change as it is manifested in the lives of those who have moved from the countryside to the city. In revealing how migrant women understand their own experiences and how their framing of those experiences within the context of their personal narratives fits within other official discourses, we come to understand how lived experience has shaped individual personal images of being a woman, mother, co-worker, and citizen. Rich in ethnographic material, this psycho-sociological study is an important contribution to the anthropology of experience, and to our understanding of migrant life in contemporary China.”
Lisa Hoffman chaired the committee for the 2007 Theodore C. Bestor Prize for Outstanding Graduate Student Paper and she worked with Susan Long and Jesook Song to make the selections. The committee presented the award to John (Song Pae) Cho, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for his paper entitled “The Wedding Banquet Revisited: ‘Contract Marriages’ Between Korean Gays and Lesbians” because

“the paper “examines marriages of convenience, or contract marriages, between gays and lesbians in South Korea. Through an ethnographic lens, Cho provides a nuanced discussion of these marriages and how those involved negotiated familial pressures, heteronormativity, and class and economic issues through individual decisions that ultimately reinforced the traditional familial form. At the same time, Cho skillfully situates the contract marriages and their reproduction of the family unit in Korea within debates about liberal politics, neoliberal reforms, and the tension between collectivities and individuality. The committee noted this paper’s contributions to the anthropology of neoliberalism, sexuality and alternative family forms, and subjectivity in East Asia.”

Matthew Erie of Cornell Anthropology received an honorable mention for the award for his paper entitled “Property Law, Public Interest, and the New Media in China: The Hard Case of ‘The Toughest Nail House in History’.” According to the judges, Erie’s a paper is

“a timely investigation of individual citizens’ challenges to the taking of land (eminent domain) by the state after the passage of a new property law in China. Based on the story of a woman in Chongqing who resisted the taking of her property and the compensation offered, this paper examines the development of a legal or rights consciousness through internet blogs, the role of citizens in shaping the “rule of law” in China, and the complexities of public vs. private interest. The committee noted the paper’s contributions to analyses of how new media may provide spaces for critical discourses to emerge, the double-edged character of liberalization, and the anthropology of legal systems in East Asia.”

The winner of the David Plath Media Award in 2007 is the Documentary film Shocking Family (2006), directed by Kyung-soon, produced by Red Snowman, distributed by Visual Cultural Group Zitta, and submitted by Hee-jeong Sohn (Jay Sohn). Laura Miller (chair) and Richard Chalfen served as the judges of this committee who praised the documentary in the following the citation:

“Shocking Family is rich in ethnographic detail covering interpersonal relationships, changing notions of what constitutes a family, complexities of social dynamics and the inevitability of social change in modern day Korea. Central themes include the centrality of the mother in Korean society as well as daughter in-law relations in recent history and contemporary times; the changing status of divorce, and women's independence from both female and male points of view. Meanings of "family" are questioned amidst Hojo reforms and state registration; the ideals of family, marriage, and maternity are juxtaposed with the
statement: "My dream is getting divorced" and subsequent notions of independence, freedom and new identity. The filmmaker offers viewers a longitudinal tracking of social dynamics between personal intra-family relationships and peer group connections. This film is commended for original graphics, a creative sound track as well as a clever and unobtrusive use a reflexive positioning. This film represents a good integration of cultural knowledge and cinematic expression by a Korean filmmaker living the film's stressful experiences.

6. Multilingual English, Chinese, Korean, Japanese online dictionary

A committee composed of Joe Bosco, Sonia Ryang and Priscilla Song began the work of collectively assembling a future online dictionary of anthropological terminology. Committee members obtained permission to use an out-of-print text on Chinese-English terms as a starting point, and have also explored possible host sites for the dictionary. By October 2007, the committee successfully launched an online dictionary of Chinese-English terms, which can be edited and expanded by its users. The dictionary is currently put on a test website and will continuously to be improved and enriched. Although this will eventually be a Japanese-Chinese-Korean-English dictionary, the committee has decided that it will initially focus on Chinese since that is the most needed. As in the previous year, the committee was able to mobilize graduate students working voluntarily and thus has not used the funding that the SEAA earmarked for this project.

7. The Proposed SEAA Conference in 2009

Encouraged by the success of the SEAA’s mini conference in Berkeley in 2005 and the SEAA conference in Hong Kong in July 2006, the SEAA board has decided to plan another SEAA conference to be held in Taiwan in the summer of 2009. Professor Julia Huang at the Institute of Anthropology, National Tsing-hua University, Taiwan, will take the lead to organize the conference, and a committee consisted of SEAA board members will be established to work with her. Julia Huang was invited to present a progress report to the SEAA board meeting in November 2007 in Washington DC and answered various questions raised by the audience. Huang and her local team have secured the initial funding of $19,250 from the National Tsing-hua University and the College of Hakka Studies, and they plan to apply for more funding so that the conference can provide financial aid to scholars from developing countries of Asia. A main purpose of having the SEAA conferences in Asia is to promote more interactions and cross-broad collaborations between American and Asian anthropologists. The 2006 conference in Hong Kong has made a great achievement in this aspect, and the SEAA board is looking forward to work closely with the Taiwan host for the 2009 conference. The SEAA board also decided to provide some funding to the conference paying for the honorarium of the keynote speaker and some organizational activities of the SEAA.