Section Annual Report:  
Society for Cultural Anthropology  

2008  

Summary  

In this report, we draw attention to key areas of concern for the SCA:  

• improved budget transparency and predictability;  
• improved indexing for AAA journal content;  
• oversight of existing philanthropic programs; and  
• the clarification of roles for the new Student Assembly and revamped Section Assembly.  

We also note a number of new initiatives undertaken in 2008:  

• the creation of a Gregory Bateson Book Prize;  
• thematic faculty-student mentoring workshops at the AAA;  
• the creation of a book review section in Cultural Anthropology;  
• Cultural Anthropology’s successful Editorial Intern program;  
• an annual “How to Write a Cultural Anthropology Article” session at the AAA;  
• an annual membership drive;  
• quarterly welcome emails to new members and explain the work of the section.  

Officers  

President: Bruce Grant <bruce.grant@nyu.edu>  
Secretary:  Stacy Leigh Pigg <pigg@sfu.ca> (to 10/1)  
Jean Langford <langf001@umn.edu> (from 10/1)  
Treasurer: Brad Weiss <blweis@wm.edu>  
Journal Editors:  Kim Fortun <fortuk@rpi.edu>  
Mike Fortun <fortum@rpi.edu>  
Board Members:  Marisol de la Cadena <mdelac@ucdavis.edu>  
Veena Das <veenadas@jhu.edu> (resigned 3/31)  
Saba Mahmood <smahmood@berkeley.edu>  
Bill Maurer <wmmaurer@uci.edu>  
Peter Redfield <redfield@email.unc.edu>  
Danilyn Rutherford <drutherf@uchicago.edu>
Status, Activities, and Accomplishments

1. Membership. The membership and subscription reports provided by AAA show that SCA and its journal, *Cultural Anthropology*, remain healthy. The Board continues to monitor membership trends, both in light of the current economic climate and the increased burden on membership fees given the move to 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. By October of 2008 we gained a few members back, showing a total of 1,582 members. 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. While we have very low conference attendance fees relative to other sections, and charge nothing to submit an article to CA, we have begun to target new members through low-cost membership fees for graduate students in annual membership drives, and as a prerequisite for participation in luncheon roundtables at the AAA.

2. Financial Balances.

Section Budget

Our financial situation, on balance, is robust. We had our biennial spring meeting in Long Beach, CA this year, which is always a major expense; and we were budgeted to contribute just under $6000 in Section Dues Subsidy to our journal for 2008. In spite of these significant expenses, our revenues from the journal increased, and our overall net asset balance is strong (up to $198,000 as of November 2008, up from $160,000 in January 2008). While we are pleased with this unexpected good fortune, the unexpected part of it leaves us concerned about our ability to forecast both the costs and revenues associated with producing *Cultural Anthropology*. We are looking for the best ways to make use of our assets in order to enhance our membership recruitment in order to ensure our viability into the future, and to foster our mission to promote creative, original, and interdisciplinary engagements with cultural anthropology.

Journal Budget

SCA looks forward to receiving detailed information on revenue streams from the journal, due from Wiley Blackwell in May. We have also asked for new benchmark information on revenue streams, such as advertising, so that we can assess CA’s performance, and consider ways to improve it.

SCA will be asking to add 12 pages to a CA through the “parameters change” process set up by AAA last year. [We do not yet know if the cost of this will be reasonable.]

*Budget Details for Cultural Anthropology*. In fall 2008, CA made the transition to Open Journal Systems, “OJS” (http://ojs.culanth.org/index.php/ca) and began phasing out use of BEpress’s EWS. All CA content in EWS was either archived in hard copy or shifted to OJS by January 1,
2009. In May 2008 the SCA board endorsed development of OJS, an open source editorial management system, both as a cost effective solution for the journal and as an open source system with the potential to be shared with other journals. SCA invested $5,000 dollars in the development of OJS for CA.

3. AAA Events. SCA presented four invited sessions this year, a number of sponsored sessions, and some particular new events of note:

- thematic faculty-student mentoring workshops at the AAA, per below;
- an annual “How to Write a Cultural Anthropology Article” session at the AAA;
- a recruitment meeting for Editorial Interns for Cultural Anthropology;
- new thematic Faculty/Student Member Roundtables, per below.

4. Spring Meeting Activities. With an excellently attended conference held aboard the Queen Mary docked in Long Beach, CA, May 8th and 9th, SCA continued its move to expanded spring meeting formats. Through From 1987 through 2001, SCA meetings often had no more than 6 panels in a two-day setting, with some 100 attending. It is now more common that our two-day sessions feature up to 24 panels alongside graduate student workshops and film screenings, with 300 registering. We continue to make efforts to balance inclusion of our broadest range of members while still keeping the meetings small enough to make them effective for collective discussion.

5. Mentorship Efforts. In SCA’s efforts to create more conversation among its members, a team of nine faculty members in SCA led five thematic workshops for up to eight students each at nearby San Francisco restaurants. The logic was part of an effort to maximize the resources of an organization like the SCA, without duplicating the existing opportunities that our graduate student members already have at their home institutions. However short in duration, we see these lunches as a key way of connected students to like-minded specialists in their field, as well as a means of broadening professional networks among their peers.

6. Additional Outreach Efforts. a) For the fourth time, SCA, the American Ethnological Society, and SUNTA held a joint reception at the AAA annual meeting. SCA was disappointed to discover that the SF Hilton had switched our room locations without notice, as confirmed by Lucille Horn in the Meetings office. We effectively dispatched the entire population of our Business Meeting to a Wenner-Gren reception, from which few emerged to find the remote SCA/AES/SUNTA location. We consider our considerable outlay of funds to have been relatively squandered by the Hilton staff.

b) Cultural Anthropology Public Advisory Board panel: In spring 2008, CA established a Public Advisory Board, to be comprised of people who can help expand engagement with CA beyond the discipline and academy. At the May SCA meeting in Long Beach, CA hosted a public discussion about potential directions. At the AAA meetings in San Francisco, CA hosted a conversation with Public Advisory Board member David Westbrook, titled “Embeddedness, Advocacy, Collaboration, Friendship, Complicity: Navigating Ethics in Contemporary Ethnography.”
7. Awards Presented. At the 2008 SCA Business Meeting Board member Marisol de la Cadena and a graduate student jury awarded the seventh annual Cultural Horizons Prize to Ilana Feldman (George Washington U) for her article, “Difficult Distinctions: Refugee Law, Humanitarian Practice, and Political Identification in Gaza.” Per recent SCA practice, Feldman was invited to assemble an invited session for the 2009 AAA as part of her award profile.

8. Status and Use of Section Internal Communications. The SCA has been grateful to Lisa Myers for her much improved communication and service to the AAA site. We especially look forward to the innovations anticipated with easier section membership signups online that she and Richard Thomas are introducing.

We intend to continue to energetically 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.

9. Changes to Bylaws or Governance Structure. n/a

Future Plans

SCA anticipates a busy year in 2009:

a) CA Editor Search. As the Fortuns draw to the close of their five-year term, we have initiated a Spring 2009 search for a new editor or editors of Cultural Anthropology. The editor(s) selected will begin reviewing submissions as of January 2010. We currently hope to be able to transfer the part-time services of our existing, excellent Managing Editor, Ali Kenner, to ensure continued high production quality at the journal.

b) New Gregory Bateson Book Prize. Awarding this prize for the first time, we hope to receive a healthy range of submissions. We worked with Mary Catherine Bateson and the Institute for Intercultural Studies that advances the work of both Bateson and Mead to develop the prize, and plan to include a prize juror from outside anthropology in future years as part of the prize’s interdisciplinary, experimental tenor.

c) Spring 2010 Conference Planning. Work is underway for the 2010, bi-annual SCA Conference, to be organized by Marisol de la Cadena (UC Davis) and Brad Weiss (C William and Mary). While locations are still under consideration, the plan is to continue our tradition of holding conferences in affordable, accessible cities and in charming historic venues.
d) Archiving Initiative. Now in its twenty-third volume, *Cultural Anthropology* had accumulated an archive of some 40 boxes of files by the time Kim and Mike Fortun assumed their tenure as editors. They worked proactively with Robert Leopold, a member of the *Cultural Anthropology* Editorial Board, to consider the best ways of archiving the journal’s collections, and to consult the SCA Executive Board on the best covenant-terms for the protection of double-blind reviews. Through their considerable efforts, the entire journal archive was dispatched to the National Anthropological Archive at the Smithsonian in Fall 2008. In turn, the SCA Executive Board has been collecting its own archives, a fairly uneven process given that few officers of the society have held on to files or the contents of hard drives since the 1980s and early 1990s. Nothing exists, for example—neither in the *Anthropology News* nor in the AAA Presidents’ Reports—about the reasons for founding the SCA in 1983. Our earliest records currently date from 1999, covering only the last ten of the section’s twenty-six year existence.

e) New Book Review Section for Journal. After many years of discussion, SCA voted to add a book review section to the journal. This is foremost an effort to create additional points of entry for journal readers—especially where related ethnographic works from disciplines outside of anthropology, part of SCA’s trademark, are concerned. This decision was also taken in response to Anthrosource’s new allocation formula that counts both research article and book review as the same download.

f) New Special Issues of CA. In late 2009, *CA* will publish a special issue on “Emergent Indigeneities,” responsive to discussion within SCA and AAA about U.N. initiatives in this area. *CA* also has an open call for essays “in translation.”

g) New “Virtual Issues” of CA. Since August 2008, three virtual issues of *CA* have been made available through the Wiley-Blackwell website, allowing free access to previously published essays for 60 days. WB has agreed to do three such virtual issues per year. The first of these virtual issues focused on “China and Tibet,” and was made available during the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. The second focused on “Democracy, Voting and Elections,” in anticipation of the 2008 U.S. elections. A third virtual issue on “Cities and Urbanism” released the week of November 15.

h) In January 2008, *CA* initiated an Editorial Intern Program that involved 16 graduates students from diverse institutions in our efforts to expand the readership of the journal. A new cohort of graduate student interns will join this effort in January 2009. Such efforts have had a clear impact: Submissions rose from 150 a year in 2007 to 170, and, between 2007 and 2007, *CA*’s impact factor doubled (from .795 to 1.636), an increase unmatched by
any other AAA journal or comparable journal, making CA the AAA journal with the highest impact factor.

**Chief Concerns**

*For the Journal:*

1. **Web Supervision.** The CA website (http://culanth.org) has become rich with content, including “supplemental pages” for individual essays, lists of essays by theme and geographic area, and a section for and about the Editorial Intern Program. Website development will continue through 2009, with the assistance of our editorial interns. The migration of Anthrosource, however, has created major problems for the CA website. All our Anthrosource links were dead for the first two weeks of January, despite promises throughout 2008 that this would not be the case. We have also been discouraged by the reduced functionality of the new interface.

2. **Indexing Capability.** Unlike most other AAA journals, CA is not indexed in the “Anthropological Index.” CA and other AAA journals are, moreover, not included in the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, despite the broad interdisciplinary reach of contemporary cultural anthropology. SCA asks the AAA publishing department and WB to make a concerted effort to correct this coverage problem in 2009.

3. **Honoring of Philanthropic Distribution Program.** In fall 2008, an SCA board member noticed that AAA journals were not listed in HINARI, contrary to what is specified in the contract with WB. AAA journals were listed in a limited fashion at the time of this report in January 2009, but are not yet tagged such that they come up, for example, in a search for "anthropology journals." SCA would like there to be sustained AAA oversight and promotion of access to CA and other AAA journals through these philanthropic programs. Eligible institutions could be notified that they have access to AAA journals through these programs, for example.

4. **Transparency of Accounting.** The move to Anthrosource collapsed all journal interests into one financial mix. Yet only very recently, and only by continued special request, has AAA been willing to share publication and download information for American Anthropologist alongside that of all other journals who share this common financial structure. SCA encourages AAA to continue this transparency as standard practice in order to enable all sections to best assess the comparative strengths of the association’s publishing program.

5. **Open Access Futures.** SCA remains committed to expanding access to the journal through open access initiative programs. We welcomed Oona Schmid’s efforts on this front to make more information on open access initiatives available to AAA members in recent outreach.

*For the Section more broadly:*

1. **Student Assembly.** At the AAA’s request two years ago, we rewrote our bylaws to include a new student representative, and were delighted to recruit Mary Murrell (UC Berkeley) in this inaugural role. While this has proven a good match for a section as ours
with a high number of student members (the highest of any section after NASA), it is not yet clear to us what the charge of such a student member is in the broader AAA context. It was Mary’s observation at the Student Assembly gathering in San Francisco that AAA staff are themselves not yet clear on why these positions were created, beyond an initial drive toward greater inclusion.

2. Section Assembly. Up through 2007, the SCA board felt strongly about the views of its members being heard at the Section Assembly through a weighted voting system. Given the disappointing dismissal of the hard-won efforts of the AAA Governance Commission at the Section Assembly in November 2007, however, it appeared to us that weighted voting would not be entertained by an assembly still tentatively sorting out its form and function (not least when such a determining vote would have taken place on a one-section-one-vote basis).

While we were pleased to see the central work of the Governance Commission recognized in the Spring 2008 balloting, it seems that the Section Assembly, now under the excellent leadership of Convenor, Mary Gray, is still finding its main purpose and voice. We anticipated that the Assembly as currently configured can function best as a forum for sharing information on section organization and leadership.

Respectfully submitted,
Bruce Grant
SCA President, 2007-2009