A year both good and bad for SLACA

2008 has been both a hopeful and a difficult year for SLACA. Thanks to the new contract between the AAA and Wiley-Blackwell, we have managed to close the year with a positive balance in our account. We chose not to take a loan during the AnthroSource crisis, and the sustained income from membership dues puts us in relative good shape. We hope that income generated by our journal will make our financial situation even better in 2009, so we can start providing new services for our membership. This year, however, our membership had its sharpest decline in the last three years, from 801 in September 2007 to 730 in September 2008.

Membership issues

We think that this decline is in part due to AnthroSource, which makes available all publications to all members of the AAA. We lost 50 regular members and 4 student members, as well as a total of 17 international members. It was striking that we went from 50 to 2 International A members (that is, from countries with the higher per capita income) while we grew from 11 to 42 International B members. Again, some of this can be explained by AnthroSource: it has made available to our members in Latin America all AAA journals for a single membership rate, much lower than subscribing to several single AAA journals. We promote SLACA throughout Latin America, and the publication of papers in Spanish is a plus when Latin Americans consider joining us. It is possible that Latin American professors are finding it to their advantage to join our Society and the AAA to gain access to AnthroSource.

The snail mail factor seems to be playing here in both cases: In Latin America the mail is not very good, so scholars there will be willing to sign up for electronic access to AAA journals more readily than their European counterparts, who work at places where English-only databases are part of the regular infotechnology packages of most universities and research centers, and regular mail is expected to function well. If Canadians and Europeans sign up for SLACA and do not receive their journals, they are more likely to leave because that is a benefit they were expecting, while Latin Americans will still see the advantage of accessing the other AAA journals, even if their copy of JLACA gets lost in the mail every now and again.

The mail and inclusion in email lists seems to have been determinant in people’s decision to drop out of our society: at the meetings several people, most of them Europeans, told us that even though they have paid their membership to SLACA for 2007, they do not seem to have been registered by our system: they were not put on the AAA’s SLACA listserve, and are not receiving our journal. We also had this complaint from several students. There seems to be a major glitch here, at the AAA membership department. Andrew Canessa, JLACA’s Editor, has written to Wiley-Blackwell to find out what happens when an issue of our journal is not delivered to the subscriber; he was told that those issues go to the AAA, where they seem to fall out of sight. It would be important for the AAA membership department to notify SLACA when this happens, so we can try to find out the new addresses and email addresses of our subscribers, or try to correct whatever we can through Internet research or other search tools. The issue of updating mailing and email addresses by the AAA system is serious as evidenced by our own experience on the Board wherein the AAA administrative offices continued to contact Travis DuBry, our Program Chair, at an address that was more than two years old. We raised these issues at the Section
Assembly in San Francisco, and were told that new software being set up at the AAA’s headquarters will take care of most of these problems. The issue transcends SLACA, and I have volunteered for the Section Assembly’s task force on membership issues, and hope we’ll come up with some ideas as to how to increase sections’ membership.

JLACA

Under Andrew Canessa’s editorship, The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology is thriving and rapidly becoming one of the most important journals in Latin American studies as a whole. There has been an increase in submissions: from 26 in 2006 to 38 in 2007 (46% increase) and 47 in 47% in 2008 (a 24% increase from the previous year). Andrew has been very active in seeking submissions and making sure the articles are promptly reviewed. Unfortunately, no papers from Latin America have been published in the last two volumes (vol. 13 No.1 and Vol. 13 No. 2, see Graph 1), but we hope this tendency will change.

We do continue to have submissions from Latin America and are looking for ways to increase their numbers too (see Graph 2). Apparently, the way in which arguments are structured by Latin American scholars are very different from the way arguments are structured in the United States, Canada and the UK, so scholars from these countries have a greater chance of their papers being accepted by the reviewers. We hope Latin American submissions will increase, and also hope that some of them will be published on JLACA.

As our budget starts recovering and becoming more solid, we are envisioning supporting Andrew Canessa’s travel to international conferences, to increase the number of submissions and hopefully, not too far in the future, increase the number of issues we publish per year. We have voted to publish more issues per year, with the same or maybe a few more papers. We are also considering publishing special editions of our journal, or maybe edited book-like issues, now that University presses are starting to leave that market. We think that this expansion of JLACA to more volumes per year, and maybe to special editions, will be an important step for SLACA, which would send a positive message to our membership and to JLACA subscribers in general.
We are very disappointed at the new AnthroSource portal, which has become unattractive, cumbersome and unfriendly; now it is hard to access the AAA journals in it. But we have not made arrangements so far to include JLACA in other journal databases, so we fully depend on for the electronic distribution of JLACA. At SLACA we hope that some of the current issues of broken links and lack of functionality can be corrected, but we are also considering contacting JStor and other such databases to have our journal’s back issues there as well.

The SLACA Board

We had important board changes in 2008, beginning with President Elect Ramona Perez taking over as President of SLACA during the 2008 AAA meetings. In the spring we elected three new Councilors and one student representative to the board, and they all took office in San Francisco. Officers who left the board were Councilors Steffan Igor Ayora-Diaz and Hortensia Caballero, and Student Councilor Rita Henderson. Travis Du Bry’s term as Councilor ended too, but he became the Treasurer Elect at a special election during the Business Meeting in San Francisco. Current Treasurer Elayne Zorn is going through health-related difficulties this year and Travis will help her until the end of her term in November 2009, when Travis will become the new Treasurer. The new Councilors are Walter Little, Andrew Orta and Anne Lou Ypeij and the new Student Councilor is Jonathan DeVore. They all came to the AAA meetings in San Jose, where we started the transition of tasks from former to new officers.

Carla Guerron-Montero continues on as Secretary of our Society, until her term at the board ends in November 2009. Susan Paulson will continue to chair the Roseberry-Nash Graduate Award Committee into 2009, since her term also continues on until November 2009. From now on, Andy Orta is in charge of the SLACA website, taking over from Travis Du Bry. Travis Du Bry continues on in charge of the SLACA program at the 2010 AAA meetings, and will work with Ramona Perez on putting together the ballot for the Spring elections. Anne Lou Ypeij has taken over the SLACA column of Anthropology News, which was efficiently and very successfully edited by Hortensia Caballero from 2005 to 2008. Walter Little now chairs the committee of the Whiteford Student Award in Applied Anthropology, which will be issued for the first time this coming May in Santa
Fe, New Mexico at our first Spring Meetings in many years. He also works with Andrew Canessa, attending meetings and keeping up to date on issues related to AAA publications. Jonathan DeVore will be taking over one of our listserves, now run by Rita Henderson on Yahoo groups. Igor Ayora-Diaz left the Board, but he will continue to serve on the SLACA programme committee for the AAA meetings in 2010.

Spring Meetings

As of this year we have started to hold Spring meetings, jointly with the Society for Applied Anthropology. We decided rather late on this, so we will have only 8 sessions scheduled for the 2009 Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico, this coming March. We expect to start earlier sending out a call for papers and to take a more active role in the organization of the 2010 SfAA conference, which will be held in Merida, Yucatan, where both Steffan Igor Ayora Diaz and I will be part of the organizing team.

Awards

Starting with last year’s winners, we are encouraging our Roseberry-Nash Award winners to send their papers to Andrew Canessa, so the authors get feedback and are helped toward the publications of their papers on JLACA, our journal. This year the winner of SLACA’s Roseberry-Nash Graduate Award was Helen Sharp, from UCLA, with the paper “‘Se soluciona todo’: A State of Exception in Guatemala.” She received a diploma during the AAA conference, and a cheque in the mail for USD 500.

We have also created a new pair of awards, the Whiteford Graduate Awards, to be given out to two students during the joint SfAA / SLACA meetings. These awards consist of two cheques for 250 USD, coming out of the SLACA Whiteford Fund. This Fund results from the royalties on the book Crossing Currents: Continuity and Change in Latin America, by Michael Whiteford and Scott Whithford, who donated them to SLACA. So far has been used to help travel of SLACA board members and special guests from outside the US, but during the AnthroSource crisis it was restricted to aid the travel of board members, so that each year 3 travel grants of USD 300 are given out to members coming to the US from abroad, and one to a student member; or one of the USD 300 travel grants has been used to aid the travel of a SLACA special guest, and the other two grants have been given to board members. The Whiteford Awards will be presented by Michael and Scott Whiteford to the winners at the SfAA / SLACA conference in Santa Fe in 2010, and hopefully also at the Merida joint meetings.

We decided in 2007 that the SLACA Keynote Lecture, though which SLACA recognizes our members who are outstanding scholars, will not be annual, but instead we will ask one of our members to be a keynote speaker on select occasions. Lynn Stephen was our Keynote Lecturer in 2005. We have not resolved the issue as to whether we will issue a cheque for the next Keynote Lecturer, to formalize it as an award; in the meantime, we’ve held back on awarding this lecture again.

The other SLACA lecture-award is the SLACA Presidential Lecture, which is given by the Past-President at the end of her or his term at the board in that capacity (that is, two years after having stopped being President). I am looking forward to giving that lecture myself, in 2011, as our two immediately past Past-Presidents have done, and we are discussing the possibility of including, besides the lecture, a guitar performance either of my own music or of the music I have been doing research on, trova yucateca.
I thank the leadership and staff of the AAA for their support during my tenure as President of SLACA, 2005-2008, and especially thank all the members of the SLACA Board who shared with me the responsibility and the trepidation of steering our Society towards good course. I leave content, and rejoice in the excellent leadership of Ramona Perez, our new President, knowing that she will further SLACA’s consolidation as one of the most vibrant sections of the AAA.

Respectfully submitted,

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TREASURER’S REPORT

Elayne Zorn (University of Central Florida)

General

SLACA’s primary revenue comes from memberships; our primary expense is publication of JLACA. An important asset is the Whiteford Fund, made possible by the generous donation of royalties by the Whitefords, which allows us to partially reimburse travel by international board members (including one student) to the AAA to ensure participation by international members.

The renegotiated AnthroSource contract, moving publication from the University of California Press (UCP) to Wiley Blackwell (WB), resulted as anticipated in an increase in revenue, since WB pays journals for content, in contrast to UCP, which only charged expenses. However, SLACA will not recover our assets that were drained as a result of the UCP AnthroSource contract.

For 2007 and 2008 we cut board and meeting expenses due to the loss to UCP, but in 2007 we continued funding the Nash-Roseberry Award, and an AAA reception, held jointly with other sections. We will do the same for 2008 and 2009.

Overall, we are in better condition than a year ago, but our revenue is primarily from memberships, which declined by 9.1% September 2007-September 2008. Net assets on January 1, 2008 were $15,396.25. Revenues January-September 2008 (memberships) were $17,818.27. Expenditures through September 2008 were ($10,391.61). That resulted in a change in net assets of $28,209.88, totaling at the end of September 2008 $43,606.13. This does not include ($5,000) to JLACA in October 2008, and expenditures for the 2008 AAA meeting.
Assets

Our financial assets were $43,606.13 on September 30, 2008. The Whiteford Fund was $9,952.48 on September 30, 2008.

Revenues

Net assets on January 1, 2008 were $15,396.25. Revenues through September 30, 2008 were $17,818.27. For 2008, membership revenue is estimated at $22,250. Our annual revenue for 2009 is estimated at $22,950.

For JLACA, through September 2008, we received a publishing royalty of $15,263. Publication revenue less expenses were ($10,391.61) through September 2008. We are budgeted to receive $9,991 for 2009.

For the Whiteford Fund, revenues through September 30, 2008 were $1,056.98.

Membership

SLACA has 5 membership categories: regular, student, life, international A (non-US, developed countries), and international B (non-US, developing countries, including Mexico, and all Central America and South America). Section membership includes a subscription to JLACA. Institutions that want to subscribe to JLACA (but not to AAA) subscribe directly to WB, which receives that income.

Since we had not raised fees for several years, we raised our regular membership fee to $45 USD, and the international fees to $25 USD; we kept student memberships at $20 USD. We also were able to sub-divide international memberships between A and B (see definitions above).

As noted, we experienced an overall decline in membership between September 2007-September 2008 of 9.1%. In September 2007, total memberships were 801; in September 2008, total memberships were 730. There was a decline of 50 regular members, of 4 student members, and of 17 international members. There was a decline in international A from 50 to 2 members, but an increase in international B from 11 to 42 members, for an overall decline 17 members. Though other sections also experienced declines, overall AAA memberships during that period increased.

We need to develop a strategy to reverse the decline and, if possible, increase memberships during this difficult economic period.

Expenditures

As a result of the new publishing contract with WB, our only publishing expenses are for JLACA’s editorial office. These were budgeted at $11,550 for 2008 and for 2009, but expenditures for 2008 are estimated to be $10,000. AAA balances the budget such that anticipated expenditures (for 2009, $11,500) equal publishing royalty (anticipated at $9,991 for 2009) and section dues subsidy ($1,559). We benefited from a slightly better exchange rate between the dollar and the pound sterling at the end of 2008.

Other expenditures are for travel (from the Whiteford Fund, for partial reimbursement of airfare to international members to attend the AAA and, for the first time in 2008, AAA Section Assembly: in 2008, $1273 for AAA and $152 for the Section Assembly); awards and honors (the AAA Nash-
Roseberry award for $500 and, for the first time in 2009, an award at the Society for Applied Anthropology meetings); meeting food and space ($250 in 2007; increased to $700 for 2008 to better reflect actual costs), and storage (approximately $350).

We continue to be charged for storage of several back issues of JLACA (primarily special issues); SLACA should determine what to do with these issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Elayne Zorn, SLACA Treasurer  
University of Central Florida