Society for the Anthropology of Religion 2011 Annual Report

Submitted by:
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I. Section Officers

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   Position: Board Member
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II. Status, Activities and Accomplishments this year
1) Provide the most recent membership numbers and list any factors you think may be increasing or decreasing your Section membership:

**Number of Members:** 637

**Factors affecting Membership:**

We definitely gained new members as a result of our biennial meetings in the spring of 2011. We were, in fact, at our highest number (645) in May, just after the meetings. But after a significant drop in August (to 545), no doubt due to the ebbs and flows of renewals, we are back up even without a conference. We hope this reflects increasing interest in the section (we may have gained new members as a result of our AAA workshop for instance) and its activities.

2) * Provide the most recent financial balances for Section budgets (and publication sponsored budgets, if applicable). Also list any factors you think are affecting your Section's finances:

**Financial Balance:** 6340.49

**Publications: (if applicable)**

not applicable--no journal.

**Factors affecting Finances:**

Since we do not have a journal, and our book series is not a big moneymaker for our section (indeed, we are not sure what, if any, revenues we get from it), we are very dependent on keeping our membership numbers up, which is not always an easy matter in the years between conferences. Our biennial meeting has the greatest impact not only on membership but finances. We charged a rather hefty registration fee in 2011 (compared to what it costs to be a member of the section) to cover our costs and this worked out well even though it is hardly ideal from the point of view of attracting early career scholars and graduate students. We found it hair-raising negotiating with the hotel over the costs of equipment, since everyone now expects to be able to show images and this is an expense that appears to go up continuously. (We were charged more than SCA, which had used the same hotel only a year before). As a result we were not able to offer the amount of food we might have liked at the meetings. We are generally concerned about finances--for the 2011 AAA we held a workshop which we hoped would generate some revenue, and we have talked about an entry fee for our book prize to cover costs of postage, but at this point the board does not want to implement that since we do not want to discourage submissions. We have talked, however, about having those submitting books register to become members of the society.

3) * List the titles of your Section's AAA meeting invited sessions, co-sponsored sessions, and any special events your Section sponsored or in which it participated. Check with your program chairs if needed: When providing session information please note if these are invited, volunteered or co-sponsored.

**Session Type:** Invited
Session: HEALING LEGACIES: BRIDGING MEDICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

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Session Type: Invited, Co-Sponsored with Society for Psychological Anthropology

Session: CONFESSIONS' TIDEMARKS, TRACES, AND LEGACIES: CONFESSION, THE CONFESSIONAL, AND THE CONFESSION OF FAITH IN THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF CHRISTIANITY A

Session Type: Volunteered

Session: Workshop: TEACHING THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF RELIGION

Other Events:

In addition we sponsored 20 volunteered sessions, consisting of 13 panel submissions and 52 individual volunteered sessions coordinated into another 7 panels by the program committee (with several papers rejected)

4) * Did your section request a meeting registration waiver or community engagement grant?

Requested Grant: No

If granted, who/what was it/they used for? (if applicable)

5) List spring meeting activities (if applicable):

We held our biennial meetings on the theme of Religion and Materiality in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on April 28-May 1, 2011. We had 24 panels, plus the Presidential Panel on the conference theme. Highlights included the Roy Rappaport Distinguished Lecture and the Presidential Address. Our meeting attracted a sufficient number of attendees to cover our costs.

6) List awards presented this year on behalf of your Section, if applicable (please provide the title of the award, date presented, and full name, affiliation, and title of the project/paper/accomplishment of the awardees):

Award Title: The Clifford Geertz Prize in the Anthropology of Religion
Date: 2011-11-18 00:00:00.0
Recipient: Amira Mittermaier
Affiliation: Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto
Project/Paper/etc: Dreams that Matter: Landscapes of the Imagination

7) * Mentorship efforts (at or beyond the AAA meetings) to any of the following (e.g.,
special activities, funding, awards, guidance/advising on professional matters, etc.):

**Undergraduate and/or graduate students**

Discussion of revising and altering our prize for graduate students, so that it would be a paper prize awarded for the best paper given by a graduate student at our biennial conference. The biennial meetings form an excellent atmosphere for mentoring students, since the meetings are small and many graduate students present papers and mingle easily with scholars in attendance.

Workshop held at the AAA this year would have been useful for graduate students.

**Early career scholars:**

Again, the annual meeting provides an opportunity for early career scholars to get to know scholars in the field of the anthropology of religion. Our workshop and the annual business meeting also provide opportunities for mentoring. The winners of our book prize committee often are early career scholars.

One of the most significant forms of mentoring offered through the society is our book series with Palgrave. The current editor, Laurel Kendall, solicits manuscripts at the business meeting and she does a superb job in providing feedback and shepherding manuscripts through the process of review, revision, and publication.

**Independent scholars:**

Most of the activities already mentioned are equally open to independent scholars. We had independent scholars present talks at the biennial meeting, submit books for the Geertz Prize, and submit manuscripts to our book series.

**8) Additional outreach efforts (at or beyond the AAA meetings) to other sections, interest groups, and scholarly societies, government agencies, public education/community engagement, and underrepresented minorities:**

It is generally difficult for members to attend both the AAA and the AAR (American Academy of Religion). We made efforts to invite relevant scholars in Religious Studies to participate in the biennial meeting and hope to continue to work toward that goal.

**9) Status and use of Section internal communications such as a website, list serve, or newsletter (if applicable): Please list internal communication tools you use and what they are used for:**

We have a website and webmaster. On the website we provide general information about the society (bylaws, officers and contact information), our Geertz Prize (especially information about deadlines and submission procedures, as well as a list of prizewinners), the biennial meeting (including inks for registration, information on hotels and transport, and a
We also have a list-serve, that is used by members to post announcements about matters of potential interest: books recently published, conferences being organized, sessions for the AAA or the biennial meeting that seek additional members are especially common. Not all members of the SAR are on the list-serve. People must contact our webmaster to be added. Conversely, not everyone on the list serve is a current member. To contact members to remind them to vote or to register for the biennial meeting, we use both the list-serve and a blast from the AAA (which also does not end up going to all of our members).

Finally, we have a facebook page. Right now, people can merely "like" us. However, we plan to make use of it to post other relevant information, such as announcements of events, prizes, and similar information, including links to other relevant pages and materials concerned with religion.

10) Changes in bylaws or governance structure (if applicable):

None

III. What Initiatives does your Section have underway or planned for the coming year: Membership, publication annual meeting, mentorship, other?

Once we have a new webmaster we are planning to upgrade the website to make it more user friendly and hopefully attract more interest in the section. We are also searching for a new editor for our book series with Palgrave. Laurel Kendall, who has served generously in that position, plans to step down. We hope that there will be other workshops at next year's AAA.

IV. Please tell us what your chief concerns and issues are, especially if they are not previously noted:

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the Section Assembly Executive Committee (SAEC)? Please be specific.

We are concerned that sections such as ours that do not have journals are frequently ignored in discussions about section finances. We are often concerned about our budget. Our publication series serves those interested in the anthropology of religion but involves a considerable amount of uncompensated work. We want to keep such issues relevant as the Executive Committee proceeds with its work.

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the AAA Executive Board? Please be specific.

The same ones:

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in discussions about section finances. We are often concerned about our budget. Our publication series serves those interested in the anthropology of religion but involves a considerable amount of uncompensated work.

We also wonder about coordination with other scholarly societies to which members of the AAA might belong. For our section, that would be AAR.

In addition, for those of us to whose research involves learning languages, we are concerned about the cutting of funds by Congress for language learning and for research overseas.

What issues would you like raised or recommendations would you like to make to the AAA Staff? Please be specific.

It would be great to have more active advice from the AAA staff as our new president begins to think about our next (2013) biennial meeting. Since our section memory is short, some outreach from the AAA would be welcome. In addition, we have concerns about the difficulty of reaching all of our members in a timely fashion through blast messages, since we found that the list of members is not necessarily up to date.