Council for Museum Anthropology

1. Status, Activities and Accomplishments.

The Council for Museum Anthropology has been quite active this year, especially because of our funding situation. We continue to publish our journal, Museum Anthropology, in two issues/year, and the issues this past year have been very well received and on time (an important consideration for scholarly review and abstracting services). Our editor, Jason Baird Jackson, who will be reporting separately, has done an excellent job with the journal which is a quality publication that we all support with pride. He published a total of 167 pages, including 30 items, and this volume (30) is now in AnthroSource as are all of our back issues. Jackson also started Museum Anthropology Review, a free online service focused on shorter items and reviews in order to free up important space in the print journal for longer articles and other member services. And he started a blog as a further means of communication for the Council and for people interested in the field of museum anthropology generally. The blog and the electronic journal have been highly successful (http://museumanthropology.blogspot.com; http://museumanthropologyreview.net). The Board also spent considerable time discussing the publications crisis for the journal within AnthroSource due to the increased cost of publication under the University of California Press publishing contract and our decreased revenues. We feared at various points during the year that we would have to either suspend publication of our journal, go to an annual, or even drop our affiliation with the AAA. We had several conference calls among the officers and with the AAA offices on these issues, and at present, look forward to some resolution under the new Wiley-Blackwell publishing contract. Other specific highlights/activities include:

A. Membership. Our membership is roughly 370, down 31 from 2006. That means that we are still healthy, but are facing declining revenues and have a definite need to do what we can to encourage new members to join. We do not know the real cause of the decline—whether it is the result of being online within AnthroSource and thus having our journal readily available through institutional subscriptions, the requirement of AAA membership when many of our museum professionals are also being hit with very heavy dues from the American Association of Museums (AAM), poor advertizing on our part, or a combination of these and other unknown factors. We do not think that it is a decline in interest in the field, as there are many more museum professionals out there and an ever-increasing number of anthropologists and others who use museums and what they present and how they present it as the subjects of their research. So, we feel the market is there, but we are for various reasons failing to reach it.

B. Financial Balances. Our Treasurer, Nancy Rosoff, who also will be reporting separately, gave our revenues to Sept. 2007 as $7,1,30, down roughly $300 from 2006. Our expenses, at $13,821 were slightly less than the previous year, given that we canceled an annual reception at the AAM meetings due to tight finances. We still have $18,777 in assets, but that is only because we had maintained a healthy surplus through the years. That is now nearly exhausted, and our journal takes roughly $13,000-14,000/year to publish, only about half of what we are taking in annually. Thus, we dare not spend our money on much else. We also have a
significant subsidy for an editorial assistant from Indiana University through our editor, that if we did not have, we would be broke. Thus, our future in terms of the financial strength and viability of Museum Anthropology, our primary concern, depends on the outcome of the new publishing contract with Wiley-Blackwell, and some increase in our membership. But the latter is not likely to be large enough to offset our total needs in publication.

C. Meeting Highlights. The 2007 AAA meetings were excellent in terms of the visibility of museum anthropology. Through our Vice President, Alex Barker, we sponsored a single and a double session ("Thinking Outside the Glass Box: The Legacy of Michael Ames" and "Still a Bridesmaid? Revisiting ‘The Research Potential of Anthropological Collections,’ 25 Years Later"), plus reviewed and approved six others, and held a reception and open house for members and others at the Department of Anthropology, US National Museum of Natural History. All were well attended, and the latter even attracted Acting Secretary of the Smithsonian, Christien Samper. We also held our annual Board meeting and Membership meeting, and officers Fowler, Jackson and Rosoff attended the Section Assembly, Editors meeting and Treasurers meeting, respectively.

D. Spring Meeting. We normally have at least a reception at the AAM meetings in spring/summer, but canceled activities this year due to lack of funds.

E. Internal Communications. We have a new webmaster (Dan Swan, to be aided by Kimberly Christen, both Board members), and we look forward to its further development this coming year. We also still maintain our membership listserv (museum-anth-council@willamette.edu), and it and other mailing lists were used this past year by a board member (Cecile Ganteaume) to prepare a report for our membership on the use of museum exhibitions and other museum work in tenure and promotion decisions. This has been something of great interest to our members, and the results were shared at our membership meeting and will be the subject of an AnthroNews column next month.

F. Outreach Efforts. The CMA Board voted with the Archaeology Division to request AAA to join the United States Committee of the Blue Shield for archaeological resource protection. President Fowler also participated in conference calls with members of the AD and several other sections to develop an AAA position on the new regulations for NAGPRA (unaffiliated human remains), which has gone forward for signature. Our Secretary Joyce Herold produced or coordinated 9 columns for AnthroNews on a wide range of topics. We are beginning cooperation with the newly organized PAWS group and will assign a Board member this year as an official representative. Museum anthropology is definitely one of the practicing aspects of the discipline. We also maintain strong ties to AAM and members attend their meetings, even though we will not have a reception again this year due to lack of funds.

G. Changes in Bylaws/Governance Structure. We will be reviewing our bylaws this year.

2. Future Plans (3-5) year

A. Membership. We hope to increase membership through a total revision of our website, which is now underway. We will cooperate with AAA on theirs as well, and everyone tells us
that we will gather more people through the internet than perhaps any other means. More visibility and advertizing with AAM may also help, and somehow we have to get the word out to students that we are a good group to join. We sat at the booth provided by the AAA at this year’s meetings, but didn’t sign up anyone or even get an inquiry—except from a publisher who wanted to do our journal if we decided to leave AAA. We will continue with the initiative begun by Board member Ganteaume on the importance of museum work in promotion/tenure decisions, and will develop suggested guidelines/equivalencies for chairs/supervisors to follow.

B. New Cooperative Ventures. We hope to reactivate our AAM connections if our financial situation eases, especially in advertizing our journal, online review and blog, but also provide more member services, such as training workshops in collections-based research, especially geared to students. We will stay active in the SA, and cooperate with the PAWS group as best we are able. We will also cooperate with the Committee for the Future Print and Electronic Media and other initiatives as they arise, and look forward to a good year.

3. Other Items

A. Issues. It is vitally important for us to get some relief on the publications cost or we will be broke and out of business within a year or at most, two. We are keeping our fingers crossed that the new deal will help alleviate the strain.

B. Executive Board. The SA governance and relationship to the EB needs to be resolved, and equitable distribution of revenues from AnthroSource tackled and resolved as well. We are slowly bleeding to death financially, although our membership has not dropped to the critical stage as yet—but it might in the near future.

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