

Annual Report, Jan. 2009 – Dec. 2009

Council for Museum Anthropology

Names and email addresses of Section Officers, 2009 Catherine S. Fowler, Pres., csfowler@unr.edu; Alex Barker, Vice Pres., barkeraw@missouri.edu; Joyce Herold, Sec., jherold@msn.com; Gwyneira Isaac, Treas., Gwyneira.Issac@asu.edu; Candace Greene, Board, greenec@si.edu; Cecile Gaunteaume, Board, gaunteaumec@si.edu; Dan Swan, Board, dcswan@ou.edu; Kimberly Christen, Board, kacristen@wsu.edu; Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Board, Chip.C-C@dmns.org; Joshua Bell, Board, bellj@si.edu; MariLyn Salvador, Past Pres., msalvador@museumofman.org; Jason Baird Jackson, Editor (ex-officio), jbj@indiana.edu; Steve Nash, Editor (ex-officio), S.Nash@dmns.org; Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Editor (ex-officio), see above.

Status, Activities and Accomplishments

The Council for Museum Anthropology had a busy year in 2009, although there is still plenty of unfinished business for 2010. A new set of officers was elected in July, and took over after the Business Meeting at the AAA meetings in Philadelphia. Incoming was Alex Barker (President), Margaret Bruchac (Secretary), and Kathleen Adams and Morgan Perkins (Board). Retiring (in addition of Fowler), were Herold, Greene and Ganteaume. All served ably in three year terms. The Council also remains on firm financial footing, at least for the present. Our journal, *Museum Anthropology*, continues to do very well, and to receive more inquiries for publication than can be accommodated. Outgoing Editor Jason Baird Jackson did an excellent job for the remainder of his term (Vol. 32:2), and incoming editors Steve Nash and Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh are busy with a redesign of the cover and front matter and also other changes through publishers Wiley-Blackwell. The Board voted to use some of our present surplus in funds to pay for these changes in order to give the journal a fresh appearance and hopefully attract more membership as well as readership. Other activities will be detailed in the sections to follow

1. *Membership.* As of the end of October, our membership was 328, down from 363 at the same time the previous year. Part of this drop may be poor reporting, as we understand that the roles are purged at a certain point in the summer by the AAA office, and then allowed to build with actual renewals, the bulk of which do not come until the Annual Meeting. If this is the case, we would like to have the situation better explained to us. If it is not, and we are losing members at this large a rate, we suspect that it is the “all for the price of one” situation that allows one AAA membership to also acquire all of the other journals, including *MA*, in these difficult times. There seems to be a lot of interest in our journal, as evidenced by the number of downloads this past year, and also in museum anthropology in general, as indicated by the number of related papers in sessions. A membership committee will be looking into the situation, and trying to stimulate new members, particularly among practicing museum professionals. Our website is also undergoing revision and is up and running again, which might attract more members. Student membership remains steady at roughly 70 (86 last year).

2. *Financial Balances.* My unofficial accounting of our expenses vs. revenues for the year (our treasurer will be reporting separately) indicates that our opening balance was \$40,350 and that our earned income from dues and ticket sales was \$9,500 and from

royalties \$15,000, giving us a balance at the end of October of \$64,850. With expenses for the journal (redesign, editorial assistance, office), travel for our editors, and our annual reception at the AAA, expenses should be roughly \$19,000, leaving a cautiously healthy balance of roughly \$45,000. Given that our expenses for the journal under the editorship of Jackson were minimal, as Indiana University kindly paid much of the editorial expenses, we will be anticipating increases here in 2010 (and we have already allocated for redesign). However, we feel cautiously optimistic about our current financial situation and are encouraged to move forward with a student prize and other activities for our membership—keeping in mind that our journal comes first.

3. *Meeting Highlights.* Our section sponsored our allotted two sessions at the Annual AAA meeting in Philadelphia: “Representation, Reflection and Resistance: Museums and the Instruction of Community Identities;” and “Gathering Them Together and Bringing Them Home—The Relational Museum in Action.” In addition, we also noted others of interest: “Latin@ Expressive Culture: About the Coming of Age of a Culture that Is Always Embedded in Politics; and the “AAA Roundtable on Race: Are We So Different: Educational Resources, experiences and Best Practices.” In addition, by keyword search, there were several other sessions and papers of interest to museum anthropologists. CMA’s president also participated in an open forum sponsored by CoPAPIA (Committee on Practicing, Applied and Public Interest Anthropology) on the issues facing museum anthropologists as practicing anthropologists. The Field Museum’s Alika Wali, a museum professional, was also the general discussant for the forum, and one of our board members, Chip Colwell-Chanthophonh was a committee member through this year. We emphasized that one of the major issues with museum practitioners was a fair evaluation for their work in promotion and tenure reviews when they are in university settings. This is something that the Council will continue to work on as it is a major issue for us. A number of people attending the session expressed strong opinions that the AAA meetings are not a welcoming environment for practicing and non-academic people, either in the sessions presented or in the attitudes of many of the organizers and those who frequent the sessions. They find little in common these days with their academic colleagues, and given the expense of attending, several said they doubted they would do so again.

CMA also hosted our annual reception at the meeting hotel. Ordinarily, we go to a local museum, but due to the situation that developed at the University Museum (U. of Penn.) this past year with the firing with little to no notice of their research faculty, we decided against it. Our hotel reception attracted 30 people, several of them students, and was a good alternative. Both the president and president elect attended the SA.

4. *Spring Meeting.* CMA used to hold a reception for members at the annual Association of American Museums meetings in the spring, but that was canceled last year and this due to finances. We are also changing our relationship with AAM as spelled out in our by laws (see below), so that unless we decide to hold an additional independent meeting (under discussion) or to meet jointly with a regional group, we are not presently hosting a spring meeting.

5. *Mentorship Efforts.* Board Member Candace Greene received an implementation grant from NSF in 2009 to train graduate students in the use of anthropological (especially ethnographic) collections for research. This past summer, 12 students attended this first training institute at the U.S. National Museum of Natural History,

Smithsonian Institution, and it was considered by all a big success. The program will continue until 2011, and CMA members are involved as faculty, although we are not an official sponsor. We see this type of effort as very important, however, and applaud it at every turn. The 12 students did object-based research, and several presented papers at the Native American Art Studies Conference in Oklahoma City this past October. They have been encouraged to join CMA as well.

In addition, we continued our discussion this year on awarding a student prize for a paper/poster to be presented at the AAA meetings. CMA has done this in the past, but due to the financial situation, since 2004 we have not been able to afford it. It should be on track to award a student prize in 2010. Several students attended our reception this year at the AAA, and were enthusiastic about the meetings.

6. *Additional Outreach Activities.* CMA continues to cooperate with the Archaeology Division and the AAM and Association of Art Museum Directors on activities involving suppression of antiquities trafficking world wide. The CMA will also remain involved in CoPAPIA this coming year, likely appointing a board member specifically to interact with that group. Our incoming president is also involved in the Ethics Committee and revisions of the AAA Ethics Code. As noted, AAM connections have been become less firm with bylaws revisions, but members will continue to attend their meetings and be involved, as they are with the Society for American Archaeology, and a number of regional societies.

7. *Awards.* None were given this year, but the Board voted this past year to establish the Michael M Ames Prize for Innovative Museum Anthropology, to be given annually (pending qualified candidates) at the AAA meetings to an individual judged outstanding for a single or multi-authored book, published catalog, exhibition, repatriation project, or multimedia award. The deadline for submissions is July, 2010.

8. *Internal Communication.* Our webmaster, Dan Swan, aided by Kimberly Christen, both board members have begun the redesign of our website and it is now up and functioning. We look forward to using this for both internal and external communications and to strengthen our membership. In addition, our Secretary, Joyce Herald, made sure that CMA was well represented in *Anthropology News* this past year, with 8 columns (6,000 words) on diverse topics of interest to our members as well as AAA members. *Museum Anthropology Review* also continues at Indiana University, and our Journal editors will take over our blog as started by past editor Jason Jackson.

9. *Changes in Bylaws/Governance Structure.* CMA's membership passed bylaw revisions in July, reducing terms of office for officers and board members terms to 2 years, and then preserving continuity by having the vice president serve as president elect for 2 years. Revisions also reduced the past president's role to an advisor for a year. And we also dropped formal connections with AAM in favor of informal with it and other societies, and updated our means of internal board voting and communication (email).

Future Plans or Activities (3-5 years)

1. *Broadening Membership.* A new membership committee has been appointed, and is looking to incorporate other ideas from AAA sections. Otherwise, we will focus on the website, awards, the NSF student training initiative, etc.

2. *New Forms of Scholarly Communication.* We hope to reemphasize posters—new kinds of posters with innovative media applications—with a student prize, and also to enhance the blog and further develop the website.

3. *Section Projects.* Developing the student prize(s), perhaps workshops connected to the annual meeting, and other services for members. We will definitely be working on improving promotion/tenure criteria for evaluating museum anthropology in academic settings as a service to our members and others.

4. *Collaboration with Other Sections.* As noted above, we maintain active links with the Archaeology Division and CoPAPIA, and these will continue.

Chief Concerns

Most of our concerns are being raised through the SA, including continued equitable distribution of *AnthroSource* revenues, careful attention to publications and cooperation between the AAA and section publication editors and the primary contractor, representation of sections and section voices on the EB. The AAA staff on the whole does an excellent job, but we would like to see improvements with getting us membership data, annual meeting analyses (better cross referencing, indexing), finances, etc., as promised by the new software.

Catherine S. Fowler
CMA President, 2009