



Council for Museum Anthropology President's Report 2012

I am pleased to report that the Council for Museum Anthropology continues to thrive.

Our September to September membership numbers have increased modestly (from 333 to 347) with a monthly range between 318 and 395 members—and if traditional membership patterns continue to hold, October will have significantly higher numbers due to the cycle of membership renewals. Our finances are strong, with current financial reserves (as of the end of September 2012) of \$82,950.59; representing an increase in net assets of 11.2% for the year. Net assets have doubled over the past several years, allowing CMA considerably more latitude for action than in years past. As a personal aside, five or six years ago the organization's future was deeply in doubt based on both membership numbers and organizational reserves; happily we are now close to reclassification as a medium rather than small section, and our reserves to net expense ratio is more than 10:1.

While membership levels are not a source of immediate concern, I would note that there is still a relatively high rate of “churn,” or turnover of members who remain part of the larger AAA without continuously remaining CMA members, and that our student numbers remain lower than I would like. I would like once again to request that the Board approve lower student membership rates, at least for the remainder of the Wiley-Blackwell contract. Those rates may need to rise based on new publications arrangements, but for now we would benefit from increase student recruitment without significant loss of revenue.

In addition to reduced student membership costs, we may want to consider surveying our members to better understand how we can effectively serve them. We share the largest proportions of our members with the Archaeology Division, American Ethnological Society, Society for Visual Anthropology, Society for Cultural Anthropology, and General Anthropology Division in roughly that order. It may be worthwhile asking permission to survey members in those closely related sections as well to determine what makes members join and retain membership in CMA, and how we can expand that membership base.

The W-B contract and its revenues are one of the primary reasons CMA enjoys such robust financial health. Concerns I noted in my report last year remain vital, and it is worth quoting that report without change:

These reserves are not based on membership dues, fees or other direct revenues from our members, but instead reflect revenue-sharing arrangements with AAA based on the current Blackwell contract. The funding formula determining how much each section receives is quite complex, but I wish to note once again that CMA is in a particularly strong position because of strategic decisions taken several years ago to invest resources to digitize back issues of Museum Anthropology, which had the effect of significantly increasing CMA's share of overall shared publication revenues. One of our challenges in the year to come is to deliberately and prudently allocate these resources, while husbanding reserves against eventual need. While the financial benefits of the current publication arrangement are undeniable, this

revenue ultimately derives from increased costs to libraries facing budget cuts and thus is likely unsustainable over the longer term. There are also concerns about both the accessibility of these journals to non-academic audiences and the appropriateness of scholars volunteering their time to generate profits for a commercial enterprise. The AAA Committee on the Future of Print and Electronic Publishing (CFPEP) is currently discussing longer-term publication directions for the Association, with an emphasis on electronic publications and born-digital resources. In the meantime the Blackwell agreement has been renegotiated and renewed by AAA Executive Director Bill Davis, so that we have the luxury of discussing future publications and revenue options while enjoying a financially advantageous agreement for at least a few more years.

The Committee for Print and Electronic Publishing has distributed an analysis by consultant Raym Crow of AAA publications which suggests that the current model is not viable in the absence current levels of W-B support. Some savings are possible through reduction in the print distribution of Anthropology News, and digital distribution of journals will result in some additional savings. Options discussed include aggregation of either titles or editorial functions, increased publication/membership charges, and changes in how content is delivered. CFPEP also encourages publishing sections to reflect on how publications advance their mission and serve to promote communication within their areas, and whether alternative platforms or methods of communication might be equally effective.

Several other issues will confront CMA over the course of the year and will require careful attention by the Board and the membership. NAGPRA regulations for 43CFR10.7 are being drafted and should be released soon for comment, seats on the NAGPRA Review Committee will be open, and a substantive review of all existing NAGPRA regulations is underway and will likely be released within the next 12 months. Sequestration of funds and consequences of scheduled cuts to federal programs—including most major funding agencies for museums, and for institutions like the Smithsonian itself—remain a real and immediate concern. And initiatives to allow the culling of federal anthropological and archaeological collections through deaccession will likely result in agency action and request for comment.

Howard Morphy, CMA President-Elect, has done another excellent job of preparing a strong program for these annual meetings. Our ability to offer equally strong programs in upcoming years depends on two factors (in addition to Howard's efforts): 1) your submission of papers and sessions for CMA review; and 2) membership levels, and the internal formula used by AAA in assigning program space based on membership. The Section Assembly continues to be pressured by Interest Groups to allot space on the annual program to IGs as well as sections. At some meetings it is possible to expand the number of sessions, but for many of the upcoming meetings where contracts are already signed there is no elasticity in program space, and offering IG programs based on membership size would be at the expense of either general submissions or sectional allocations, or both.

CMA's journal, *Museum Anthropology*, is on a solid foundation. Its outgoing editors Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Steve Nash redesigned the format and editorial board of the journal, and incoming editors Jen Shannon and Cynthia Chavez Lamar will make additional changes to keep the journal's appearance fresh and engaging. The Board approved additional pages for 2012 so that the new editors would not face a deep backlog of accepted manuscripts, and I look forward to the new directions Jen and Cynthia will take *Museum Anthropology*. Christine Weeber is continuing as editorial assistant, ensuring continuity in process, and the outgoing and incoming editors have consulted over the course of the past year to ensure a smooth and straightforward transition.

In addition to the editorial transition at *Museum Anthropology*, Howard Morphy becomes President of CMA at the conclusion of these meetings. He has been an exceptional President-Elect, and will do an outstanding job as President. I am pleased to report that the CMA membership has elected Patricia Capone of Harvard to serve as Howard's President-Elect, and that Marge Bruchac will continue to serve as Secretary for another term. Cara Krmpotich and Joshua Bell will also join the Board.

It has been my pleasure and honor to serve as President of the Council for Museum Anthropology over the past three years, and I wish to thank the members of the CMA Board and *Museum Anthropology* editors for their support, their energy, and their service to the organization. It has been a great pleasure serving with them, and I am excited both by the Council's prospects and that I am able to leave the CMA in such capable hands.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Barker, President
Council for Museum Anthropology