



NEAA NEWSLETTER

Message from the President

Let me begin by giving my sincere thanks to Amy Gazin-Schwartz (Assumption College) for her superb leadership as NEAA President over the past two years. She has been instrumental along with other executive board members in strengthening a dedicated membership and initiating positive transformations in the organization. I would also like to congratulate the following individuals for their newly elected positions: President-Elect, Pierre E Morenon (Rhode Island College); Graduate Student Representative, Angela Labrador (UMASS-Amherst); and Undergraduate Representative, Heather Slivko-Bathurst (SUNY-New Paltz), and to Matthew Smith (St. Lawrence University) who was appointed NEAA membership coordinator.

The NEAA meetings' theme this year "Anthropology Comes Home: The Enduring Promise of a Holistic Discipline" struck a personal chord for me both as someone who is a staunch supporter of the four (and five) field approach, had given a paper as a graduate student the last time they were held in Amherst 21 years ago, and is a UMASS Alumnus. I felt that the conference was a great success due in no small measure to presentations by a mix of faculty, professionals and students at all levels of experience. That said I want to extend a special note of gratitude to the leadership of Ventura Perez and the entire UMASS community for their wonderful sponsorship and support. Congratulations are also in order to Graciela Monteagudo (UMASS-Amherst) who was awarded the M. Estellie Smith Graduate Paper Prize for her paper on "Towards an Anthropology of the Wild Publics," and to Megan Paradise (Dartmouth College) who was awarded the John Omohundro Undergraduate Paper Prize for her paper on "Social Constructions of 'Quality' in Subsistence Agriculture and Food Production: A Case Study from Himachal Pradesh, India." On a related topic the membership voted to create a new category of undergraduate and graduate student prizes for poster paper presentations.

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At the general business meeting we heard the results of an excellent survey of departments conducted by Alan Hersker, Abbey Mastin and Natisha Romain (all of SUNY Potsdam) that will help shape the future direction of both the organization and the annual meetings. A full report will soon be made available. Alan also deserves a special declaration of praise for keeping us financially in the black as the NEAA treasurer and for doing double duty as the newsletter editor while Jessica Skolnikoff (Roger Williams University) was on sabbatical. Thanks to the editors we also ushered in an electronic version of the newsletter, and the development of a new webpage, with the much appreciated assistance of Webmaster David Houston (University of Vermont). Both of these developments should increase the exposure and viability of the organization.

Finally, I am excited to report a preliminary commitment by Pierre Morenon and his colleagues at Rhode Island College and neighboring institutions that they will be hosting the 2009 NEAA meetings in Providence, RI. Further details will be made available at our website and in the Fall 2008 newsletter in the months to come. In the meantime please feel free to contact me or the NEAA executive board members for any assistance that you may need. In closing, I wish everyone a prosperous and productive summer ahead.

Barrett P. Brenton

Message from the Editor

Driving back from the conference at UMASS Amherst in March, I thought a lot about the NEAA. It was, as usual, great to see and to catch up with folks I haven't seen since last year. I enjoyed spending some time with colleagues with whom I work closely but rarely get to see "off campus" and I had the pleasure of meeting new people from all over the region: Drew University in New Jersey, Keene College in New Hampshire, University of Western Ontario in Ontario and, of course, the great team
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of faculty and students at Amherst who made the meetings such a success. But mostly I thought about how fortunate I was to have the opportunity to be active in an organization that is such a great fit for me personally and professionally.

In the 2007 survey of the departments (see Romain's and Mastin's article below), several respondents noted that it's understandable that the NEAA doesn't have more junior and untenured faculty involved in the organization: given time and financial constraints, as well as workload issues, many of us feel forced to redirect scarce resources (i.e., our time and money) into larger, better-known, more "prestigious" professional organizations. I'm fortunate not to be at a university that subscribes to the doctrine of "publish-or-perish", but I know folks who are. And while they present regularly at the AAAs or the SfAAs or the SHAs, there just never seems to be enough time or money or energy left in March to come the NEAA meetings ... let alone to become active in the organization.

I wonder if part of the solution may be for students and for us junior and untenured faculty to use the NEAA a bit more selfishly. For example, I mentored Natisha Romain and Abbey Mastin as they did the 2007 NEAA survey as an internship project to fulfill the requirements for our department's Certificate in Applied Anthropology and it was win-win-win for everyone involved: me, the students and the NEAA. Many people have mentioned that working groups or special interest groups would be one way for the NEAA to increase interest and activity in the group. Why not convene a group that fits into your research area? You gain contacts and grow your network while the NEAA gets some much needed PR. Are you looking to put together a panel or publish an edited volume? Consider using this newsletter or our website to put out a call for papers. Are you an undergraduate looking for information on graduate programs? Think about creating a network of graduate students who are willing to give advice and recommendations. Are you the director of graduate studies? How about writing a brief article on your program? There are plenty of ways to get involved, but it's up to each of us to create our own opportunities. Try doing THAT at the AAA.

Best wishes for a safe, fun and productive summer. We'll see you in the Fall!

Alan Hersker

ORGANIZATIONAL ASSESSMENT: A STUDY OF THE NEAA MEMBERSHIP

Founded in 1961, the Northeastern Anthropological Association serves students and anthropology professionals in the northeastern United States and south eastern Canada. While the organization focuses heavily on the annual meeting, they also publish a newsletter three times a year, award prizes for student papers, and occasionally aid in other publications.

At the annual meeting of the NEAA on 21 April 2007 in Ithaca, New York, several members expressed their concern with declining participation in the organization, particularly at

the annual conference. The membership and executive board agreed that the NEAA should address these questions in a systematic way. We expressed an interest in the research and Alan Hersker (SUNY Potsdam) agreed to organize the project. Hersker developed the project proposal in the summer of 2007 and it was approved by the SUNY Potsdam Institutional Review Board (Project #07-F-478) in September 2007. We gathered and analyzed the data in the fall of 2007. We presented the results of the project at the business meeting at the 48th annual meeting

(UMASS Amherst) in March and at SUNY Potsdam's Learning and Research Fair in April. The full report will be available on the NEAA website.

Methods

Data was collected from anthropology faculty at public and private colleges and universities in the US and Canada within the NEAA service area. We developed a spreadsheet of colleges, department chairs, mailing addresses, and email addresses. Drawing from this spreadsheet, we sent an email in late September to alert department chairs to the project, to gauge interest, and to encourage potential project participants to self-identify themselves. We also had access to the email list of current NEAA members. The project utilized two methods for data collection: key informant interviews and a quantitative instrument.

The interview participants included current and former NEAA executive board members as well as individuals who responded to our preliminary email and expressed interest in participating in the project. We interviewed a total of 16 individuals and interviews lasted for 10-45 minutes. Based on informal conversations with members and on the interview data, we developed a twenty-seven question quantitative instrument. The quantitative instrument was run through Survey Monkey, an online quantitative data collection site. The survey was designed in late October 2007, pre-tested by NEAA executive board members and members of the SUNY Potsdam Department of Anthropology in early November, and then opened from 15 November until 15 December 2007. Department chairs were encouraged to complete the survey and to forward the email and hyperlink to interested faculty, students, and professionals.

Interview Summary

Interview participants familiar with the NEAA noted that the organization encourages communication between anthropologists in the northeastern United States and southeastern Canada. Several participants felt that the NEAA's "international" service area added greatly to the

meetings and the organization as a whole. The NEAA provides information about the discipline of anthropology, reports on research in all of its subfields, and offers information on career options for students and practitioners. It encourages the participation of all schools, including small colleges and universities, and offers opportunities to all members, from undergraduates to professionals.

Many of the participants agreed that membership in the organization has declined recently. However, one interviewee stated that even though attendance has decreased from what it was thirty years ago, over the past ten years it has stayed relatively the same. Another participant noted that this trend can also be seen in other organizations.

Participants noted that untenured junior faculty feel pressured into becoming active in organizations which have more prestige. Some also felt that senior faculty do not encourage junior faculty to get involved in the NEAA. Heavy workload also affects faculty and student attendance at the meetings. A few interview participants stated that the NEAA executive committee and the conference organizers do not actively recruit participants. Some interview participants stated that their perception is that the organization focuses on anthropological research in the northeastern US and southeastern Canada, limiting faculty or student interest.

Survey Participants

There were 114 respondents to the online survey; 48 respondents were current NEAA members. The majority of survey participants were college and university educators (57%). Of other respondents, 28% were graduate students, 7% undergraduate students, and 10% were professionals. Half of respondents identified their specialization within cultural anthropology (50%). Thirty-seven percent identified as archaeologists, 20% as physical anthropologists, 20% as applied anthropologists, and 6% as linguistic anthropologists. Participants were allowed to select multiple specializations.

When queried on the benefits of belonging to professional organizations, 85% responded that keeping current in their field was a benefit. Other benefits included professional development, networking nationally and locally, keeping current in other fields and disciplines, for affirmation of their work, and for training opportunities.

Respondents were asked how long they have been members in the NEAA. Forty-two percent of respondents had been involved in the organization for one year or less. Thirty-one percent were involved for two to five years, 10% for six to ten years, and 17% for eleven years or more. It is important to note that 73% of the current membership had been involved for five years or less.

Views on the NEAA

Non-members were asked why they were not involved in the NEAA. Sixty-three percent noted that they did know about the group. Echoing the interview respondents, survey participants stated that they were too busy, that membership did not lead to professional advancement, that the organization did not meet their professional interests, and that there were too few benefits. A few (6%) participants noted that the membership costs were too expensive. However, interview participants stated that fees were very affordable compared to other organizations. Some survey respondents also claimed that they were members in the past, but their membership expired and they were not notified to renew it.

Participants provided numerous suggestions on communication. The most effective methods included e-mail, website, electronic newsletters (87%), and paper newsletters (54%). The least effective methods were telephone calls, blogs, and online networks like Yahoo!, MySpace, and Facebook.

Participants suggested that keeping members informed about the organization would increase membership. The organization should have better membership management including notification of expired membership. They also suggested that the NEAA improve its annual meetings. This could be done by providing a variety of presentation topics,

hosting meetings at more convenient locations, improving paper quality, increasing the amount of attendees, and sending a post-conference update.

Views on the Annual Meetings

Participants listed a variety of important reasons for attending the NEAA annual meeting: networking opportunities, professional contact with colleagues, professional development, and learning about current. Mentoring students and getting away for the weekend were given little importance by survey respondents.

Sixty-three percent of the survey respondents preferred the meetings to be held on a college campus, 45% preferred a hotel. A few participants commented that either venue was fine. Many respondents expressed their concern that the meetings were airport- or major-highway-accessible and near a range of hotels and restaurants. Respondents also noted that they would most likely attend the NEAA annual meetings if they were held in March, April, or October. Many stated that the NEAA should avoid hosting their meeting during the same time as larger national and international meetings.

Two survey questions asked participants to rank responses on a four-point Likert scale (from *generally agree* to *not applicable*) to statements about the NEAA conference. There was little agreement: in seven of the fifteen categories, *neither agree nor disagree* had the highest response rate. Where this was not the case, the following statements received the most significant response. Sixty-five percent of respondents agreed that faculty should be present at presentations they sponsor. Respondents disagreed that there were too many student presentations (54%) and that the annual meetings were advertised well (55%). Participants were also asked to rank types of presentations on the same scale. Fifty percent or more of participants rated the following as important or very important: papers by faculty, papers by graduate students, papers by professionals, well-known keynote speakers, professional development workshops, book displays, papers by undergraduate students,

mixers and other social activities, and career workshops.

Recommendations

Our recommendations were developed from our interview and survey participants responses. The recommendations are organized around the themes of conferences, connections, and communication.

Many participants noted that annual meeting locations were often the most convenient to members from New York State but that Ontario, Pennsylvania, Maine, and New Jersey were underrepresented at the meetings. Several participants suggested that making the conference more accessible to people from these areas could draw new members and institutions to the organization. Respondents emphasized that certain types of conference programming should be available, including networking and socializing opportunities, professional development workshops, breakout sessions, and special interest roundtables. In addition, programming should be included that is of interest to professional and applied anthropologists who are not faculty or students. There should be equal representation of all the sub-disciplines of anthropology within panels and presentations at the annual meetings. Respondents suggested that the NEAA continue to encourage active participation by undergraduate students while increasing participation by graduate students, faculty, and professionals. To ensure high quality presentations, all posters and papers should go through a rigorous selection process. Providing high-profile keynote speakers may also aid in increasing attendance at annual meetings.

Respondents offered several suggestions to improve networking and foster professional connections between students, faculty and professionals at the NEAA annual meetings. One way would be to encourage more professional development opportunities. Another would be to establish working groups and special interest groups to encourage contact among members with similar interests. Developing outreach programming for local community groups and

other disciplines could also aid in building local connections.

Interviews and survey respondents stressed the importance of communication. They suggested the NEAA increase its visibility at larger colleges and universities, especially those in urban environments. Also, the organization should increase its outreach efforts to private, non-academic, organizations such as CRM firms. Participants also suggested that the newsletter should include book reviews, reports on the conference papers, a question and answer section highlighting different universities and faculty, and briefs about members and their current research. Proceedings from the annual meetings should also be published. Participants also suggested that the membership and renewal membership process should be made user-friendlier. They noted that the conference fee and membership fee should be separated to allow those who are unable to attend the annual meeting to remain members of the organization. E-mail and web-based technology should be used more effectively to communicate with members and nonmembers. Membership could be increased if the NEAA offers opportunities such as student scholarships, thesis/dissertation awards, book awards, or other monetary prizes. The organization could also encourage, and perhaps aid, in the publication of papers from members, especially junior faculty.

Responses to the Report and Recommendations

We delivered the project report at the business meeting at the 2008 annual conference at UMASS Amherst. The major recommendation given by those present was that this survey be conducted every few years to evaluate the NEAA organization and conference. The audience felt that conducting an evaluation every few years would be beneficial to the organization.

Though it was not directly related to our recommendations, much was done at the business meeting regarding the student membership of the organization. An undergraduate/graduate poster prize was created in addition to the current paper prizes. There was also a lengthy discussion about how the graduate and undergraduate student

NEAA representatives should be involved in the organization and conference planning.

Conclusions

Projects such as this one help to promote the future of organizations by addressing the issues and concerns they face. By continuing this type of project, the NEAA can actively evaluate the organization from the members' perspectives. We hope that this research can help the NEAA improve its services and expand its membership. We also hope that this project opens the door for

other to gain applied anthropological experience in organizational assessment by partnering with the NEAA to conduct research. We would like to thank the NEAA executive board, members, conference attendees, interview participants and survey respondents, and all those who helped us during the research process.

Natisha Romain, SUNY Potsdam
Abbey Mastin, SUNY Potsdam

Network with Professionals in Your Field! Build Your Resume!

We are currently looking for a Contributing Editor for Archeology for the NEAA. If you are interested, please contact Jessica Skolnikoff, Roger Williams University, jskolnikoff@rwu.edu

2008 Student Paper Awards

~~~~~*The M. Estellie Smith Graduate Paper Prize*~~~~~  
*Paper, Rivers, and Genetically Modified Trees: Environmentalism/Racism in the Neoliberal Frontier*  
Graciela Monteagudo (University of Massachusetts Amherst)

The neoliberal frontier in the global south is characterized both by hubs of prosperity and by masses of populations left out of these enclaves. Those left out face unemployment, starvation, and death. There are, however, unintended consequences to this model, characterized by Harvey as accumulation by dispossession. The new social movements that rose up to counter corporate globalization partially defeated neoliberal policies by creating public spaces with women in strong leadership positions, egalitarian structures, and direct democracy practices. In Gualaguaychú, Argentina, the citizens affected by the installation of a Finnish paper mill along the Uruguay River coast have sustained for 14 months an uninterrupted road-blockade of the international bridge that connects Argentina and Uruguay, using methods for mass participation and decision making processes that were first put into practice during the mid 1990s and early 2000s by the unemployed worker movements, the popular assemblies and the recovered factories of Argentina.

~~~~~**The John Omohundro Undergraduate Paper Prize**~~~~~  
*Social Construction of “Quality” in Subsistence Agriculture and Food Production: A Case Study
from Jimachal Pradesh, India*

Megan Paradise (Dartmouth College)

This paper will examine the cultural constructions of quality in a subsistence agricultural community in northwestern India. The paper is based upon field research carried out in the Indian Himalayan state of Himchal Pradesh, in a village located about fifteen kilometers outside of Dharamsala called Heena. During the course of my research I recorded differences between emic and etic definitions and meanings of food quality; this paper explores these distinctions and how they relate to each other. By outside meanings I am referring to the scientific and policy definitions of which foods are safe to be consumed and of 'nutritional value', whereas inside meanings refers to the ways villagers in Heena determine quality food. In both cases, these constructions of quality, and of what creates a higher quality food, are learned through various knowledge channels. While much of the literature on ideas of food quality focus on wealthier populations, this paper presents an alternative reading of what quality means in a subsistence setting, albeit one that is also impacted by regional, national, and global agricultural practices.

CALL FOR PAPERS

The NEAA Newsletter is delivered to over 200 individuals, anthropology departments and professional organizations so it's a great way to reach people who share your research interests. If you would like to include a call for papers or for submissions to an edited volume here, please contact Jessica Skolnikoff, Roger Williams University, jskolnikoff@rwu.edu



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MEMBERS RECEIVE 3 ISSUES OF THE NEAA NEWSLETTER PER YEAR AND A REDUCTION ON FEES TO THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE