

## Biological Anthropology Section Annual Report 2009

### 1. Status, Activities, and Accomplishments

- **Membership Numbers** have remained relatively stable during the year and our membership for November 2009 was 428. This figure is lower than that of November 2008 was 496. Of these 236 were regular members and 192 were student members, indicating that the student membership has remained relatively constant, and the reduction in membership is mostly in regular members. We are unclear why this reduction in membership is occurring.
- **Financial Balances** as of October 31, 2009 were 22,349 (2008, \$21,228) in the General Fund and \$23,645 (2008, \$23,668) in W.W. Howells Endowment. In 2007 we increased section dues to \$20 for regular members and retained the \$5 dues for student members, and this increase has helped offset the decrease in membership. In 2007 we also asked members to donate \$15 to the Howells fund in honor of the fifteenth anniversary of the Howells award, and at the 2009 meeting renew our request for contributions.
- A continuing concern remains the amount of the endowment for the W.W. Howells award. We will continue to ask for contributions to this fund.
- Food for the Executive Committee meeting and Reception with bar service continue to represent our major expenditure for the year. These costs continue to escalate. The cost associated with our Distinguished Lecturer have also continued to increase. Committee Members attendance at the annual meeting was retained at a maximum of \$300.
- **AAA Meeting Highlights**
  - a. The 2009 **W.W. Howells Book Prize** was awarded to Pat Shipman and Alan Walker for their book, "Ape in the Tree: An Intellectual and Natural History of Proconsul".
  - b. The 2009 **Distinguished Lecture** was presented by Dr. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy. The title of the lecture was "Darwin and the Ascent of Emotionally Modern Man: How Humans Became such Hypersocial Apes."
  - c. The 2009 **Student Prize** was presented to Molly Zuckerman for her paper "Making Sex Less Dangerous: Evaluating the Evolution of Virulence in Syphilis." Honorable mentions went to Matt Nowak for his poster "Group size, social structure, and ranging in lar-gibbons: implications for the ecological constraints model," and to Carrie Veilleux for her paper "Habitat preference and nocturnal lemur color vision: implications for primate and human evolution."

d. Program Chair, Dr. Debra Martin, organizes thee BAS sponsored and co-sponsored sessions. This year we had 23 volunteered abstracts that came to us for review – almost all of them requested podium except for 3 that preferred being in a poster session. We accepted all of the abstracts, and organized them into 2 thematic session and 1 poster session. Some individuals were asked if they would shift their papers to posters or vice versa, and everyone did agree. The themes/titles for the volunteered paper sessions included “Evolutionary Perspectives on Morphology, the Brain and Tool Use” and “Biocultural Perspectives on Inequality, Health and Diet.” The posters were grouped into two themes, one having to do with forensics and field methods, and one having to do with cooperative breeding. In addition to these volunteered sessions, there was one organized session on “Bioarchaeology of Captivity and Slavery” organized by Debra Martin and Ventura Perez. We used our invited designations for one of the volunteered sessions, the captivity and slavery session and we co-sponsored a session with Medical Anthropology in immigration and health. All BAS sessions were spread out across the days and time slots, and do not seem to conflict with other biological sessions that did not go through BAS (such as the Presidential session on Darwin). In 2008we had a total of 49 papers and posters, and in 2007 a total of 34. The declining numbers of papers/posters is a concern and we will work to increase the number.

e. The **Reception** followed the distinguished lecture. I had requested a room for 100 people for the both events. The lecture was schedule for a smaller room (about 75 seats) and was overly full with people sitting on the floor. The room was too small to set up the reception in the back of the room as planned (and discussed with the hotel in at least 3 phone calls). The inadequate space negatively impacted the reception and it did not last as long as usual.

f. The **BAS website** remains operational. Dr. Kate Pechenkina will be replacing Jim Bindon as Webmaster.

g. The AAA **listserve** continues to serve as a convenient way to contact members.

h. Dr. Virginia Vitzthum continues to edit the **AN BAS columns**.

i. Dr. Sarah Stinson currently chairs the **W.W. Howells Book prize** committee

## 2. Important action points

- A. We welcome Drs. Rachel Caspari to the executive committee of the BAS.  
We sincerely thank Jim Bindon for his years of service as Webmaster and Dr. Nina Jablonski for her service as a Member-at-Large.
- B. Our executive committee members and terms of office are: (terms end after the meeting in the years listed below)  
Darna Dufour (Chair) 2010  
Karen Strier (Chair elect) 2010

Trudy Turner (Past Chair) 2010  
Karen Rosenberg (Secretary/Treasurer) 2011  
Debra Martin (Program Chair) 2010  
Rachel Caspari 2012  
Kathleen MacKinnon 2010  
Kristin Klingaman (student member) 2010  
Virginia Vitzhum (AN editor)  
Sara Stinson (WW Howells prize)  
Kate Pechenkina (incoming Webmaster)

### **3. Future plans or activities**

- In this year's election we will have candidates for position of Member-at-Large
- BAS members were also nominated to run for AAA wide offices
- We will continue to maintain communication with our members via the listserv and encourage our members to present papers at the annual meeting.
- We ask the membership to vote on amendments to the by-laws that reflect current activities and practice.
- We will complete a handbook for executive committee members and officers and post the same on our website.

### **4. Future concerns**

Our major concern is membership and our ability to offer our members enough programming to encourage them to attend the meetings. With thanks to the Executive committee (Drs. Dufour, Bindon, Crews, Himmelgreen, Vitzhum, Strier, Martin, Jablonski, Stinson).

Respectfully submitted,  
Darna L Dufour, BAS Chair