

SECOND OPINION

SMA at the AAAs: Annual Meeting Preview

December 3-7, 2014 | Washington, D.C.

ATHENA McLEAN (CENTRAL MICHIGAN U)

AAA 2014 promises some exciting sessions for SMA. This was my first year as SMA section program co-chair/co-editor, joining Alex Edmonds (U Edinburgh and U Amsterdam) for his second year. Claire Snell-Rood, post-doc (U Kentucky), and Adrienne Remmert, recent B.A. (Central Michigan U), also served on the SMA Program Committee, providing considerable assistance.

AAA allots each section eight credits to use toward invited sessions. It takes two credits for each invited session; if we use our credits judiciously and co-sponsor sessions with other sections we can extend the number of invited sessions. To spread our invitations to a broader range of subjects, we chose not to invite both parts of two-part sessions, although we tried to get them scheduled sequentially.

Highlights

This year SMA has seven invited sessions, six of which were co-invited:

1. “Covered? Risk, Citizenship and Politics in the Wake of Obamacare, Part 1” with the Society for the Anthropology of North America (SANA)

2. “Who is the Subject of Illness? Part 1 of a Discussion of Affliction by Veena Das” with the Society for Humanistic Anthropology (SHA)
3. “Bi-Disciplinary Identities: Medical Anthropology-Public Health Hybrids and the Importance of Cross-Disciplinary Understandings”
4. “Assembling the Biosocial: Embodied Environments, Health and Modes of Interdisciplinarity in the Life Sciences and Anthropology” with the Anthropology & Environment Section (A&E)
5. “Iterations of the Genome: Public

Health, Ethical Dilemmas and Power in the Post-Genomic Era” with the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA)

6. “‘Care’ful Consideration: Examining Notions of Care within and toward Ethnography” with the American Ethnological Society (AES)
7. “Why Can’t Linguistic and Medical Anthropologists Just Get Along?” an invited roundtable co-sponsored with the Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA)

There were many others we wanted to invite but weren’t able to due to programming limitations. A few include: “Psyche and Brain in the 21st Century”; “Metabolizing Environment: Anthropology of Metabolism between Molecular and Eco-Political Scales”; and



Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, location of 2014 AAA Annual Meeting (photo by Jurgen Matern, CC)

“Discipline, Care and Punish? Anthropological Approaches to Suffering and Well-Being along the Carceral Continuum.”

We were also surprised at the thematic coherence of several of the volunteered papers that we arranged into sessions. “Biomedical Hegemony in Health Discourses: Promoting Knowledge/ Obscuring Experience” and “Ethnicized Narratives and (Mis)Representations of Diseases and Sufferers” are two that were particularly striking.

There will also be five SMA roundtables: “Council on Anthropology and Reproduction Roundtable”; “Encountering Epidemiology: Risk, Uncertainty and the Politics of Evidence”; “Revisiting ‘Testing Women, Testing the Fetus’: The Social Impact of Amniocentesis in America”; “Anthropological Perspectives on Eating Disorders”; and the funding-focused “Navigating the NIH Funding Stream: NIH Funding Opportunities for Anthropologists.” The workshop “That Almost Finished Journal Article” has been scheduled for a highly coveted eight-hour slot beginning at 9:00 a.m. on Wednesday, December 3rd.

Unexpected Changes

Many changes were made to the schedule this year to prevent competition with Executive Program Committee selections, but some negotiation allowed sections to preserve their evening business meeting times. SMA’s Business Meeting, Awards Ceremony and Presidential Address will occur later than in past years, on Friday night, 8:30-10:30 p.m., followed by our reception and cash bar. Also look for slightly later times for SIG (special interest group) business meetings, now mainly scheduled in 1:00-2:15 p.m. time slots.

We received 127 volunteered abstracts this year! Eleven of those abstracts were for posters, and we arranged the remainder into 22 sessions. We also received 55 organized sessions, all of which the SMA Program Committee accepted. However, because of the record number of submissions to the AAA this year, and inadequate rooms to accom-

modate them, unanticipated cuts were made to accepted submissions in many of the sections.

For SMA this meant that five excellent organized sessions (9%) that we expected to be on the program were dropped along with six of the 22 sessions we had arranged from volunteered abstracts (27%). Those sessions and papers that had been accepted by their section’s program committee were invited to present in an alternative poster format, but this was unacceptable to most presenters, especially those whose papers were part of an organized session.

Because we were taken aback by the cuts, I tried to find a solution with the AAA program co-chairs that would have allowed the five organized sessions to be included in the final program. Unfortunately, we were ultimately unsuccessful. There was no advance warning that cuts of this magnitude would be made (the SMA experience was quite different last year). The SMA Program Committee would have appreciated the opportunity to assess the SMA program as a whole and make some final editorial decisions, even though this would have undoubtedly extended the review process.



SMA poster presenters Danielle Kabella (U New Mexico, top) and Maeghan Dessecker (Georgia State U, bottom) at the 2013 AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago (photos by Dinah Winnick)

Given the amount of effort that goes into creating proposals and reviewing them, we feel additional consultation with section program committees should occur before the final acceptance decisions are made. I am urging next year’s AAA program chair(s) to work with the chairs of section program committees to assure the final decisions about cuts remain the responsibility of the section.

Despite the disappointment of not being able to include several high quality proposals, we are confident that the 2014 program will be thought provoking, engaging and full of compelling research and perspectives from both emerging and longstanding SMA voices. We look forward to sharing more details in the coming months, and to welcoming you all to Washington D.C., in December.

Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group Inaugural Conference

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON D.C.

DECEMBER 2, 2014, PRIOR TO AAA ANNUAL MEETING

CONFERENCE THEME: CURRENT ISSUES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN
THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF MENTAL HEALTH

Anthropologists and other scholars are increasingly focusing their attention on the social, cultural and structural dimensions of mental health. The continued acceleration of globalizing processes, the impact of deleterious social policy and structural conditions on population-level mental health inequities, and the need for culturally appropriate prevention and treatment all speak to the critical importance of this work. However, because of (sub-)disciplinary compartmentalization, the diverse geographic and occupational settings in which anthropologically-informed mental health issues are addressed have largely gone unrecognized, even among researchers and practitioners who focus on this topic area.

This lack of recognition is also due to ongoing epistemological tensions

between the (false) dichotomies of theory-praxis and prevention-treatment. Therefore, the purpose of this inaugural conference of the Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group (AM-HIG) is to take stock of the current state of anthropologically-informed mental health research and practice; identify areas of theoretical and applied cross-disciplinary collaboration; identify employment and funding opportunities; and map out future directions.

Given this broad-based agenda, the conference will be structured to highlight four roundtable discussions on these key topics:

1. Anthropological Theory in Mental Health Research and Practice:

This panel is concerned with identifying those theoretical and

conceptual approaches that can best illuminate the social, cultural and structural dimensions of mental health and illness.

2. **Community Partnerships and Collaborations:** This panel will describe both the challenges and opportunities of developing collaborative relationships between anthropologists and community groups around local- or regionally-based mental health issues and concerns. We have particularly welcomed joint participation by representatives of community organizations and their research collaborators.
3. **Methodological and Ethical Issues in Mental Health Research:** Given the unique vulnerability of populations experiencing mental illness and its associated conditions, this panel will explore some of the methodological and ethical concerns of carrying out research, or developing research-based services, for this population. In an effort to think through some of the best practices of working with populations experiencing mental illness, we have particularly welcomed panelists who can discuss ways in which they addressed these challenges;.
4. **Funding and Career Opportunities for Anthropologists in Mental Health:** This panel will identify careers and sources of funding for anthropologists focused on mental health issues.

The abstract submission deadline has passed, and we are now inviting conference registrants, from our interest group and beyond. To register for the conference, please visit <http://bit.ly/1qHXNVm>. We encourage scholars and practitioners from a variety of disciplines and workplaces to participate!

Have any questions? We welcome you to email the SMA's Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group at aamhig@gmail.com.



Michael Duke welcomes participants in the first gathering of the Anthropology and Mental Health Interest Group at the 2012 AAA Annual Meeting (photo by Dinah Winnick)

Collaboration and Experimentation with Digital Genres at Somatosphere

EUGENE RAIKHEL (U CHICAGO)

This summer *Somatosphere* starts its seventh year as an online forum for medical anthropology and the broader social sciences and humanities of medicine, health and science. Those of us who work on *Somatosphere* are very excited to continue developing the site as a platform for communication, collaboration and experimentation. We are interested both in fostering novel conversations about shared concepts, issues and methods, and in experimenting with new forms and genres of publication and communication. In this sense, we see the site as engaged in a changing ecology of scholarly communication and publication, one in which older forms, such as peer-reviewed print journals, edited volumes and monographs, are becoming increasingly entangled with (relatively) new forms, such as blogs, online journals, podcasts and social media streams.

As part of an effort to explore the potentials of digital forms and genres on the site, we've recently formed an Editorial Collaborative (<http://somatosphere.net/masthead>). The members of this group will be working together to conceptualize and see-through new series and projects, as well as to help navigate *Somatosphere's* long-term direction. We don't know where these changes will take the site—in that sense, the Collaborative itself is an experiment—but it is likely that we will be running more pieces in the context of projects or series that span a year or longer. In fact, we've already been doing this for some time.

For example, one of the most exciting projects to appear on the site recently has been *Commonplaces* (<http://somatosphere.net/commonplaces>). The idea for this “series of short entries... by scholars reflecting on the classical and contemporary sites in medicine and science” came from its editors, Tomas Matza (U Pittsburgh) and Harris Solomon (Duke U), in conversation with Betsey Brada

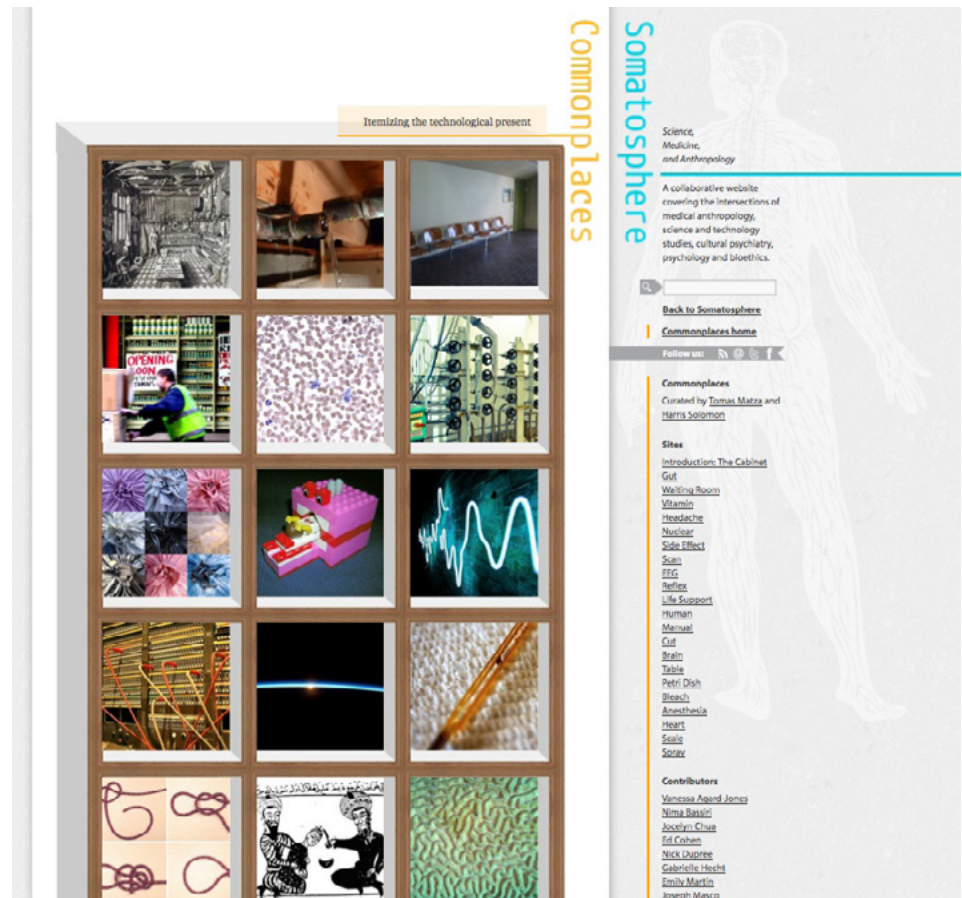
(Princeton U) and other members of the SMA's Science, Technology and Medicine Interest Group.

As the series editors explain, “Rather than curiosities, we pursue here commonplaces: those unrecognized and yet central infrastructures of the everyday whose banal nature, once unbound, may very well become curious once more.” Each of the pieces thus explores a familiar trope, artifact or object in the world of medicine and science—the waiting room, the side effect, life support, vitamins, the petri dish, bleach—drawing our attention to its often surprising associations, meanings and social lives. *Commonplaces* currently consists of 22 pieces by anthropologists and other scholars in the social sciences and humanities, and more short essays will appear in the *commonplaces* cabinet through the end of 2014.

“Top of the heap” (<http://somatosphere.net/series/top-of-the-heap>) is another series that has now run for over a year. In these pieces, our contributors—Maria Cecilia Dedios (London School of Economics) and Ekaterina Anderson (Boston U)—ask scholars in medical anthropology and related disciplines to tell us about books they've recently found compelling, engaging or significant, either to their research projects or to their lives as writers and thinkers. The books recommended in this series' 15 pieces range from academic texts in numerous disciplines, to works of fiction, poetry and graphic novels.

Many more projects are planned for the fall of 2014, including new series on health and global warming, forgotten scholarship in medical anthropology, the relationship between the anthropology and history of medicine, concepts and methods of biocultural research, and several others, for which we are seeking contributions.

While many of the pieces that appear on *Somatosphere* are invited, we always welcome unsolicited proposals for posts



Somatosphere Commonplaces landing page (screen capture courtesy of Eugene Raikhel)

of various kinds, including (but not limited to) thought-pieces, essays, research reports, conference reports, interviews, photo essays, videos and other multimedia projects. Not only are these great opportunities for students and young scholars to circulate their ideas and to begin publishing, writing a piece for *Somatosphere*—or another similar venue, such as *Savage Minds*, *Anthropoliteia*, or *Allegra Lab*—can also be a first step toward developing an idea into a journal article.”

sphere—or another similar venue, such as *Savage Minds*, *Anthropoliteia*, or *Allegra Lab*—can also be a first step toward developing an idea into a journal article. Indeed, several pieces that first appeared on *Somatosphere* were later reworked into articles for peer-reviewed journals or into

book chapters for edited volumes.

If you’d like to write a piece for *Somatosphere*, send us a brief proposal to admin@somatosphere.net. If you are specifically interested in reviewing a book for the site or would like to suggest a book for review, please contact our Book Reviews Editor, Seth Messenger,

directly at sethm@umbc.edu.

We are also actively seeking submissions for a number of new and upcoming series.

“Foreign Correspondents,” a series edited by Stephanie Lloyd (Laval U), features reviews of books published in languages other than English in the social sci-

ences and humanities of medicine, health and science. For more information on the series please visit: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8422>

“The Collaborative Turn: Interdisciplinarity across the Human Sciences” is a forthcoming series that seeks to open up a critical dialogue on collaboration and interdisciplinarity around topics in health, medicine and science. Appropriately enough, the series is being edited collaboratively as well. For the full abstract and information about submitting a proposal visit: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8675>

“Experiments with Pedagogy,” a series edited by Hanna Kienzler (King’s C London), invites contributors to consider new approaches to pedagogy in anthropology and the humanistic social sciences, as well as their impact both on students and our disciplines. For the full series abstract visit: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=8616>

Finally, if there’s something that you’d like to see the site cover or address, or if you’d like to get involved in working on *Somatosphere* in any way, please feel free to get in touch with us at admin@somatosphere.net.

Call for Applications / Deadline: September 24, 2014

Attention Students: Apply for Conference Travel Support!

DOUG HENRY (U NORTH TEXAS)

For the third year in a row, the SMA is offering conference travel support to five student members who have had abstracts accepted to the AAA annual meeting in Washington, D.C. This will be in the form of a \$500 travel award disbursed as a check at this year’s SMA Business Meeting. Eligibility is restricted to student members of the SMA who are presenting papers or posters at the AAA meeting.

Applications should include the following: (1) proof of current SMA student membership, (2) a copy of the conference abstract, (3) proof of acceptance, and (4)

a recommendation letter from an advisor. Awards will be evaluated based on significance, innovation and clarity of the submitted abstract, as well as the strength of the letter of support from the advisor, who should discuss the significance of the to-be-presented work.

Please compile all supporting materials into one file and save

it in PDF format. Email materials and any direct inquiries to the SMA 2014 Student Travel Fellowship committee at smaawards@gmail.com by September 24, 2014. Awardees will be notified by October 2, 2014.

Our students are our future! We hope to see you in Washington D.C.



Janelle Taylor and Linda Garro at the most recent SMA meeting, held in Albuquerque, NM (photo by Jim Eldridge, SfAA)

Call for Applications / Deadline: September 15, 2014

SMA Seeks Digital Communications Manager

The SMA is seeking a digital communications manager who will be responsible for preparing, editing, and distributing news to members of the SMA and beyond. This is an excellent opportunity for an advanced graduate student with broad knowledge of medical anthropology, strong writing and editorial skills, a sophisticated understanding of professional uses for digital media, and the ability to work independently.

Strong WordPress, Facebook and Twitter management skills are required. The preferred candidate will also be confident using Adobe InDesign and MailChimp, or similar tools for news layout and distribution. The SMA currently produces a quarterly PDF newsletter distributed by email, supplemented by social media. The new digital communications manager will continue to work with these existing outlets and help the SMA expand its digital presence.

We are offering a stipend of \$2,000 for a 1-year position starting in November 2014. Applicants are invited to submit a cover letter detailing their experience and interest, along with a CV, to Mara Buchbinder, Communications Committee Co-Chair (mara.buchbinder@gmail.com), by September 15, 2014.

Call for Applications / Deadline: September 15, 2014

MAQ Seeks Digital Media Editor

Medical Anthropology Quarterly invites applications for the new position of digital media editor. This position is part of MAQ's initiative to expand its digital archives and to promote new forms of scholarly communication. The digital media editor's responsibilities include:

- helping to envision MAQ's use of digital media
- coordinating the Editorial Intern Program, which provides graduate students with opportunities to create digital media relevant to the journal's content
- editing content for MAQ's new website (medanthroquarterly.org)
- proposing or developing original content contributions for the website
- contributing to MAQ's presence on social media
- working with the main MAQ editorial office at the University of Florida
- attending MAQ editorial board meetings during the AAA annual meeting

The ideal candidate would be broadly trained in medical anthropology, proficient in relevant technologies (e.g., WordPress or other content management systems), and able to work with and manage teams. Candidates with the PhD in hand are preferred, but we also welcome applications from advanced graduate students.

We estimate that the position requires approximately 6–8 hours per week, on average. Support from applicants' home institutions (e.g., time, technology, student or staff assistance) would be desirable.

MAQ is an international journal published by the Society for Medical Anthropology, a section of the American Anthropological Association. The journal publishes research and theory in all areas of medical anthropology. Its goal is to stimulate development of important ideas, methods and debates in medical anthropology and to explore the links between medical anthropology, the parent discipline of anthropology, and neighboring fields in the health and social sciences.

To apply, send a letter of interest and a CV to the editor, Clarence C. Gravlee, at cgravlee@ufl.edu by September 15.

*SMA Invites Comments /
Deadline: August 29, 2014*

Policy Statement Opposing Legislative Barriers to Abortion Care

The SMA Policy Committee invites SMA members to comment on a preliminary policy statement: "CAR Opposes Legislation that Creates Barriers to Safe Abortion Care."

This statement was submitted by the SMA's Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) and written by the CAR Advocacy Committee (co-chairs, Lauren Fordyce and Elise Andaya). A version of the statement previously appeared as a commentary in the January 2014 issue of *Second Opinion*.

Feedback received on the posted draft will be reviewed by CAR's advocacy committee in preparation for sending a version to the SMA board for their endorsement. The statement will remain open for comment through August 29, 2014. To review the statement and submit comment, visit <http://bit.ly/1o27e3H>.



U.S. Capitol west side (photo by Martin Falbisoner, CC)

Reflections on Publishing and Policy

LINDA C. GARRO (U CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES)



This issue's column is a potpourri. Since my last column, among other things, the SMA received this year's election results (see separate an-

nouncement), posted our first "policy statement" for review (and worked out a process for reviewing these statements on the SMA website), and made progress in assessing future publishing options for our journal. I'll have a bit more to say about the policy statement process below. My summer "break," so far at least, has very much revolved around writing a response to the AAA's request that publishing sections prepare five-year sustainability plans for their section's journal.

Future of Publishing

Although there is much that could be said about the steps ahead in planning for the future of publishing, this extended discussion can wait for a later date. For now, let me just say that I structured the report to keep options open for the SMA while pointing toward a more focused consideration of these options in the coming months. At the time I write this, the report has been endorsed by the SMA Committee on the Future of Publishing and is under review by SMA board members. If supported by the board, the report will be sent on to the AAA's Committee on the Future of Print and Electronic Publishing (CF-PEP) which has established a working group (that includes representatives from publishing sections) to review the five-year plans.

As I know that many of you will soon (if not already) be preparing for the coming academic year, I wanted to take this opportunity to mention one of

the recommendations from the "sustainability plan" for increasing the SMA's financial well-being during the remaining period of the publishing contract with Wiley-Blackwell. The recommendation was to remind SMA members that the SMA benefits financially when faculty provide their students with active links to assigned or recommended articles through course websites or syllabi.

It is in the SMA's interest to see the number of downloads increase during the remainder of the Wiley-Blackwell contract. In addition to providing needed revenue to the SMA, the number of downloads for a journal may impact whether librarians renew an institutional subscription, an issue of critical importance for us. It bears noting that even the currently open access *Cultural Anthropology* (CA) is on record as encouraging those with access to CA through an institutional subscription to use the institutional channels for downloads rather than going the open access route.

Policy Initiatives

I would also like to remind everyone that a draft of the policy statement submitted by the Council on Anthropology and Reproduction (CAR) has been posted to the SMA website (see www.medanthro.net/policy/preliminary-policy-statement-72014). The site will remain open for comments until August 29, 2014. I encourage everyone to read the policy statement and provide any

feedback you may have.

Over the past few years, the SMA's policy agenda has centered on encouraging SMA special interest groups (SIGs) to develop relatively short policy statements (the "PS" initiative). Policy statements are intended to reach beyond anthropologists or academics and to promote greater public awareness of SMA's stance on important policy issues. All policy statements are to include recommendations for the public and not just be addressed to other medical anthropologists. The CAR statement is the first PS sent to the SMA board.

Prior to the PS initiative, SMA's main

"...the SMA benefits financially when faculty provide their students with active links to assigned or recommended [MAQ] articles through course websites or syllabi. [...] In addition to providing needed revenue to the SMA, the number of downloads for a journal may impact whether librarians renew an institutional subscription, an issue of critical importance for us."

policy focus was the "Takes a Stand" (TAS) initiative, introduced when Mark Nichter was SMA president. According to Mark, who currently chairs the SMA Policy Committee, TAS "is a process designed to generate a series of high profile, critical, and balanced reviews of focal issues that have a bearing on public policy, and to identify what anthropology has contributed or could contribute to a better understanding of the issue in context and/or as it is unfolding. A primary aim of the TAS process was to provide a suggested list of high prior-

ity research topics for anthropologists to pursue related to the focal issue.” As many of you know, a number of the TAS articles have appeared in MAQ.

Both the PS and TAS initiatives will be discussed at an upcoming SMA board meeting in an effort to determine what kinds and combinations of policy-related activities to encourage and support as a means of both serving the needs of our members and making the SMA more visible to the press and policymakers.

Announcements

The SMA is looking for a new digital communications manager, who will take over the responsibility of producing our newsletter and help the SMA expand its digital presence through social media. Please see the advertisement in this newsletter. If you know of anyone who is a good fit with this position, please encourage him/her to apply.

Following the death of Richard Thomas, long-time manager of AAA’s membership department, earlier this year, we used a different channel to access SMA’s membership database. Unfortunately, the member list we used to distribute our April 2014 newsletter inadvertently left off a few members. We regret that this happened and are working closely with the AAA to ensure this issue of *Second Opinion* reaches every currently enrolled SMA member, excluding those who have indicated they do not want to receive emails from the AAA. If you did miss an issue, are a new or returning member (welcome! or welcome back!), or simply want to check out something in an earlier issue, all back issues of *Second Opinion* are archived on the SMA website at www.medanthro.net/newsletter.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and best wishes for a wonderful fall season.

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Election Results 2014

Welcome to SMA’s Incoming Officers!

This year’s SMA elections included excellent candidates all-around, and voting results were close!

At the end of the 2014 SMA Business Meeting in Washington, D.C., I look forward to welcoming Elisa (E.J.) Sobo (San Diego State U) as our next president-elect and Lesley A. Sharp (Barnard C), Cathleen “Catie” E. Willging (Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation), and John “Juan” S. Luque (Georgia Southern U) as our newest members-at-large on the Executive Board.

The SMA Board and Nominations Committee thank everyone who participated in the election process, including those who voted. I would like to personally thank members of the Nominations Committee, under the able direction of SMA Board Member Juliet McMullin, for their diligent efforts on behalf of the SMA. In addition to Juliet, the following individuals served on the Nominations Committee: Ruthbeth Finerman, Simon Craddock Lee, Holly Mathews, James Pfeiffer (SMA Board), Sarah Willen (SMA Board) and Linda Garro (SMA Board, ex-officio).

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