

SOUTHEASTERN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE BUSINESS MEETING 2020

OFFICER REPORTS

President's Annual Report: Janet E. Levy

Ordinarily, the president of SEAC reads a report to the Friday Business Meeting at the annual meeting. This year, as with so much of our lives, we have had to adapt to conditions created by the global pandemic of COVID-19. The Business Meeting will be held online, via Zoom, and will be much shorter than is standard. Therefore, with the outstanding help of SEAC's Social Media Editor/Webmaster, Dr. Megan Kassabaum, more extensive reports are available on SEAC's website. It occurs to me that if this is successful, it could become a model for future years.

It has been an extraordinary experience to lead SEAC over the past year. I am tempted, on my low days, to exclaim: "I didn't sign up for this!" However, with the support of the officers and Executive Committee, and chairs and members of SEAC committees and task forces, we have made it through the year since our meeting in Jackson, MS in fiscally sound and organizationally stable condition. Take it from me that not all non-profit organizations have done as well.

Let me start with a bulleted list of basic accomplishments completed by the Executive Committee (familarly called "the board"). After that, I will briefly discuss items that need our attention in the coming year.

Activities of SEAC's Executive Committee and President, Nov 2019 – Oct 2020

Immediately after the 2019 annual meeting in Jackson, work focused on finding and confirming new members and new chairs for SEAC committees and task forces.

Before Christmas, 2019, SEAC signed a new 5-year contract with our publishers, Taylor & Francis, for our flagship publication, *Southeastern Archaeology*. The most important part of this contract is the expansion to four issues/year (with an expansion of total pages).

I then took a break from SEAC business to have my right hip replaced, which turned out to be successful and not as scary as I had feared. Entirely by luck, my last follow-up appointment with the surgeon was March 11, so I was done by the time the major shut-downs began.

It rapidly became clear that we could not realistically plan for the annual meeting in Durham, NC, during the last week in October. It then took several weeks of negotiation with the Durham Convention Center, the four hotels we planned to use, and the venues in Little Rock, AK, and Chattanooga, TN, for following years, to rearrange things. Although we could not avoid all financial penalties, we were able to negotiate a viable postponement of the annual meeting until October 24-27, 2021, in Durham. This solution could not have been accomplished without a huge amount of work by Dr. Heather Lapham in particular and her colleagues, Dr. Margie Scarry and Dr. Steve Davis, at UNC-Chapel Hill. We plan to be in Little Rock in 2022 and Chattanooga in 2023.

This negotiation was barely complete when the death of George Floyd in police custody in Minneapolis generated a wave of concern/protest/demands/agitation/etc. focused on long-standing issues of racism

and social justice across U.S. society. Archaeology was not and is not exempt from this development. In the short term, SEAC distributed a public statement, drafted from the contributions of Executive Committee and members of the Native American Affairs Committee. Several members of SEAC leadership also participated in webinars organized by the Society of Black Archaeologists. Several members of SEAC wrote contributions to the Fall issue of *Horizon and Tradition*, SEAC's newsletter, that focus on issues of equity within archaeology. Planning for the longer term, the Executive Committee created a Task Force on Diversity and Equity (working title). This group will be working on interrelated issues, including expanding diversity within the archaeological profession as well as grappling with archaeology's complex and contested relationships with Native American communities. Personally, I want to emphasize the long term nature of this commitment to change. We are in very early days yet.

In addition, the activities triggered by Floyd's killing generated inquiries from some SEAC members about the C. B. Moore prize and its physical award, a replica of a possible sacred indigenous object (the "Moundville cat"). A suggestion was made to remove Moore's name from the prize. The Executive Committee discussed this, but did not reach a decision about it. There is diverse opinion on the question within SEAC's membership, with quite different perspectives all proposed by people I respect. However, the Executive Committee did decide to retire the physical award itself and replace it with individual plaques for award winners. In fact, the ExComm had been struggling with this question for more than a year because we have run out of space on the base to add engraved names. Also, at least some recipients mentioned that it would have been nice to have an award which could be displayed beyond one year.

In between unexpected issues that needed attention, the SEAC ExComm works to manage more mundane projects. With the thoughtful advice of the Investment and Finance Committee, we rebalanced some of the investments in the Life Fund, in order to protect against market volatility. We also withdrew some earnings from the Life Fund and added them to the operating budget, following established policies. The ExComm also wrote a letter to the Corps of Engineers in support of recertification of the Tribal Nations Technical Center of Expertise.

After the much grieved death of SEAC's longtime member and friend, Judy Knight, editor extraordinaire, the ExComm voted to rename the Student Paper Prize – which Judy managed for many many years – in her honor, as the Judith G. Knight Student Paper Prize.

The final major discussion among members of the Executive Committee focused on continuing activities of the Task Force on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault. This issue received less attention over the past year than it has in recent years because of all the unexpected developments noted above. Following up on sentiment expressed by members last year in Jackson, the ExComm prepared amendments to the Articles of Incorporation and to the Bylaws to add an individual to the ExComm, as the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Coordinator. These amendments are before the membership for a vote as I write this report.

Concerns and issues for the future

One can hardly imagine another year with as many high-intensity issues coming before SEAC governance, but the reality is that many projects remain to be accomplished. Each of the ones listed below has a range of complexities that I am not going into here. SEAC lacks some kinds of important diversity, but there is plenty of diverse opinion about policies and actions that should be initiated by the

organization. As I end my term as president, I urge the ExComm and the membership to consider with respect a full range of opinions. So, this is just a list of items to keep in mind, lacking full exposition. Those of you who know me know that I have opinions on all these things, which I will share if asked down the road.

- We are just starting to make progress on a Social Media Policy, which is important when so much communication takes place via social media. In fact, SEAC needs a broader “Electronic Communication Policy” which will cover the website, social media, and acceptable use of our database of members’ email addresses.
- We need to support organizers for Little Rock in 2022, confirm arrangements for 2023 in Chattanooga, and move forward with scheduling meetings for 2024 (Tampa?) and 2025 (Louisville?).
- There are a number of issues to discuss regarding publications. First is working with Taylor & Francis to have online access to all back issues of *Southeastern Archaeology* available to members directly through the SEAC website. Second is an ongoing discussion, with the Native American Affairs Committee and other representatives of tribal communities, about illustrations, specifically of objects from burial contexts, in the journal.
- SEAC archives need attention. We more or less have a grip on archiving paper materials through the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian. But, there are hardly any paper archives to worry about now. We need to seek advice on appropriate ways to curate email and electronic archives.
- The Task Force on Diversity and Equity will be active in the coming year. The ExComm should be a strong collaborator here. Equally, I urge everyone to give SEAC time to work through these complex issues in a thoughtful way.
- At the same time, SEAC has a commitment to continue work on mitigating sexual harassment/assault in the organization and in the profession.
- A proposal has been received to change the way the recipient of the C. B. Moore award is chosen (the proposal came from a previous winner). While I am very sympathetic to the suggestion, it’s yet another complex question. I have suggested a task force to tackle this topic, as well as returning to the question of the name of the award, another not-as-simple-as-you-might-think issue.
- It has been suggested that, in addition to the Public Outreach award, SEAC should initiate a Public Outreach Committee to work on ways for the organization to engage with a broad diversity of communities (e.g., events at the annual meeting; web resources; development of curricula; etc.).

Conclusion

After November 6, 2020, I will turn the SEAC presidency over to Maureen Meyers, with appreciation for her support and contributions over the past two years. This year has been an unexpected challenge. I am grateful for all the work I’ve been able to rely from the SEAC Executive Committee: president-elect Meyers, Secretary Chris Rodning, Treasurer Patrick Livingood, journal editor and editor-elect Mary Beth Trubitt and Rob Beck, social media editor Megan Kassabaum, and executive officers Jayur Mehta and Meghan Buchanan. In addition, the SEAC committee chairs and members have supported SEAC’s mission throughout the year. Finally, I am grateful to several senior members of SEAC to whom I have turned for information and input at various times.

There are many opportunities for contributing to SEAC's governance. If you have ideas about facilitating and expanding SEAC's activities and goals, I hope you will volunteer for committees, task forces, officer positions, and other ways of contributing to the organization.

As the Grateful Dead have said: "What a long, strange trip it's been."