To PMA or Not to PMA: That is the Question!

Journal Editors

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southern_anthropologist

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southern_anthropologist/vol22/iss3/3

This Front Matter is brought to you for free and open access by the Southern Anthropological Society at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Southern Anthropologist by an authorized editor of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.
To PMA or Not to PMA: That is the Question!

[Editor’s note: At the Baton Rouge meetings, one of the items to be voted on is whether or not the SAS should hire the Professional Management Associates to do the managing of the Society’s business affairs. In order to promote an informed electorate, discussions both for and against are presented here: YOU will be asked to study these and cast YOUR vote at the meetings!]

NO!

During the business meeting at Raleigh it was proposed that we consider the possibility of contracting with Professional Management Associates specifically for booking hotels, managing the meetings, collecting registration and annual membership dues, and investing endowments, and finally laying out the newsletter. Admittedly, PMA has produced results for the one association it currently supervises. In ten years it has increased membership threefold in SfAA. Their meetings operate with flawless precision each spring.

However, I view such management unnecessary for a regional association such as SAS. As Miles Richardson put it, outside professional management would only add another level of bureaucracy. Granted, the SAS has a highly fluid membership. Except for a core of members who attend most annual meetings, many of those registered in any given year are specifically...

NO! continued next page

YES!

Last year, 1994-95, several of our members approached the Executive Board with a proposal concerning a means by which we might increase the management efficiency of SAS. The proposal concerned writing a contract with Professional Management Associates (PMA), located in Oklahoma City, for carrying out management services for us. PMA’s President is Dr. Tom May, a sociologist, and PMA is the management organization for the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA). The SAS Executive authorized me to look into the possibility. Through the year, I was in contact with PMA concerning what they would propose. Hans Baer, Current SAS President, and I also attended one joint meeting with Tom May at the SfAA convention. Last April Dr. May also came to our annual meetings in Raleigh and spoke briefly to the Executive Board. The Executive Board decided to wait until next year to make a decision, but the proposal was brought up at the annual business meeting. People spoke both in favor and against the proposal. I am writing this to speak in favor of the proposal.

I will be brief. The PMA proposal to manage the SAS is a win-win situation for us. PMA has many years of successful...
interested in the current topic of the key symposium. Others attending are students delivering a first paper. In general these latter participants maintain a membership for one year only. I do not disparage this participation, indeed, for it adds constant vitality to the organization. However, it is unrealistic to expect any lasting commitment from this segment. It is unlikely that a constant flow of computer-driven dues notices to former participants will significantly increase the number of continuing members.

As for the tasks of local arrangements and program organizations, the responsibility is not difficult for even rank amateurs such as ourselves. Outside of Atlanta and New Orleans, most cities in the region have only one convention center, most of which are usually on the verge of Chapter 11 from lack of convention business. Booking space and general arrangements are not complicated and local hotel management is extraordinarily accommodating to groups such as the SAS. Certainly the 100 or so paper abstracts are not difficult to arrange into sessions and a final program. The technology to expedite the project is already sitting in every academic...
NO! Continued

The Newsletter and generating endowment investments are also problematic. This publication is only as good as the material submitted to the editor. Slick paper or layout does not necessarily improve the product. The challenge of investment of the endowment is first to determine how much risk SAS is ready to make and this decision will have to be made by the Executive Council regardless of who calls the investment banker.

In short, the SAS does not need the expert management. Indeed, if our limited resources are to be expended, I would propose they be used to underwrite the annual travel expenses of the three members who are required to attend all meetings: the Secretary-treasurer, the newsletter and proceedings editors. These are responsible positions, which demand effort and time and are critical in year to year continuity of the SAS.

In any case, the SAS has done well for three decades with all the imperfections of volunteer labor. Why change it now?

Tom Collins
University of Memphis
Memphis, TN 38152
collinst@cc.memphis.edu

YES! Continued

city more than once. PMA deals with hotels and convention businesses all year long, every year. They could get us a better deal in most cases, I believe.

PMA has years of experience in helping program chairs call for papers and organize abstracts for printing in preliminary and final programs. We can use that expertise to make our program development more efficient and effective. Local arrangements and program chairs would have more time to spend on soliciting papers and organizing the structure of the program. Printing costs can be very high; PMA could help us achieve a good-looking program at a reasonable cost.

PMA could also take over managing the mailing list. The mailing list is important because it one way we can solicit new members, and make sure that members who not attending the meetings pay their dues. Meeting fees and dues are key elements in raising funds for our association activities, programs and journal.

I must add here that our current Secretary/Treasurer, Daryl White, and our past one, Tom Arcury, have been efficient, dedicated and outstanding not only in the devotion they brought to their task, but also in the skills they have given us. They have kept us on track and brought the SAS to the doorstep of the next century. Daryl has also been program chair or local arrangements chair at least twice. Tom continues to serve the SAS directly by his role as Treasurer of the SAS Endowment Campaign.

In sum, I believe a management

YES! continued next page
organization such as PMA could help us greatly in our annual SAS activities, particularly in the areas of: (1) increasing membership, (2) increasing attendance at our annual meetings, (3) aid us in getting the best deals for putting on our annual conferences, (4) aid us in organizing the printing of the annual SAS meetings program, (5) maintain and expand our mailing lists, and (6) assist us in running the annual meetings.

Of course, PMA will charge us a management fee for their services. I believe the cost of the management will be more than offset by the increased revenue we will get from new memberships and renewals and by the increases in registrations at the annual meetings. PMA has in fact suggested that they can do that by the end of the first two years.

The assistance of PMA would not affect our own autonomy. Let me quote a letter from Tom May (PMA) (Feb. 12, 1995) on this, “It is important to realize that in contracting with our firm one does not dilute/diminish any corporate authority. Negotiating a contract with PMA is not like “joining” the American Anthropological Association. In effect, your constitution and bylaws remain unaffected. You have simply hired a firm to perform specific tasks over a designated period and for a particular price. In sum, our posture is that a management firm like our own can handle the rudimentary tasks and thereby allow the leadership to focus on the more important things that are central to organizational culture and long-term, strategic goals.”

I suggest that we seriously consider hiring a management firm to take over the rudimentary tasks, so that we can develop the SAS. I have a vision of the SAS continuing to bring well-known figures to speak at our meetings, such as Marvin Harris, Marjorie Shostak, Jim Peacock, Michael Blakey, Johnnetta Cole, etc., of expanding to a wider audience, producing a peer-reviewed journal, doing more outreach, bringing more practicing anthropologists into our organization and helping students more with their needs about knowing how to find jobs and get into the right graduate school. Clearly we are already on that track. A management firm like PMA can help us achieve those goals sooner, more efficiently and more effectively.

Sincerely, Tim Wallace
Current Past-President, SAS
North Carolina State University
email: Tim_Wallace@ncsu.edu
Remember the
SAS Endowment Campaign
for Education and Outreach in the South

The Endowment is now in its second year of fund-raising toward a $30,000 goal. The purpose of the endowment is to support student participation in the meetings and the student prize competition, expand the knowledge of anthropology in and of the South and to smaller colleges and universities which do not yet offer courses in anthropology, bring the message of our discipline to minority institutions through a dynamic speakers bureau, encourage minority participation in the field and at our meetings, and reward outstanding scholarship in the anthropology of the South with the annual presentation of an enhanced James Mooney prize.

Please take time to make a campaign pledge or donation, and send it to:
Dr Thomas Arcury, Campaign Treasurer
Sheps Center for Health Services Research
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7590

Public

African Burial Grounds: extraordinary news articles, opera, and a public meeting. There have been funerals, ceremonies, candle lightings, communityrxs, public meetings, and a public meeting. There has been a place its anthropology and the interpretation of the history of the African American community. In the northern United States, African Americans.

In the Africa, there are burial grounds that are the largest early cemeteries in America. They have been from the late 1600s until the 1700s. They have thousands of burials, many of them unmarked and unrecorded. The history of the African Americans in the United States and the misrepresentation in education. Could one's history be lost to memory.

Unexpected, they have themselves.