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## FROM THE EDITOR

## Departures and Arrivals

Tom Boellstorff  
*Editor-in-Chief*

## AN EXTRAORDINARY JOURNEY

On May 29, 2007, I submitted a memo titled “Statement Regarding Potential Editorship of *American Anthropologist*” to what was then known as the Committee on Scientific Communication (now the Anthropological Communication Committee) and the American Anthropological Association Executive Board. In that letter I expressed my interest in becoming editor-in-chief for one year (to complete the term of the previous editor), provided I could either put my name forward for the full four-year term that would follow or stop after 12 months. Admitting that at that point “I have not yet edited a journal,” I nonetheless expressed my enthusiasm for the opportunity and hoped that my scholarly track record would inspire sufficient confidence to support my candidacy for the one-year position.

What a difference five years makes! Looking back on that letter and my experiences editing this journal, I am struck by the unexpected paths of life, the importance of taking best advantage of serendipitous opportunities. The chance to edit *AA* has been one of the most rewarding and transformative aspects of my career. I am proud of my—to be honest—Herculean efforts over the past half-decade. I have certainly come to appreciate that alongside intellectual vision, my strong organizational skills, facility with the written word, and near-obsessive ability to focus on a task have helped me leave *AA* in a much stronger position than when I began this journey. *AA* has experienced a 36 percent increase in its five-year impact factor, a 61 percent increase in its immediacy index (how quickly articles are cited), and a 50.9 percent increase in article influence (how often articles are cited). By 2011, *AA* became the number one most-downloaded journal of the 490 journals Wiley-Blackwell publishes in the social sciences and humanities.

However, from the time I wrote that first letter of intent in May 2007, it has become clear to me that the editorship of any journal, and particularly a large, complicated journal like *AA*, is a deeply collaborative endeavor. From the beginning, Sally Merry and Alan Goodman provided unwavering support and counsel. Fran Mascia-Lees played a critical role as confidante and mentor, and the former editorial board was crucial in suggesting good candidates for my editorial board.

Every member of my board has been there for me over the years. My associate editors—Agustín Fuentes, Barbara Rose Johnston, Michael Silverstein, Carla Sinopoli, and Barbara Yngvesson—have all been comrades-in-arms through thick and thin. My review editors have been stellar models of creativity, responsibility, and excellence—John M. Bishop, Naomi H. Bishop, Melissa Checker, Karl Heider, Rosemary Joyce, Lilith Mahmood, Marc Moskowitz, Justin Richland, Sydel Silverman, David Vine, and Alaka Wali. AAA and Wiley-Blackwell staff have been beyond exemplary in their support—above all, Oona Schmid, a true visionary and trooper, always there with a creative solution—and also Bill Davis, Emilia Guevara, Elaine Lynch, Suzanne Mattingly, Lynne McCumber, Lisa S. Myers, John Siever, Jon Spielberg, and Terri Teleen. Hilary Heindl was crucial to getting our online submissions system operational. The presidents of the AAA during my editorial tenure (Virginia Dominguez, Alan Goodman, Setha Low, and Leith P. Mullings) have been vital supporters of my work.

Mayumi Shimose Poe was my managing editor during my entire editorial tenure. Issue after issue, she made *AA* happen: from author agreements to layout, from copy editing and proofs to the image gracing each cover, Mayumi’s incredible editorial and creative skills made the journal’s publication possible. Dac Nelson has also been indispensable to the copyediting work “behind the scenes” that makes the journal possible.

Closer to home, every member of my department has supported the work of my editorship and the demands it has placed on my time. In this regard, particular thanks is due to my husband, Bill Maurer, whom I am lucky to have as a colleague in my own department. Department and school staff, particularly Keith Drover, Norma Miranda, and Heather Wuebker, have helped me in innumerable ways. Karen Reiser handled the complicated finances of the journal—an extraordinary service—and at many a meeting in her office helped me understand budgets and reimbursements. The dean of the School of Social Sciences at Irvine during my editorship, Barbara Doshier, provided me with extraordinary support in terms of resources and a teaching reduction of two courses a year for each year of my

editorship. I literally could not have succeeded as an editor without her support, which should be a model for other institutions.

During the years of my editorship, I have had four editorial assistants: Neha Vora, Yoon Choi, Allison Fish, and Erin Moran. These extraordinary individuals worked with me on a daily basis to ensure the success of the journal, and I am deeply thankful for their energy and support. I am honored that I have been able to coauthor an article with Dr. Vora in this issue of *AA*. Graduate students in our department have also helped ensure the success of the journal through their work as editorial interns, and a number of these graduate students (as well as a few from other institutions) have produced a collaborative commentary that also appears in this issue of *AA*.

To all of these individuals named above, and to any I may have forgotten to include: you made me look good. Your support, counsel, and enthusiasm was the foundation of my editorial journey, and I will always be in your deepest debt. And a special “thank you” to all of you who reviewed manuscripts throughout my term. This may sound odd, but in a sense I consider all of you my closest colleagues during my editorship. It was your words that I read so intently and your sage advice that guided me in my comments to authors. You are truly exemplars of collegiality and unacknowledged inspiration.

What next steps lie ahead for my continuing journey? When I wrote that memo in May 2007, I had received tenure less than 12 months earlier. The advantage of this is that I step down from the editorship at 43 years of age and with a sense of new research adventures unfolding before me. Those adventures may involve Indonesia and online as well as mobile socialities—areas of past and continuing interest. But to be honest, what I need above all is a few months to read that stack of things I’ve been meaning to peruse for a long time but that have been superseded by the next manuscript for which an editorial decision is due. I will be editing a new book series with Princeton University Press, the “Princeton Studies in Culture and Technology” and may edit another journal someday, but for the time being a rebooting of my research is in order. The administrative work that is the ethical mandate of seniority will of course take up some time, as will the work of teaching and advising that is deeply rewarding to me. All in all, I am (unsurprisingly) not entirely sure what the future will bring. What I do know is that all of these varied endeavors will be powerfully shaped by the legacy of my experiences as editor-in-chief of *AA*.

### INTRODUCING THE NEW EDITOR

When, as has been the case over the last year or so, people ask, “Don’t you think that in some small way, you’re going to miss being the editor of *AA*?” all I can do is smile. Smile and assure them in no uncertain terms that while the work of editorship was a life-changing joy, it was an overwhelming task best suited to a limited term of service. I also emphasize

another key reason I have no regrets about the end of my editorship—my successor. I am simply thrilled that Michael Chibnik has agreed to become the new editor-in-chief of *American Anthropologist*. Professor Chibnik is an economic anthropologist with a distinguished history of research in Latin America and the United States. Having served in a number of editorial capacities, including as the editor of the *Anthropology of Work Review*, Professor Chibnik is perfectly positioned to take over the editorship of *AA*. I worked closely with Professor Chibnik over a six-month period to ensure a smooth transition and very much look forward to watching the journal grow and flourish under his editorship.

### IN THIS ISSUE

To mark the end of my editorship, this issue of *AA* features a section entitled “In Focus: American Anthropology,” which is inspired by the conference “American Anthropology,” which was held at the University of California, Irvine, on January 27, 2012. This conference (whose participants included several members of the *AA* editorial board, as well as current and former editorial assistants) involved fascinating discussions regarding a range of issues including the “editor” subject position, the role of the article genre in anthropological knowledge production, and the political economy and epistemology of journal publishing.

This In Focus section is comprised of three articles that build on and chronicle the conversations that took place during the conference. The first article, “Editorship, Value, and American Anthropology,” begins with a revised version of my keynote address at the conference’s outset. That keynote was followed by responses from members of the editorial board. Three of these respondents—Agustín Fuentes, Barbara Johnston, and Michael Silverstein—have generously provided revised versions of their responses.

The second piece in this section, “Anatomy of an Article,” is coauthored by myself and Neha Vora, my first editorial assistant. After receiving her Ph.D. in 2008, Vora left *AA* to take up a tenure-track faculty position. The following year Vora submitted a manuscript to *AA*, which after several rounds of revision was eventually published in the journal. In this article, we build on a more informal presentation at the “American Anthropology” conference to take the extraordinary step of presenting early drafts of Vora’s manuscript, as well as editor’s letters and reviewers’ comments, that are all normally hidden behind a cloak of privacy. This allows us to show, step by step, examples of how a manuscript moves through the revision process and how an author successfully responds to suggestions for improvement.

The third and final article in this In Focus on “American Anthropology” is also an unusual collaborative effort. I was gratified that a large number of graduate students (including students from beyond Irvine) attended this conference. I provided an opportunity for these students to jointly create a response to the conference; 13 students took advantage of this opportunity to produce “Reflections on American

Anthropology: A Conference at UC Irvine.” This article is composed of ten short reflections on the conference, bracketed by an introduction and conclusion. Together, these contributions provide a fascinating and multifaceted commentary on the conference and on the world of scholarly publishing and knowledge production. I insisted that these graduate student contributors submit their manuscripts using the online submissions site and rendered initial “revise and resubmit” decisions on all of them, providing a detailed editor’s letter and requiring the authors revise their contributions before accepting them for publication. In this way, I provided these graduate students with a taste of how the publishing process works in practice. I am proud of the collaborative article that has resulted from their efforts.

This issue of *AA* also features a Vital Topics Forum, “What Is Science in Anthropology?” guest edited by Peter N. Peregrine (a member of the editorial board). His introductory prompt is followed by short commentaries from four well-known anthropologists (all past presidents of the American Anthropological Association) and concluding reflections by Dr. Peregrine. This Vital Topics Forum thereby presents a succinct and compelling conversation regarding science and anthropology, an issue of longstanding and continuing importance for our discipline.

The first of the six research articles featured in this issue of *AA* is “Career Subjectivities in U.S. Anthropology: Gender, Practice, and Resistance.” In this article, Keri Brondo and Linda Bennett examine shifts in the working lives of anthropologists in the United States, particularly in relation to forms of practicing anthropology outside of the academy and dynamics of gender and race. In “Managing Muslim Visibility: Conversion, Immigration, and Spanish Imaginaries of Islam,” Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar draws on fieldwork in southern Spain to investigate how both European converts and Moroccan immigrants represent Islam through word and practice, and how these representational dynamics are shaped by issues of authenticity and authority in a context where Islam has a powerful historical presence. This is followed by Constantine Nakassis’s article, “Brand, Citationality, Performativity,” which provides a semiotic account of the performativity of the brand, in part by honing in on questions of citationality and the ontology of a brand itself. In “The Virtuous Tourist: Consumption, Development, and Nongovernmental Governance in a Mozambican Village,” João Baptista looks at a very different aspect of consumerism by exploring the relationships between vacationing and governing, and particularly the ethical agencies of residents, tourists, and those who govern. In the penultimate research article in this issue, “Hunting in Ancient and Modern Amazonia: Rethinking Sustainability,” Glenn Shepard, Taal Levi, Eduardo Neves, Carlos Peres, and Douglas Yu employ a computerized modeling technique to investigate how forms of hunting in the Amazon region shape the environment. One aspect of this modeling technique is a reframing of “sustainability” in both spatial and temporal terms; the authors show the technique’s utility with reference to contemporary

ethnographic data from two sites in contemporary Amazonia and also with reference to two archeological contexts. This is followed by Oliver Harris and John Robb’s article, “Multiple Ontologies and the Problem of the Body in History.” Here, Harris and Robb turn to the long-standing anthropological concern with embodiment to address questions of ontology, incommensurability, and historical change. Drawing on a range of scholars who have investigated culturally contextual understandings of the body, their analysis provides a fascinating counterpoint to the modeling technique of the article that precedes it. As has been the case throughout my editorship, these kinds of unplanned juxtapositions of top-notch scholarship demonstrate the breadth of anthropological inquiry and the surprising insights and conversations these wide-ranging forms of investigation can collectively foster.

These research articles are followed by a series of public anthropology, visual anthropology, and book reviews that further demonstrate the scope of anthropological interests. The issue concludes with Jeffrey Parsons and Deborah Nichols’s obituary of Elizabeth M. Brumfiel. Dr. Brumfiel was a leading Aztec archaeologist and former president of the American Anthropological Association (among many other honors and leadership positions), a scholar who published in this journal on many occasions (e.g., Brumfiel 1983, 1987, 1992, 2006). But in addition and on a more personal note, Dr. Brumfiel was a member of my editorial board. She was always extremely supportive of my work as editor, and I feel the loss of her keen voice and clear insight.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

There is, I think, no simple way to say “goodbye” as editor-in-chief of *American Anthropologist*, save to reiterate how rich and rewarding the experience has been. It has been a labor of love and an unending series of learning experiences, even surprises. I was surprised to see how often reviewers cluster around an assessment of a particular manuscript and to discover the degree to which what makes for good anthropological writing does not vary significantly by sub-discipline or topical focus. I have read far outside my usual “comfort zone” and learned about the brilliant work of anthropologists around the globe, on a truly staggering range of topics and a wide spectrum of methodological and theoretical approaches. Anthropology has so much to offer, and I am honored to be a member of this community of activists, teachers, and researchers.

Hardest of all for me during my tenure as editor has been rejecting manuscripts—it has never ceased being difficult and painful, every time. Even in these cases, I worked to my utmost to provide supportive feedback and build webs of collegial interchange. But beyond the “accepts” and “rejects” (and the many “revise and resubmits”), I have, above all, learned many things about myself, learned a deepened sense of being for others and the place of scholarship in the world. I depart the editorship a different person than he who arrived five years ago, and I will be forever thankful for the growth in self that this work has instilled in me.

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