

# Anthropology Newsletter

## COMMENTARY

### What Electronic Bulletin Boards Are All About

By Robert T Trotter II  
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If the Continental Congress had had microcomputers and the computer software for an electronic bulletin board, the first American Revolution would not have taken nearly as long to complete. If American anthropologists do not start using existing computer communication networks, then they may well be late for the second American revolution.

The current revolution is based on our new ability to send messages, texts, data and computer programs from one location to another at electronic speed worldwide. One person who is a part of this movement stated that "with 50 microcomputers, telephone lines and bulletin board software, you could plan and execute a revolution anywhere in the world, just using existing technology. We have finally achieved a primary dream of our founders; we have the capability for true freedom of information exchange at the grass roots level."

Anthropologists are already taking advantage of some of this technology. More and more microcomputers and terminals are showing up in departmental and faculty offices, but there are indications that we are somewhat behind, as an academic discipline, in the use of computers to communicate with colleagues. This commentary is unabashedly directed at encouraging our reluctant anthropological colleagues to join in the fun. After all, communication is at the very heart of everything we do in our discipline.

One way to transfer information between anthropologists at electronic speeds is with a computer-based bulletin board system. Bulletin boards have two primary services to offer. The first is to provide general-interest information, not unlike the bulletin board in your grocery store. The other is to accomplish electronic mail and data transfer. Within these two service areas, bulletin boards simultaneously function as an answering service, a mailbox, a public forum for interesting issues, a news and information service, a conferencing system, a system to organize events when the organizers are geographically dispersed and a repository for the type of junk mail that you can choose to read or ignore.

You need exactly three things to use any bulletin board: a computer or terminal, a modem (an electronic device that allows one computer to communicate with another over the phone) and an electronic communications program. These items allow you to call the

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**1986 CANDIDATES  
FOR ELECTIVE  
OFFICE,  
PP 18-29.**

## AAA and Constituent Units Announce Candidates on Fall Ballot

The annual fall balloting of the Members of the American Anthropological Association will be conducted this October. The slates for two seats on the Committee on Ethics are composed of M Catherine Bateson (Amherst) and Carol J Greenhouse (Cornell) and Robert A Fernea (Texas-Austin) and George Roth (Bureau of Indian Affairs). For three seats on the Nominations Committee, the slates are composed of Susan Gal (Rutgers) and Conrad P Kottak (Michigan-Ann Arbor), Alfonso Ortiz (New Mexico) and Renato Rosaldo (Stanford) and George C Frison (Wyoming) and John E Yellen (NSF). Elected members of both committees will serve 3-year terms. In the past, service on the Nominations Committee has been 2 years, but with biennial presidential elections, the Board of Directors has extended the term to 4 years. To stagger service on the seven-member committee, candidates elected this year will serve 3 years.

The elections of Units of the Association will be conducted in the same balloting, with voting limited to Unit Members. In this issue, candidates are an-

nounced by the American Ethnological Society, Archeology Section, General Anthropology Division, National Association for the Practice of Anthropology, Society for Humanistic Anthropology, Society for Linguistic Anthropology, Society for Medical Anthropology, Society for Psychological Anthropology, Society for Urban Anthropology, and Society for Visual Anthropology. Other unit elections will be announced in the September AN.

Biographical sketches and statements by candidates appear on pp 18-29. Members are reminded that this material will not be reproduced to accompany the ballot and should be retained.

As reported in the January AN, Members attending the Annual Business Meeting in Washington, DC, last December passed the "Proposed Resolution on Minority Anthropologists," which would amend the current Principles of Professional Responsibility to include sexual orientation, age and disability among other nonacademic attributes already cited as the possible bases for exclusionary practices in personnel

actions. In the fall ballot, this proposed resolution will be presented for a vote of the entire membership, as follows:

Be it resolved that the Board of Directors, when it makes the "thorough reassessment" of guides to ethics announced by President-elect June Helm in the October 1985 *Anthropology Newsletter*, be instructed to include protection of minorities at least as strong as paragraph 3.e. of the Principles of Professional Responsibility as amended below, and September AN.

Be it further resolved that paragraph 3.e. of the PPR be amended to read as follows, with new wording underlined:

When anthropologists participate in actions relating to hiring, retention, and advancement, they should ensure that no exclusionary practices be perpetuated against colleagues on the basis of sex, marital status, color, social class, religion, ethnic background, national origin, sexual orientation, age, or other nonacademic attributes. Nor should any otherwise qualified individual be excluded on the basis of disability. Anthropologists should, furthermore, refrain from transmitting and resist the use of information irrelevant to professional performance in such personnel action.

## China Scholar Elected President of SSRC



Frederic E Wakeman, Jr

Frederic E Wakeman, Jr, Professor of History and former Chair of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, has been elected President of the Social Science Research Council effective July 1, 1986. The announcement was made by Hugh T Patrick, R D Calkins Professor of International Business, Columbia University, and Chair of the Council's Board of Directors. Wakeman will succeed Francis X Sutton, who has served as Acting President since October 1, 1985. Sutton

had replaced Kenneth Prewitt, who resigned from the Presidency in 1985 to become Vice President for Program at the Rockefeller Foundation.

The Council's new chief executive officer, who is 48 years old, is one of the nation's foremost historians of modern China. He has authored or edited six books on China, including *The Fall of Imperial China* (1976) and *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (two volumes, 1985), and numerous articles. He will be the first historian to fill the position.

Wakeman graduated from Harvard College in 1959 and studied for a year at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris. He received a PhD in Far Eastern history and Oriental languages from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1965 and has taught there for the past 21 years.

Almost every national scholarly association in the United States that has a China program has benefited from Wakeman's leadership: the Council, the American Council of Learned Societies, the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China and the National Humanities Center. At the two Councils, he served as

Chair of their Joint Committee on Chinese Studies (1982) and as Chair of one of its predecessor committees, the Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization (1974-79). He recently spent several years in China in various capacities: he was a visiting professor at Peking University and a consultant to the US National Academy of Sciences.

The Social Science Research Council is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1923 "for the purpose of advancing research in the social sciences." Throughout its history, and particularly since World War II, the Council has been a leading national organization for international training and research. Programs most familiar to anthropologists are those sponsored by the foreign area committees on Africa, China, Eastern Europe, Japan, Korea, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Near and Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, the Soviet Union and Western Europe. These are currently sponsored jointly by the Council and the American Council of Learned Societies.

Sydel Silverman (Graduate School, CUNY) is the AAA representative to the SSRC.

## Commentary

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bulletin board and scan through its menu. The menu lets you call up items of interest. You then read items immediately or capture them with your computer and store them to read when you are not paying long distance or computer connect charges. The level of difficulty in using a bulletin board is similar to ordering food at a restaurant. The first time you eat in a restaurant, you have to read the whole menu. You may even have to read it a couple of times to find what you want. But, the more often you return to the restaurant, the quicker you can get to the beef.

Most bulletin board (or computer network) communication is asynchronous. You leave information and as soon as someone calls in they get it and respond to it. These systems can eliminate telephone tags, replacing it with more efficient electronic mail and data exchange. Some sophisticated systems also provide the ability for several people to sit at their terminals and hold a keyboard conference. This capacity has to be used carefully and appropriately; otherwise, it is simply a slow, silent telephone conference call.

With a bulletin board system, you can send information to a single individual, to selected individuals or to a whole group. Anything that can be typed can be sent, from a single character to a set of encyclopedias or complicated graphics. You can type messages directly from your terminal, while you are hooked up to the board, or create messages in advance and send them much more quickly, having already corrected any typos that may have occurred in the original composition. You can use this method to send and receive an article that you are jointly authoring or bibliographies or even computer programs.

One of the most common uses for grass roots bulletin boards is to provide "computer users groups" (individuals who have the same type of computer or who are interested in the same type of issues) with a method for trading public domain (free) computer programs. There are literally thousands of excellent public domain programs available on bulletin boards, from ones that will let you encrypt your files (so no one can read them without the encryption program and a password) to wonderful programs that do exactly the statistical analysis you wanted, that print the screen you are reading, that give your computer graphics capabilities, that do genealogies, or that are text-oriented data bases, and so on ad infinitum.

An example of a bulletin board valuable to anthropologists is a joint project of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA) and the Anthropology De-

partment at Northern Arizona University (NAU). A survey of the NAPA membership, conducted last year, indicated that enough of the NAPA membership had the basics (computer, modem and software) and the interest to make a bulletin board worthwhile.

The Project welcomes proposals across the entire intellectual spectrum.

Most services that potential users desired to have on the board (electronic mailboxes for members, text file and computer program transfer capabilities and a cooperation column) are in place. A few others, such as a job and project announcement service, will be available in the near future. The bulletin board went into service in January and has shown steady growth in use ever since.

So far, there seem to be two basic types of calls made by regular users. The first type could be called a "chat." A member calls the board, selects the main message section, checks his or her electronic mailbox, and replies to messages and/or sends mail to colleagues. Then the person may read any of the open messages (private messages can only be read by the person whose name is on the message). After that, the person changes to the cooperation column message area and scans for new messages. The computer lets you know which messages are new messages to you, which are old messages, and which ones you have already read. If something sparks your interest, you type in a reply. After looking at the message sections, the person may switch to the file section to see if there are any programs or text files that are of interest.

After that, the person usually signs off the board. The whole process, once you have used it a couple of times, takes about 5 to 10 minutes. The second common type of call from our users is project focused. An example is where people are coauthoring a paper (or abstract) with a short deadline. The first author composes the text on his or her computer, and when it is ready, calls the board, goes to the file transfer section and transfers the file to the board. Then the caller leaves the other author(s) a private message in the message section, leaving the name of the file and any other important information or instructions. The second author can then call in, the same day or whenever convenient, retrieve the file, add to the paper and begin the process all over again until the project is completed to everyone's satisfaction. This same process can be used to set agendas for meetings, write multi-institution grant proposals, organize symposia or write joint-authored computer programs. The possibilities are virtually limitless.

To put anthropology into some perspective with other disciplines and professional associations, both sociology and political science have just recently created large commercially serviced computer networks, called SocNet and PoliNet, respectively. These two networks are serviced by the same company that runs the services of Delphi. Engineering and the physical sciences have had both commercial and noncommercial computer networks

for several years. There are hundreds of SIGs (special interest groups) running bulletin boards, or electronic mail services, through private microcomputer bulletin boards or through some of the major commercial computer networks, such as TymNet, BCN (Business Computer Network), ScienceNet, The Source, Compuserve and TeleNet (there are many others). There are also regional commercial networks, such as The Electric Pages in Texas, which provides both public and private access areas for its subscribers (which, from their promotional literature, include the Texas Computer Education Association, Texas Parks and Wildlife Agency, members of the Austin City Council, Governor Mark White, the Texas Education Association and many stores and businesses).

Anthropologists are moving in the right direction. In addition to the NAPA/NAU board, several other anthropological associations are studying the feasibility of starting compatible systems (ones which might communicate in a national network eventually). Also, there is at least one large anthropology department that has installed a private board for its faculty and students. It will be used for internal electronic mail and will serve as a method for students and colleagues to send in data sets from all over the world and to protect and store them until the researcher returns home. This is an excellent use for microcomputer boards and should be investigated by more anthropology programs.

The beauty of bulletin board communication is that it is frequently more socially horizontal than vertical. This tends to make it intimate, immediate and creative. Someone puts an idea on the board (often anonymously), others respond and expand, or critique and deflate, the idea. This creates a dialog that is highly stimulating, useful, occasionally silly and not infrequently humorous. Computer conversations often approach the ideal that is supposed to occur in academic halls, but that all too often fails to materialize because of the environmental constraints placed on such conversations. For that reason alone, it would be worthwhile for more anthropologists to participate in the computer communication revolution.

If you are interested in getting on the NAPA network, all you have to do is join the organization and then call the board and request that your name be added to the users list. A password that only you know protects you from having other people read your mail or use the board in your name. If other anthropology organizations are interested in setting up a board consists of having the hardware available and finding someone to tend the board when it needs it. I sincerely hope that you will take advantage of one or more of the telecommunication systems available to you.

NOTE: Research to support original research in the humanities. Grants support collaborative or coordinated research projects of up to 3 years in duration.

NOTE: The NAPA/NAU bulletin board is available from 5 pm until 8 am on weekdays and 24 hours a day on weekends, Mountain Standard Time. Arizona never changes to Daylight Savings Time. Computer calls at other times will probably hurt someone's ear, since the phone line (602/523-3180) is used as the departmental phone line between 8 am and 5 pm MST.

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## NEW! Funding for Anthropological Research

Edited by Karen Cantrell and Denise Wallen

*Funding for Anthropological Research* is a one-stop directory that fully identifies over 700 funding sources that support anthropological research and activities. Sources include government agencies, private and corporate foundations, associations, institutes, museums, libraries, and professional societies. Complete and current information is given for grants, awards, scholarships, and other funding.

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