

Note from the Executive Director

Greetings from a still chilly Ann Arbor. As was the case last year following the meeting in Atlanta, upon returning home from the Chicago conference, we once again found ourselves dragging out the snow shovels to cope with an April snowstorm. Conventional wisdom points out that crazy weather patterns are to be expected in Michigan, but I hope spring blizzards do not become an established pattern after our annual meetings, particularly for those planned in 2010 and 2011. But first a few wrap-up comments about the Chicago meeting.

Many thanks to all who attended and helped make the conference in Chicago an unqualified success. Final attendance was 2,951, which was 120 more than our previous meeting in Chicago in 2005, and about 430 more than last year's meeting in Atlanta. East coast venues are almost always our best attended meetings (esp. Boston and Washington), but Chicago certainly was a lively affair. Several attendees commented on the convenient layout and quality of the Sheraton Hotel. **The formal program was our largest ever, with 249 panels.** There also were a number of special panels involving journalists and policy-makers who normally would not attend our meetings, a contingent of scholars of Korea from Latin America, and two keynote speakers who were supported through generous funding from the Luce Foundation and Korea Foundation. The AAS board is committed to broadening and enhancing the content of the annual meeting program, and we expect similar types of panels and special events will be part of future meetings.

Next year's meeting will be in Philadelphia and is scheduled for March 25–28. This will be our first meeting in the city of brotherly love in 25 years, and we hope it will be a similar draw to other east coast cities. We anticipate having a formal program roughly the same size as this year's meeting in Chicago, and in addition to the usual array of panels covering all disciplines and areas of Asia, Program Committee Chair Gil Rozman is actively encouraging submissions in underrepresented areas such as the social sciences, participation by government officials, specialists from think tanks, etc., as well as hoping to generate true cross-regional topics. As mentioned above, we also expect to have one or more public figures, policy specialists, or individuals prominent in the arts or humanities to give plenary addresses and/or participate in other panel sessions. **For more information please refer to the Call for Papers which will be available on the AAS website in May.**

Concerning plans for 2011, the cat is out of the bag! Although the official announcement will come later this summer at the ICAS conference in Daejeon, Korea, many AAS members already know that the 2011 meeting will be in Honolulu. It will be in early April and will coincide with the 70th anniversary of the AAS, for which we hope the conference will provide a suitable occasion to celebrate. Many details must still be worked out, but the meeting will be a jointly-organized affair between the AAS and ICAS, and will combine the meetings of both organizations. As such, it will be both larger and longer than normal, with a diverse program combining our usual panel-driven model with many elements of a typical ICAS meeting such as film showings, author readings, cultural events, etc. We also hope to continue efforts toward inviting prominent scholars and public figures, as well as greater participation by scholars from Asia. We realize travel costs are likely to be higher than normal, and we can't promise a luau on the beach, but I'm sure there will be many appealing aspects that will make the conference an event no one will want to miss. Please mark your calendars and plan ahead.

From a more general perspective, the AAS continues to do well, despite the abysmal economic climate. Like nearly all institutions and organizations, our investments were impacted by the economic meltdown, resulting in our net worth declining by nearly 20%—approximately \$1.5 million. However, the good news is that it could have been much worse. While a degree of budgetary belt-tightening likely will be necessary, the losses should not threaten our core activities. In many respects the AAS is thriving. The slow erosion of the membership over the last several years has been halted, and totals are now approaching levels of about ten years ago—roughly 7,300. This can be attributed to several factors including expansion of membership benefits, revamping of the AAS website and member-related features, digitizing the *JAS*, etc., but Membership Manager Doreen Ilozor's ceaseless efforts at promoting the Association to potential new members (and just as importantly, pursuing past members to re-join) has been central to this happy trend.

Other indications of a healthy AAS can be seen in our thriving publications department. A large part of the rationale for revitalizing the in-house publishing program was the changing conditions affecting academic presses that made it increasingly difficult for scholars to publish their work. I'm happy to report that under the management of Jon Wilson, and ably advised by an editorial board chaired by Martha Selby, the "Asia Past & Present" monograph series is primed to take off. Two new titles appeared just before the Chicago meeting, and several more are in the pipeline. We anticipate up to three more titles will be published in the series this year. The subvention program that enables academic presses to publish works that otherwise would not be financially viable also has been popular and helped address the economic problems affecting the field. We also expect to complete three booklets in the "Key Issues in Asian Studies" series intended for classroom use. Since we always are seeking ways of improving member benefits, we have recently created an electronic publications catalog and "shopping cart" feature on the website to make it easier for members to purchase these items. Our other publications also continue to thrive. Under the ongoing editorship of Lucien Ellington, *Education About Asia* continues to be a unique and essential resource for classroom use. Please check out the newly revamped section for EAA on the AAS website (www.asian-studies.org). The *Journal of Asian Studies* in both print and electronic formats continues to evolve under the able leadership of Jeff Wasserstrom, and is being effectively marketed and disseminated on a wide basis in Asia and Europe by Cambridge University Press. The Online *Bibliography of Asian Studies* edited by Anna Shulman also is updated on a regular basis in both content and functionality, and continues to be an essential resource for libraries and institutions having programs or faculty in Asian Studies.

Finally, I would like to call readers' attention to a small but extremely important activity, **the dissertation workshops** organized

and convened for the last seven years by David Szanton. The workshops are very intensive 2.5 day affairs based on a model developed by David several years ago for the SSRC, and scheduled either immediately prior to or directly after the AAS annual conference. Each year 12 graduate students (from roughly 30–40 applicants) working in a wide range of areas and disciplines are selected to participate in the workshops. They are chosen largely on the basis of how well their particular research topic would fit within a broad over-arching workshop theme, such as “Politics of Environment,” or “States, Elites, Citizens, and Subjects.” Themes are formulated each year by David in conjunction with the AAS Board of Directors, and reflect both current research trends in the field, and the potential for extensive cross-regional and cross-disciplinary discussion among the workshop participants. In addition to the students, 4–5 faculty participants interested in the particular subject area are asked to moderate and mentor the students at the workshop.

Without a doubt these workshops have been one of the most direct and effective ways for the AAS to develop and integrate a new generation of scholars into the field. The universal enthusiasm, praise, and gratitude expressed by both students and faculty participants are amazing. We receive several comments like the following after every workshop: “I came to a newfound appreciation of the importance of the AAS as an organization that creates links between diverse groups of scholars . . . without the

AAS we would not have met each other or have had the opportunity to realize how much we had in common with one another, despite our different foci of research” and “the workshop format facilitated thinking of our projects as a shared endeavor . . . rather than feeling proprietary about one’s knowledge or competitive with one’s fellow student, I think all of us developed a shared sense of purpose and an alacrity for helping one another develop the ideas motivating any given project.” Far from being generic platitudes, these sentiments are supported by the fact that several workshop participants have developed ongoing relationships with each other over the years resulting in collaborative research projects and organized panel sessions at later AAS meetings. Perhaps most telling, student participants in early workshops have volunteered and participated in later workshops as faculty mentors—providing continuity and truly building future generations of scholars in Asian studies.

David has been threatening to surrender the workshops’ organizational reins for a few years now, but the prospect of indulging in a few Philly cheesesteaks may lure him back for at least one more year! We can only hope the sands of Waikiki will be similarly attractive.

With best wishes for an enjoyable summer,

Michael Paschal

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