

COUNCIL FOR MUSEUM ANTHROPOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No.1 October, 1977

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The Newsletter is a quarterly publication of the Council for Museum Anthropology. Subscription is by membership in the Council (annual dues are \$5.00 which includes the Newsletter) or institutional subscription (\$6.00 per annum).

Back issues are available for \$2.00 each.

The Newsletter is published in October, January, April, and July.

Unsolicited manuscripts are accepted. Unused material will be returned to the author only if return postage is included. Authors are requested to indicate their preference for the category under which an item is to be run.

Subscriptions for the Newsletter and requests for individual issues can be sent to:

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CMA COMES OF AGE

*by Richard I. Ford, editor, CMA Newsletter
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The Council for Museum Anthropology has come of age--it has established its presence within the wider discipline of anthropology. But now it has reached a point where it must go beyond its initial goal of tackling problems defined by its members. Its existence has attracted a professional audience from outside museum employment which expects answers to a range of problems.

At this year's annual meeting, two of these complicated issues will be addressed. They were not created by museums of anthropology but their resolution is the responsibility of the Council.

The first concerns the relationship of museum records, collections, and employees to contract archaeology. Demands for accessibility by persons other than "traditional" researchers must be met in a sensible and equitable manner. At the same time museums need guidance in making policies about charging for services and the involvement of their employees as consultants to firms which may compete with even the museum itself for contracts. After hearing a report from CMA President Joe Ben Wheat, the assembled membership will have an opportunity to discuss these issues at the meeting.

A second problem has been around for a number of years--accessibility to anthropological collections by researchers. Perhaps the most important objection in the past has been the fragile condition of many objects. In recognition of the national importance of this irreplaceable cultural heritage and in response to an increasing number of requests for research on these unique collections, the

continued on page 4

BOARD ELECTION continued

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Subscriptions, dues time for 77-78

Only individuals and institutions who paid their dues or subscription renewals will receive the *Newsletter*. Subscription rates are \$5.00 for individual subscribers and \$6.00 for institutions. The fee covers the period from September through August.

Membership to the Council is by nomination and election. Memberships are \$5.00 and only members in good standing with the treasurer will receive the *Newsletter* and ballots.

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EDITORIAL continued

National Science Foundation (NSF) has established a curatorial support program for anthropological collections. Its success, however, requires that museum curators apply for the funds with the inception of this program. Non-museum anthropologists will no longer accept collection condition as a reason for rejection of research requests. Dr. John E. Yellen, director of the anthropology program for NSF, will attend the meeting to answer questions about the new program and the guidelines NSF has established.

Museum anthropologists have sought a greater voice in museum concerns. The CMA's stature and credibility have created such an opportunity. The new problems are discomfiting and solutions may be disturbing. These are the consequences of maturity.

Note: Editorial opinions are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Council for Museum Anthropology. They are printed for contemplation and debate. Alternative positions are invited for publication.