

NETWORK NEWS

From the Outgoing Board Chair

ASIANetwork at Sixteen: A Status Report

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On a glorious San Antonio afternoon during the 16th annual meeting of ASIANetwork, I passed the gavel—actually the imaginary gavel—of the AN board chairmanship to my successor, Professor Erin McCarthy of the Philosophy Department at St. Lawrence University. Erin knows ASIANetwork through and through and is already used to working daily with Executive Director Teddy Amoloza on matters ranging from the meeting program to finances to publications to membership. She is going to be a great leader of the organization.

There were good wishes and many expressions of gratitude in the air at that meeting, the most meaningful of which doubtless was the presentation of the first-ever ASIANetwork Distinguished Service Award to Professor Van Symons of Augustana College, longtime AN Executive Director and presently in charge of the Student-Faculty Fellows program, funded by the Freeman Foundation. This was not the first year of an annual award: the Board voted to give it only in extraordinary circumstances. It was our unanimous feeling that this was such an occasion, and Van was a deserving first recipient. We thank him for his wisdom and his years of setting an example for the rest of us, and we are thrilled that Van will be continuing his service to the organization in what is so clearly a labor of love.

My own thanks go to Teddy Amoloza—and I know I am not alone—for her many long days and nights of

meticulous work tending the business of the organization from her office at Illinois Wesleyan. Teddy is an active scholar-teacher, a Sociologist with many students and campus obligations. Her energy and vision are vital to ASIANetwork, and it was our pleasure at the meeting to announce that Illinois Wesleyan and ASIANetwork have signed a contract to keep the AN headquarters in Bloomington for another three years, with Teddy at the helm, supported by Patra Noonan and Jerry Amoloza, who now serves part time on the AN headquarters staff.

The New Exchange

Professors Tom Lutze and Irv Epstein of IWU reported to the Board on the status of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, which is mailed to over 900 recipients on all member campuses of the organization. Lutze and Epstein, together with the headquarters staff, have amassed enough experience assembling and publishing the *Exchange* to offer some recommendations, which the Board accepted (see p. 1). First, there will be two issues of the *ASIANetwork Exchange* each year instead of three. The inter-

vening Winter issue will be a “Bulletin,” devoted to the details of the annual meeting, and will not carry content in the form of articles or reports. Beginning next fall, the other two issues will no longer be

called a “newsletter;” that designation will be removed from the masthead and replaced by the new designation: “journal.” Reflecting an item in ASIANetwork’s strategic plan, which is to make the *Exchange* a desirable venue for the publication of original scholarship by member scholars, the Board and editors will bend their efforts to inviting new scholarship for publication in the two “regular” issues of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*. These decisions were conveyed to the membership at the Saturday afternoon business meeting and approved.

Next Year’s Conference

Professor Ronnie Littlejohn of Belmont University is now the vice-chair of ASIANetwork, responsible for putting together the program for the annual meeting in March 2009, which will be held at the Hickory Ridge Conference Center in Lisle, Illinois. The theme for that meeting is “Asia Changing/Changing Asia.” All conference attendees in San Antonio received panel proposal forms in their registration packets. Please note the deadline, contact your friends and colleagues, and submit timely proposals to Ronnie. The Board believes that the designation of a theme for each annual meeting has led to stronger programs in the past several years. This, too, is an item in the AN’s strategic plan: to make the annual meeting a venue for important scholarship as well as professional development in teaching about Asia.

New Look on the Website

Professor Robert Eng of the University of Redlands, working with Craig Rice of St. Olaf University, has

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Don Clark displaying the ASIANetwork Distinguished Service Award presented to Van Symons. (Photo by Marsha Smith)

overhauled the website at www.asianetwork.org. Many members will have seen it, since registration materials for the conference were on it. The new design makes many things more readily accessible, including archives of the *ASIANetwork Exchange*, reports of past Student-Faculty Fellows projects, nomination and proposal forms, information about the AN leadership, and myriad items of interest to the membership, including help finding colleagues.

ASIANetwork is grateful to Bob Eng and Craig Rice for their work, and the Board looks forward to reports about increased traffic on the site in the future.

The Board also heard reports on the Asian Arts volume, the book that is the product of several years of the Luce-funded arts consultancies, under which troves of Asian art objects at member institutions were found, photographed, catalogued, and readied for use as a base for teaching Asian art from objects in heretofore-overlooked collections. Authors are at work on topical chapters for the volume and are expected to finish and have a manuscript in press within the year. Publication will be enabled by a subsidy from the Luce Foundation. Proposals have been floated to publishers, and the Arts volume committee is confident that a suitable publisher will be found. An interesting technical note: While this book project has been under way, the medium for dissemination of images of the art works has gone from photographs to CD-ROM to DVD to Web-based access, which is the present plan. That is, the book will contain a number of images to illustrate chapters, but the data base of images will be on line.

Grants and Finances

ASIANetwork lives on grants, and our fact sheet tells the story of generous support from the Freeman and Luce Foundations, the Ford Foundation, the Fulbright program, the Korea Foundation, and many other benefactors over the years. In the last year, the Freeman Foundation's renewal of the Student-Faculty Fellows Program has been especially good news. This popular



Spring 2008 Board Meeting, San Antonio, TX. (Photo by Bob Eng)

program is a tremendous draw for faculty and students across the nation and embodies the best of ASIANetwork's mission, which is to pool knowledge and resources to do things we could not do by ourselves as individual institutions.

These grants, together with hard work from the Development Team (Paul Watt, Cathy Benton, and Teddy Amoloza), the creation of an investment policy by Suzanne Barnett and Jim Peterman, careful management by the Board's finance committee and discipline imposed by successive Executive Directors have created an investment fund of slightly more than \$1 million. This is a great benchmark and not long ago it might have triggered a decision to relax, but the fact is that in the

the foundations' funding priorities as well as the AN membership's needs. This is a top priority, and within the next year the Board hopes to have some specifics to report.

Final Reflections

After handing the imaginary gavel to Erin McCarthy, I had moments to reflect on what I've learned in three years on the ASIANetwork Board of Directors. The first is certainly a lesson in what

respect and cooperation can accomplish among people of shared values. The ASIANetwork is first of all a community of colleagues, of friends who hold each other in esteem and who think constantly of others. The Board is a circle of educators whose faces are lined with experience, of campus wars won and lost, of decades of shoestring operations, of building careers out of love for students and home campuses while also trying to keep abreast of scholarly fields. On top of these demands, with the only reward being the occasional vote of thanks or appreciation from peers, they handle steady streams of AN email, demands for votes and decisions, and

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present economic climate, a million dollars does not yield enough income to run the organization. Accordingly, ASIANetwork is going to continue to be dependent on grants for its very survival, in addition to needing grant support for programs.

The Board declined to set a target for "resting easy," but rather asked the Development Team to follow up on several promising meetings that it had this spring with foundation representatives. Faculty development is central to the Team's thinking and the Board mulled over many kinds of projects, mindful of

inconvenient meetings in faraway cities. Back home there are few who realize what they are doing when they're away on ASIANetwork business. And yet it's a privilege to work with such dedicated professionals. The ambitions in ASIANetwork are not selfish ambitions. They are ambitions for the communal good, and that makes all the difference.

So thank you fellow Board members who so diligently kept to time during meetings that I chaired this past year. Thank you for your faithfulness. I will always cherish the hours I spent in your company.