

The *Arizona Anthropologist*: History, Heritage, and Prospects

John T. Murphy, University of Arizona

Dear gang,

Nearly twenty-five years ago the graduate students in the University of Arizona Department of Anthropology published the first issue of the series that is today called the *Arizona Anthropologist*. Many of the more recently arrived graduate students in our department are unfamiliar with the journal, and this short article should bring them up to speed. It is, moreover, a history that offers inspiration. The journal is part of a fine tradition, an important example of the heritage of our department and the enterprise and talent of our graduate student body. It is worth a few pages to look back on its history both to better understand what it is today and to have a model from which to imagine what could be.

The journal's history, of course, is situated within the broader history of graduate student life in our department. Tracing this history completely would be a task deserving a fuller treatment than I can give here; I encourage someone to take it further. To do so will mean interviewing the people who lived through this history- there are many still associated with our department- and organizing and summarizing the extant archival material; both are pleasant tasks for which I wish I had sufficient time.

Fully expecting, then, that someone will flesh out the story I tell here, and correct its errors, I can offer the broad outlines of the journal's past. As with so many things in our department, the threads of its history can be traced back to Emil W. Haury. What is now called the *Arizona Anthropologist* was originally

called the *Atlatl*; issues numbered 1 through 6 of the journal carry this name. But the *Atlatl* existed long before this numbered series began: the first publication to bear this title was published in 1944. The *Atlatl* grew out of Haury's practice of writing letters to current and former members of our department, to keep them up to date about the goings-on in our department and field. An additional concern was to keep in touch with former students then serving in World War II. Letters to individuals were eventually consolidated into a semiannual newsletter that Haury named the *Atlatl* because, as an *Atlatl* aids a spear in flight, so publishing in bulk allowed the news to be carried further.

'Doc' Haury opened many of the early issues with a cheerful letter, usually addressed 'Dear Gang.' The *Atlatl* was the department's small-town newspaper; it included welcomes to new arrivals, updates, serious and lighthearted, on field projects and other work, and even a 'society news' section with announcements of births, deaths, marriages and engagements. A historian is trained to wonder what was omitted- the *Atlatl* was surely no scandal sheet- but the picture it presents is of a tightly knit community of people having a good time studying anthropology.

In what records have been kept by the graduate student body there are documents largely supporting this picture of close camaraderie. Although the *Atlatl* included faculty-authored pieces, the organization in charge of publishing the *Atlatl* was the student-run Anthropology Club, which in the 1950's and 1960's flourished. Records show that the Club at times had over 80 members, including graduate students, undergraduates, and members of the community. It held meetings at professors' houses, during which the hosts and guest speakers showed slides and spoke of their research and fieldwork. Dues for the Club paid for refreshments at these get-togethers, and, on at least one occasion, excess money (halcyon

days!) was donated to the Arizona State Museum to be put toward the purchase of books.

There are some enjoyable highlights among the early *Atlatl* issues. For example, a special issue in February of 1962 was devoted entirely to the opening of the new Anthropology Building. The building was lauded as “second to none in beauty and functional design”; the 21st-century eye may have its own aesthetic assessment, but it cannot be denied that a building entirely dedicated to an anthropology department was, for its time, a bold step and, in the words of the issue’s uncredited author, “a reminder that anthropology has come of age as a science.”

In the issues from the 1950’s and ‘60’s there is a bias toward archaeology, the department’s original focus, but other subfields are represented as well; a more careful review than I have given could measure more precisely how well and how far back in time our ‘four-field’ claims could be defended. Most issues from the beginning of the *Atlatl* onward included discussions of the various field projects in which faculty and/or students were involved; later issues included photographs of the crew and current research foci and goals. This kind of informal history of such projects as Tabun, Whiptail, and Grasshopper is a treasure. Snippets of department history, like photographs of the Anthropology Club’s 1971 Homecoming float entitled ‘In the Beginning,’ on which Adam and Eve were depicted as Australopithecines, or a description of the 1971 origin of the Club fundraiser, the White Peccary Sale, as narrated by J. Jefferson Reid, are also priceless.

Over time the *Atlatl* assumed a more professional appearance, due in part to better printing technology; accompanying this, it found a more formal tone. It began to include fewer personal notes and more structured articles. At first these were generally centered on professional practice rather than research. One article published in the 1967-8 issue discusses the path to publishing student papers; it contains

some insightful and still useful points. The 1969-70 issue merged a presentation of faculty biographies and research interests with a discussion of ways to improve student/faculty communications, for which views from both sides of the desk were represented. By the 1970's articles even included no-holds-barred reviews of recent U of A dissertations.

After 1972 the *Atlatl* apparently fell into hiatus. A few copies exist of another newsletter, called the *Chichimeca* and apparently entirely student-run, whose earliest extant issue dates from this time. The *Chichimeca* was a different kind of newsletter, but its exact character is difficult to assess, because either its publication was very infrequent or few early issues still exist. It was possibly an undergraduate response to the *Atlatl*. In the eighties the *Chichimeca* became an interesting but odd collection of news, cartoons, editorials (including a controversial parody of Flannery's famous 'Golden Marshalltown' article), and the occasional crossword puzzle. What is unclear is exactly who published the *Chichimeca*; some of the letters to the editor commented on the fact that the views of the *Chichimeca* were not those of the Department and asked, indeed, whose views they were.

Also during the 1980's, the emphasis in the records of the Anthropology Club shifts. On one hand, Anthropology Club events- at least, those that were recorded- became largely social, and most were without academic content (which may simply reflect that more lectures and discussions were taking place under the department's aegis or were not recorded as Anthropology Club events); on the other hand, there was an increasing concern with the professional roles of graduate students. For example, surveys mailed to over 30 other anthropology departments nationwide inquired about the degree and form of graduate student representation in departmental decision making. Other questionnaires examined how faculty hiring committees treated women applicants. Within the department, discussions on course availability

(especially seminars) were sometimes quite heated. The graduate students were beginning to find a more professional voice; this undoubtedly was driven by the growing size of the department, and by the increasing professionalization (and bureaucratization) of the department and the university structure as a whole.

The *Atlatl's* rebirth reflects these trends. When it reappeared in 1980 under the editorship of John Andresen and Edward Staski it was published as a collection of student-authored "Occasional Papers." Gone were the cheery notes from the field and friendly gossip; whether the *Chichimeca* filled this role or not is difficult to say, but the personal element so prominent in the original *Atlatl* was absent in its new incarnation. From that issue forward the *Atlatl* was purely a research publication.

And it was a good one. From the beginning the papers published in the *Atlatl* reflected well our department's breadth. The first issue included topics ranging from an ethnography of "The Low Rider Ritual" to trade among the Maya and Sociobiology. Archaeological theory was well represented: Issue 2 included discussions of style, negative evidence, and formation processes. But archaeology was not an overwhelming force, and alongside these articles were discussions of Navajo sand painting and the relationship between cytogenetics and macroevolution. The first linguistics paper appeared in issue #5, dating from 1984/5. Among these papers were several by notable U of A students, including Randy McGuire, Nancy Parezo, and Anthony Andrews, to name only a few.

The editors and staff found ways to distribute the journal onto the shelves of libraries far from Tucson: subscription records show that in addition to those distributed to individuals, copies of the *Atlatl* made their way to the libraries of Berkeley, Harvard, and the British Museum.

It was in the early and mid- 1990's, not long after the first issue that was called the *Arizona Anthropologist*- issue #7, a

special issue dedicated to 'Writing Culture'- that cracks began to appear in the journal as an institution. There is no record of an issue #9, and while this may simply be a lack of preservation (a problem with many early issues- only a few copies of some of the issues exist in our records) it is also possible that no issue #9 was ever published. Oral history passed to me several years ago (probably transformed before me and rearranged again in this retelling) suggests that the editorial staff had split between two groups, one of which was to prepare another special issue that was assigned the number '9' but was never completed, even while publication of issue #10 went forward.

The Anthropology Club had its own difficulties during this same period. At least once in the early 1990's it had been 'reborn' as the "Association of Student Anthropologists" (ASA), though I've never learned exactly why. At the time that I arrived the Anthropology Club (under that name, not the ASA) was a small but healthy mix of graduate and undergraduate students; the president was an exceptional young undergraduate named Amber Wittig. Shortly after Amber stepped down to finish her senior year, I took over the presidency of the Club- which under my leadership promptly crumbled; graduate students and undergraduates had different agendas for the club (and graduate students wanted to exclude undergraduates from some of the Club's social events), so soon it was effectively an undergraduate-only group. We formally divided the Club at the end of my year as president; the undergraduates kept the name "Anthropology Club" and many of the Club's resources, and the graduate students kept the ASA designation, the tradition of the Halloween party, and the responsibility for publication of the *Arizona Anthropologist*.

By then the journal was struggling. At one point only a few people knew the journal's current status or the locations of its archives and pending submissions, and they were people whose lives were fast drawing them away from campus. Issue #13 was brought to light through the efforts of only a handful of people,

including a heroic effort by my co-editor for that issue, Liz Perry, and it was only with issue #14 that the journal as an institution began to regain momentum.

Because it informs on both the history and the prospects of the journal, it is worth asking why it would face such difficulty. On reflection, it should be unsurprising that a student journal would struggle, because it must face a unique set of challenges. Graduate students are neither professional editors nor publishers, and they are under the demands of their own academic careers, to which they owe first allegiance. The membership of a student journal's staff can be expected to change frequently, an obstacle to the development of the institutional knowledge that allows novel procedures to become routines. Each generation brings a set of expectations about the journal and its purpose; although these usually agree in their general outlines, there can be differences that eventually make themselves felt in the format and content of the journal. And there is the ever-present difficulty of finding the funding and other support the publication requires.

Also among the constraints of a student journal are its philosophy and its *raison d'être*. Most journals can orient themselves toward a mission of publishing the best research related to a specific area or topic. This mission structures submissions, reviews, circulation, and (when applicable) thematic structure. A student journal exists for a different purpose, and in fact a set of them. High-level scholarship is expected, of course- we would permit nothing less to reflect on our department- but there are other goals. One is to give students the opportunity to publish work that for a variety of reasons might not be appropriate for a full peer-review journal, including reasons as straightforward as length, topic area, or writing style; not all good work conforms to the constraints of the existing journals. Another is to provide graduate students with the opportunity to go through a kinder, introductory version of the peer review process; this opportunity applies to

authors and reviewers both. Finally, the journal exists for reasons that are more clearly self-serving: the journal's staff gains experience in the joys and tribulations of the publication process, and the department gains the benefit of a showcase of student talent.

These concerns mark a student journal as distinct from a 'true' peer-reviewed journal, and graduate students are rightly cautioned to limit their submissions to the student journal to only one or (rarely) two; a student journal is like training wheels on a bicycle, and graduate students should take one spin with their assistance and then learn to ride on their own. But after these purposes are recognized and the limitations accepted, the graduate student journal is still of great value for all the benefits it brings.

Despite these challenges, which exist today as they always have, there now is a renewed momentum for the *Arizona Anthropologist*. I am pleased to report that it is in the good hands of a dedicated crew, as the current issue bears witness. The current staff includes a healthy and promising mix of those with experience from the preceding issue and those who plan to carry on work on the next, a recipe with great promise.

It is therefore not overly optimistic to hope that the journal will continue to grow and flourish. If each year the number of articles reviewed increases, more authors and more reviewers will get the experience of the peer review process, which is now even more formally guided by the editorial staff to ensure that it is a constructive experience for all involved. More students will see their work in print, many for the first time, and as the list of subscribers grows more people will see the work that blossoming Arizona anthropologists have to offer.

To this general optimism I will also add the hope that the history of the Anthropology Club and the *Arizona Anthropologist* may provide models for what the graduate student body may be like in our department. As the department expands, its sense of community is too easily lost; what must be remembered is

that, when such a sense was present, it did not exist by chance, but by the efforts of the people in it. The antidote to the anomie that can affect large department is a well-organized graduate student body, with opportunities and activities that bring the students together for fun and anthropology both. Faculty in our department have always been open to helping with this, and in my experience are no less so today than in the past, but the students must provide the initiative. The *Arizona Anthropologist* is one arena where this can take place, and each student who participates in it sees firsthand the fruits such organizations may bear, while also adding to its momentum.

I hope, then, that this overview of the *Arizona Anthropologist's* history encourages our more recently arrived graduate students to become involved in it, either through volunteering for the editorial staff, acting as reviewers, or submitting their own quality efforts. Doing so carries many benefits, and makes our department not only stronger academically, but a better place to work in, live in, and learn from. We have a strong tradition on which to build. We may not ever return to the folksy days of the first *Atlatl*, but we can certainly hope to have a graduate student community and a student-run journal that would make Doc Haury proud.

Archival material from which this paper was written is in the Anthropology Club archives and in the Arizona State Museum archives; many thanks to Alan Ferg for helping me with the ASM collection. John Murphy was the editor of the Arizona Anthropologist for issues #13 and #14 and President of the Anthropology Club in 1998.