

LOOKING BACK THROUGH TIME: THE ANTHROPOLOGY OUTREACH OFFICE (1975-2012)

by P. Ann Kaupp and Ruth O. Selig



For the past 33 years, *AnthroNotes* has been produced in the Smithsonian's Anthropology Outreach Office at the National Museum of Natural History. Promoting the public understanding of anthropology has been a major goal of the Anthropology Outreach Office, and of *AnthroNotes*. The office and its flagship publication particularly supported the teaching of anthropology in schools. *AnthroNotes* reaches thousands of teachers by informing them about anthropological research around the world and offering excellent teaching activities and other educational resources for the classroom, many now available online.

Currently, *AnthroNotes* is undergoing a digital *rite of passage*. The Anthropology Outreach office is closing after 37 years, and *AnthroNotes* editors are taking their publication into the digital universe. As part of this transition, we (Ruth O. Selig and P. Ann Kaupp) wanted to offer a brief history of the Outreach Office, which was for so many an important Clearinghouse of anthropological materials and information about the teaching of anthropology.

From 1975 - 2012, we ran the Outreach Office and edited *AnthroNotes*. Working with curatorial staff, we produced publications and information materials to handle public inquiries, organized workshops and teacher training programs, and worked with outside professional anthropology organizations.

The thousands of inquiries that the Smithsonian's Anthropology Department received over past decades, as well as the many media requests for access to the department's researchers and collections, speaks to the public's strong interest in anthropology. The Smithsonian has had a long history of public service; accordingly, the museum's responsibilities always have included the answering of public inquiry mail. In the late 1950s, curatorial staff produced prepared materials to respond to the ever-increasing public inquiry mail. For a time, the department hired a contractor, but then relied on volunteers to assist the curators in answering public inquiries.

In 1975, the department's information materials (bibliographies and leaflets) were out-of-date and individual inquiries numbered on average over 4,000 annually. Chairman Bill Fitzhugh hired one of us, anthropology educator Ruth Selig, then teaching anthropology at George Washington University, to develop a Public Information Office for the Department. A new departmental information system was developed, modeled on that used by the U.S. Geological Survey, consisting of a large number of specific information sheets and leaflets, teacher packets, and bibliographies. GWU anthropology graduate students helped develop these materials, working with curatorial staff. In 1978, the other half of the team, Ann Kaupp, joined the office as a part-time unpaid assistant and soon became a contractor.

Between 1978 and 1986, with guiding support from Chairman Bill Fitzhugh, the Office grew through NSF, NEH, and Smithsonian grants, along with the assistance of volunteers and interns. The Office created about 50 new prepared materials; developed, in conjunction with Bill Fitzhugh's *Inua* exhibit, the first Smithsonian secondary school curriculum packet *Of Kyaks and Ulus* (co-authored by Selig); and initiated with Alison S. Brooks the George Washington University/Smithsonian Institution Anthropology for Teachers Program - AFTP), funded by the National Science Foundation (1978-1982).

The AFTP, staffed by four individuals (Alison S. Brooks and Ruth O. Selig; JoAnne Lanouette and Ann Kaupp) trained over 350 Washington, DC area teachers from 152 local schools in year-long graduate courses. In 1983, Ruth took a year's leave of absence to move with her husband to Laramie, Wyoming. The following year she returned to the Smithsonian payroll to conduct the Anthropology for Wyoming Teachers Program with funding from the Wyoming Council for the Humanities/National Endowment for the Humanities. When Ruth returned to NMNH in 1985, she became Director Dick Fiske's special assistant and Ann took over the Anthropology Outreach Office. Over the following decades, Ruth worked in

various Smithsonian administrative positions but continued as a co-editor of *AnthroNotes*, while Ann became managing editor of the publication.

By the mid-1980s, Ann had become a full-time employee and initiated and edited a departmental newsletter called *Anthropolog* (1985-2012) with staff contributions to keep members of the Department and other administrators within the Smithsonian abreast of departmental research and activities. Ann also organized teacher workshops on American Indians, archaeology, and forensic anthropology.

The earlier Anthropology for Teachers Program, in addition to generating new information materials for handling the Outreach Office's public inquiries, also produced a tri-annual newsletter, *AnthroNotes, National Museum of Natural History Bulletin for Teachers*, first published in 1979. Robert Humphrey, GWU anthropologist and artist, provided pen and ink cartoon illustrations for the publication until his death in 2002. *AnthroNotes* has a readership of well over 10,000 school, university, and museum educators, students, and anthropologists, and has grown from a six-page local newsletter to a 20-page international publication with scholarly articles written for a general audience.

Throughout its history, the Anthropology Outreach Office worked closely with the anthropological professional organizations, particularly the American Anthropological Association and the Society for American Archaeology. Both of us held various positions with and contributed to education initiatives in both national organizations. For example, both were invited members of the AAA Task Force on Teaching Anthropology and the AAA's Anthropology Education Commission (1999-2002), whose members were appointed by the AAA President.

Both of us served for several years on the SAA Public Education Committee. Ann was also active in the Society for Anthropology in Community Colleges, helping support their outreach to teachers, and then serving as President of the Society. The office also worked closely with Project Archaeology, a national education program, when the Anthropology Department became the Chesapeake Regional Office and supported archaeology education by hosting teacher workshops.

In 1998, *Anthropology Explored: The Best of Smithsonian AnthroNotes* was published by the Smithsonian Press, edited by Ruth and Marilyn London, who became an editor of *AnthroNotes* when Ann took a year off to travel in 1995. In 2003, Ruth, Marilyn, and Ann worked on a 2nd expanded and revised edition of *Anthropology Explored*, published in 2004. In 2002, after 23 years of publication, *AnthroNotes* received the Society for American Archaeology Award for Excellence in Public Education, "for presenting archaeological and anthropological research to the public in an engaging and accessible style, and for encouraging the study of these disciplines in the classrooms across the nation."

Increasingly the department website has become an essential vehicle for informing the public about our educational materials, including the "American Indian Annotated Bibliography for K-12," as well as many teaching activities, past issues of *AnthroNotes*, and staff videos. Currently we are focusing on re-purposing *AnthroNotes* for the digital age and have added digital specialist and archaeology journalist Colleen Popson to the editorial team (Alison Brooks, Carolyn Gecan, Ann Kaupp, and Ruth Selig).

The *AnthroNotes* editors look forward to continuing to inform the public, in general, and teachers, in particular, about the rich knowledge that anthropology offers in helping us to understand our world, both past and present.



Ruth Selig (left) and Ann Kaupp at an exhibition in the 1980s.