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The *SAA Bulletin* (ISSN 0741-5672) is published five times a year and is edited by Mark Aldenderfer, with editorial assistance from Karen Doehner and Dirk Brandts. Deadlines for submissions are: December 1 (January), February 1 (March), April 1 (May), August 1 (September), and October 1 (November); send to *SAA Bulletin*, Dept. of Anthropology, UC-Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-3210. For further information, call (805) 893-8604, (805), fax (805) 893-8707, or email [saanews@alishaw.ucsb.edu](mailto:saanews@alishaw.ucsb.edu). Manuscript submission via email or by disk is encouraged. Advertising and placement ads should be sent to SAA headquarters, 900 Second St. NE #12, Washington, D.C. 20002, (202) 789-8200. Associate editors include Kevin Pape [Insights, (513) 287-7700], Kurt Dongoske [Working Together, (520) 734-2441], and John Hoopes [Networks, (785) 864-4103], and Jose Luis Lanata (southern cone contact, [jlاناتa@filo.uba.ar](mailto:jlاناتa@filo.uba.ar)) and Emily McClung de Tapia (Mexico and Central America contact, [mclung@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:mclung@servidor.unam.mx)). Inquiries and column submissions should be addressed directly to them. The *SAA Bulletin* is provided free to members and institutional subscribers to *American Antiquity* and *Latin American Antiquity* worldwide. *SAA Bulletin* can be found in gopher at [alishaw.ucsb.edu](http://alishaw.ucsb.edu), and on the WWW at <http://www.sscf.ucsb.edu/SAABulletin>. Items published reflect the views of the authors and publication does not imply SAA endorsement.

## Editor's Corner

Are there too many Ph.D.'s in archaeology? Or is the question really, Are the Ph.D.s trained in the vast majority of graduate programs likely to obtain meaningful employment in the academy? If the answer is no, is what they are learning in these programs going to serve them well in the increasingly primary market of the contract field? Joseph Schuldenrein examines these and other questions in a very interesting report on a conference held recently at Barnard College in this issue's Insights column. The conference offered a wide spectrum of opinion from the private sector, the academy, museums, and government service on just what kinds of training archaeologists need to create their careers in these difficult times. Some of the most interesting commentary came from graduate students facing the realities of the job market with a mixture of confidence, optimism, and resignation. The report can be read at a number of levels, but the one that captured my attention was only obliquely mentioned: the ethical issue of producing many more Ph.D.s than are remotely likely to get academic employment. I have had colleagues argue that graduate programs should declare a moratorium on admissions for varying lengths of time. Others argue that as long as programs honestly inform students at the start of their graduate careers that the chances of obtaining that dream job are very small, we have discharged our ethical duties and can keep our programs running. I imagine that while most of us feel the ethical pinch in continuing to produce students, we are also very aware of the consequences of allowing this ethical concern to come to the attention of predatory administrators with cost-cutting agendas. Schuldenrein and others suggest that a middle ground would be to retool aspects of our programs to provide our students with some of the very different skills they need to succeed in the contract world. This too may prove impractical for most of us, but it may be a sensible option for some programs to pursue. One thing is certain in all of this: we as a discipline must take this question seriously over the next decade and develop some acceptable responses. If we don't, someone else will do it for us, and it's quite likely we won't like the results. ☐



## Update on ROPA

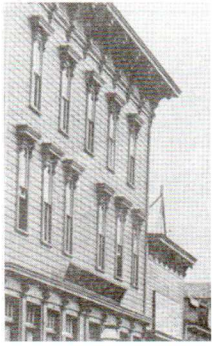
Vin Steponaitis

As reported by Secretary Lynne Sebastian (page 3), SAA's members just voted to adopt the "Proposal for the Establishment of the Register of Professional Archaeologists," also known as ROPA [for additional background, see *SAA Bulletin* 15(3):6-14]. The proposal passed convincingly, by a three-to-one margin. At the same time, the Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) also held a membership vote on this proposal; their members passed it as well.

These two votes, coupled with the earlier endorsement of the proposal by the Society of Professional Archeologists (SOPA), mean that steps will now be taken to formally establish ROPA under the joint sponsorship of SAA and SHA. The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), which also collaborated in drafting the proposal, has not yet voted on whether to join the consortium of sponsoring organizations, but is expected to decide soon.

Under the terms of the proposal, ROPA will be legally established as a nonprofit organization, separate from SAA, and will be governed by its own board of directors. The ROPA's initial "transitional" board will consist of three of SOPA's current officers—President Bill Lees, Treasurer Rochelle

*Continued on page 18*



## The 63rd Annual Meeting is Just around the Corner

By the time you read this you may already have in hand the preliminary program for the Seattle meeting, which mailed in late December. Nevertheless, here are some highlights:

- **Opening Session:** "Pacific Northwest Archaeology in the 1990s: A Regional Overview" is the topic. As always, this officially opens the meeting on Wednesday night.

- **Plenary Session:** You've been seeing a lot about global warming lately, and that subject figures in this session as well. It deals with the vital role archaeology plays in understanding the long-term consequence of human systems in ecosystem development modification.

- **Public Session:** For the first time the public session moves out of the general meeting area. This year the session finds a museum venue—at the Museum of Flight—and covers a topic sure to please a public audience, as well as archaeologists of many ilk: underwater archaeology. The theme is "What Lies beyond the Shore? Underwater Archaeology of Prehistoric and World War II Sites" and features speakers from the National Park Service and Florida State University.

- **COSWA Roundtable Breakfast:** COSWA for the first time is planning a continental breakfast instead of the traditional luncheon so you can squeeze even more events into your schedule.

- **Be sure to stop by the SAA Exhibit Hall** where, among the more than 60 booths, you'll find the Silent Auction sponsored by the Native American Scholarships Committee.

- **Thematic Roundtable Luncheons:** Two luncheons (Thursday and Friday) are planned, and, thanks to our generous sponsors, the cost of these has been reduced to \$7.10 per lunch.

SAA thanks the following for their generous support: American University, Department of Anthropology; Archaeology Wing Faculty, Harvard University; Department of Anthropology, Michigan State University; Department of Anthropology, Penn State University; Department of Anthropology, University of Arizona; Department of Anthropology, University of Oregon; Department of Anthropology, University of South Carolina; Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of British Columbia; Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies, Inc. (FAMSI); Gray & Pape, Inc.; National Park Service; School of American Research, Santa Fe, New Mexico; Simon Fraser University, Department of Archaeology; Southeast Archeological Center, National Park Service; University of Toronto, Department of Anthropology; University of Utah Press; University of Washington, Anthropology Department; Washington State University, Department of Anthropology; and Washington University (St. Louis).

This is just a sampling of what lies ahead. Do plan to register early to beat that February 23, 1998, deadline for early registration! ☞

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*Continued from page 2—ROPA*

Marrinan, and Secretary John Hart—and one additional member named by each of the sponsoring organizations. I have just appointed our immediate past president, Bill Lipe, to serve as SAA's representative on this transitional board. Bill took an active part in drafting the ROPA proposal and understands the key issues as well as anyone. I'm very grateful to Bill for taking on this important task.

The first meeting of this transitional board will take place at the SHA annual meeting in Atlanta on January 10, 1988. The sponsoring organizations and AIA have been invited to send additional representatives to this meeting if they wish. Bill Lipe and I will both attend on behalf of SAA. Among the topics to be tackled at this inaugural meeting are the drafting of bylaws and the mechanics of starting ROPA.

As soon as ROPA is created, it will take over SOPA's day-to-day functions, and SOPA itself will become "dormant." That is, SOPA will retain its legal status as an organization but will become inactive. If ROPA meets its membership targets and proves to be financially viable, SOPA will disband. On the

other hand, if ROPA doesn't flourish (hopefully, an unlikely event), then SOPA will revive and ROPA will dissolve.

The members of SAA, SHA, and SOPA have already taken an important step toward enhancing professionalism in our discipline by passing the ROPA proposal. But that is just the first step. It's now up to all of us to make ROPA work. The key to ROPA's success lies in the participation of a large fraction of SAA's members. The more of us to become Registered Professional Archaeologists (RPAs), the more credibility that credential will have, and the more effective ROPA's grievance procedures will be in enforcing professional standards. All current SOPA members will automatically become RPAs, but these alone will not provide the critical mass that ROPA needs to be successful. So I encourage all qualified SAA members to register with ROPA as soon as the application procedures are set up. More information on these procedures will be published in future issues of the *Bulletin* and will be made available through SAA's web site ([www.saa.org](http://www.saa.org)). ☞

*Vin Steponaitis is president of SAA.*

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