

# MAKING "ANTHROPOLOGISTS AT WORK": LESSONS FOR ANTHROPOLOGISTS

By Elizabeth K. Briody

**"A**nthropologists at Work: Careers Making a Difference" is a thirty-six minute, VHS color video describing a wide variety of anthropological careers. Conceived by members of the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA), a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the video is directed primarily at students and other members of the anthropological community. Its purpose is to provide up-to-date information on the range of careers associated with all major subfields of anthropology.

Planning, producing, and marketing this "careers video" involved NAPA members and the video team in a large, complex project. In describing this process, I identify some of the constraints under which we worked and the context in which decisions were made. Many of the lessons we learned have direct application for the work of anthropologists—particularly applied and practicing anthropologists.

## Need for Career Information

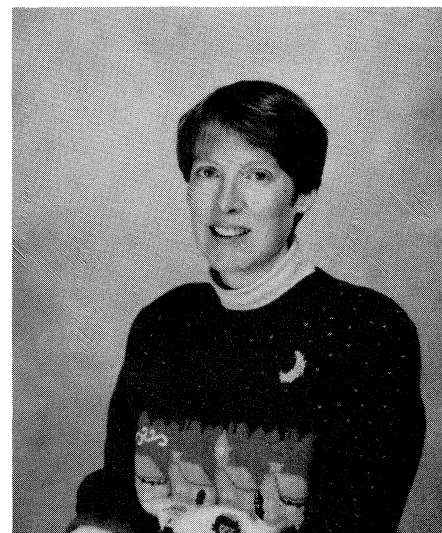
Statistical data show that anthropological work has become increasingly diverse and that a growing number of anthropologists with M.A.'s and Ph.D.'s are employed outside academia ("1990 Survey of Anthropology Ph.D.'s" [Washington: AAA, 1991]; "AAA Membership Demographic Survey" [Washington: AAA, 1991]). Prior to this effort there was no single source of information about the broad array of careers held by anthropologists. Directories of anthropologists and their positions had been compiled, some mini-cases or "professional profiles" of selected anthropologists had been written, and a few manuals had been developed to assist new graduates in the

career search in particular areas of specialization (e.g., medical, federal government). However, comments from students interested in the anthropology job market, and from professors who taught applied/practice courses or coordinated student internships, led NAPA members to believe that a more comprehensive career awareness tool was necessary. NAPA held Special Events at the AAA Annual Meetings in Washington, D.C., in 1989 and Chicago, IL, in 1991 to gather information and gauge members' interest in producing a careers video; the audiences enthusiastically confirmed the demand for such a video and the interest of NAPA members in producing one.

## Project Feasibility and Initiation

Fundraising for this project, initially expected to take a relatively short period of time, turned out to be highly labor-intensive, and it was only concluded as the video's final version was released. We were surprised to discover that private foundations were not viable funding sources because they tended to view the video as a promotional rather than an educational piece. Similarly, the project did not fit the funding guidelines of any division of the National Science Foundation. The AAA declined to assume the role of primary sponsor when no agreement could be reached on the video's focus or funding options. (Ultimately, the AAA became one of several contributing organizations.)

NAPA decided to seek funding directly from those individuals and organizations who had a particular stake in the discipline's future. For example, anthropologists employed in the private and nonprofit sectors, and their employing organizations, might be willing to support the video project. College and university anthropology departments, particularly those training students for



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the nonacademic job market, might be willing to make a contribution. Both monetary contributions and donation of services were sought in an aggressive fundraising campaign similar to the direct mail operations of nonprofit organizations. In exchange for a monetary contribution of at least \$100, individuals were offered a complimentary copy of the video, and organizations donating at least \$250 would receive a complimentary copy of the video plus listing both in the video credits and in an accompanying brochure.

By the fall of 1992, the video project hinged on our ability to attract volunteers to serve as technical production and post-production staff. People were needed for the positions of producer/director, writer, director of photography, location photographer, director of lighting, location audio director, narrator, composer of original music, "pre-line" and "on-line" editors, graphics artists, and audio engineers. We decided to focus our recruitment for these positions in the Detroit, MI, area for several reasons. Since the work of the Detroit video production community

focused almost entirely on the automotive market, it was anticipated that many of these professionals would welcome an opportunity to work on a novel, education project which would expand their portfolios. One of the executive producers, Dawn Bodo, was well acquainted with the Detroit video production community, and would be able to select the best applicants for each position. Since I, the other executive producer, live in the Detroit area, I could act as an on-site contact.

With the support of the NAPA Governing Council, headed by outgoing President Shirley J. Fiske and incoming President Linda A. Bennett, I announced the initiation of the project at the December 1992 NAPA Business Meeting during the AAA Annual Meetings in San Francisco, CA. I stated that we would adhere to an aggressive one-year time frame so as to concentrate interest in the project and take into account the limits of volunteer time. The audience reacted by talking, smiling, and writing the first checks towards the effort. Later, I was told that

the announcement conveyed a sense of the importance and significance of this undertaking combined with the necessary focus, direction, and "can-do spirit." It had the effect of kindling enthusiasm and momentum within the sponsoring NAPA community.

### Getting the Video Committees Up and Running

A committee structure was established which consisted of Content, Fundraising/Marketing, Technical, and Advisory Committees, with most averaging five to ten members each, plus an overarching Executive Committee. The latter included myself and Dawn Bodo, as executive producers, and Linda A. Bennett, Ken C. Erickson, Susan T. Ferkany, Shirley J. Fiske, Julia Gluesing, and Robert T. Trotter, II—all NAPA members. Dawn Bodo and I were actively involved in the work of all the committees; I was associated largely with the Content, Advisory, and Fundraising/Marketing Committees,

while she was associated primarily with the Technical and Content Committees.

The Content Committee used a research-based approach in developing an outline for the video. Demographic and employment data on anthropologists were gathered from survey results published either by the AAA or NAPA. A number of M.A. programs specializing in the applications of anthropology were contacted for descriptions of their programs and listings of their graduates and the kinds of jobs they had secured. A questionnaire solicited the views of the Content Committee members on a preliminary outline for the video, the demographic and employment data compiled, off-camera questions for the cast, inclusion of historical and/or ethical issues, sources of appropriate visual materials, and potential cast members. Responses to this questionnaire were tabulated, presented, and discussed at a special meeting of all the video committees in March 1993 at the Society for Applied Anthropology Meetings in San Antonio, TX.

From the demographic and employment data, the range and frequency of individual characteristics and career parameters could be ascertained, facilitating decisions about the types of individuals and careers to feature in the video. The Content Committee recommended as diverse a cast as possible based on demographic indicators, with career characteristics selected on the basis on sample frequency. A matrix based on these demographic and career indicators was developed to aid in the selection of individual and career types by allowing direct comparisons. (Content Committee members included Ralph Bishop, Anne Bolin, Judith A. Brennan, Marjorie L. Briody, Linda B. Catlin, M. Jean Gilbert, Laurie J. Price, Karin Tice-Szocik, Joan Weibel-Orlando, and John van Willigen.)

The Advisory Committee was established to ensure that the video conveyed a broad and accurate coverage of the discipline. It was composed of representatives from each of the four subfields: Hugh Berryman (physical/biological anthropology), William L. Leap (linguistic anthropology), Thomas



Photo by David Clements

*Film Crew and Cast Members in Washington, D.C.*

Greaves (cultural anthropology), and Prudence M. Rice (archaeology). A fifth member, Sue E. Estroff, was appointed by the AAA's Executive Director, John Cornman, from the AAA's Committee on Scientific Communication. She played a critical content and public relations role, strengthening cooperation between NAPA and the AAA. All members provided valuable feedback on both content and procedural matters.

The Fundraising/Marketing Committee established a procedure for soliciting donations and eventually raised over \$22,000 to defray costs associated with travel, telephone, postage, supplies, and other miscellaneous expenses.

Fundraising volunteers approached friends or colleagues at selected universities and organizations and asked those individuals to act as liaisons in seeking institutional donations. A follow-up letter and phone calls reiterated the need and purpose for such a video, provided the names of the key individuals associated with the project, specified the use to which contributions would be put, and outlined the benefits of a monetary donation of \$250 or more. A later strategy was to send a letter to potential donor institutions listing all institutions which had already contributed to the project. (Members of the Fundraising/Marketing Committee included Nancy Craig, Kristy Frisbie, G. Alfred Hess, Cristy S. Johnsrud, Barbara Olsen, Flora L. Price, Marc S. Robinson, Nathaniel Tashima, and Thomas F. White.)

The Technical Committee consisted solely of Dawn Bodo, our liaison with the technical production community. She was largely responsible for technical matters relating to the production and post-production of the video.

The Executive Committee publicized the video project by word of mouth, through various anthropology newsletters, over the ANTHAP Computer Network, and through monthly status reports to the more than thirty video committee members. As part of publicity, a "NAPA Video Career Sheet" was developed and circulated to interested anthropologists. It requested a career description, one or two photographs of

the anthropologist at work, and the individual's signature on a release statement. This information was to be used to complement the video footage so that more anthropologists could be included in the video in some form. Usable photographs of anthropologists at work were placed in a rolling format alongside the video credits, but other information collected from the "Career Sheets" was not fully utilized, causing some dissatisfaction within the anthropological community. In retrospect, this request for information should have been phrased differently so as to avoid raising false hopes concerning the centrality of these career sketches to the body of the video.

### Filming

The basic plan for the video was to focus on the careers of several anthropologists with on-camera interviews and footage of them in their work settings. Anthropologists on the team chose film crew from among the volunteer applicants, selected three filming locations, set the filming

schedule, and made the necessary travel, hotel and transportation arrangements. Members of the film crew made arrangements for equipment rental. Both the anthropologists and film crew were involved during each shoot—working together to elicit a central message from each cast member: the anthropologists making sure that the particular career was portrayed accurately, the producer/director, Gheri Arnold, and director of photography, Dave Kelley, placing more emphasis on communicating the message in a visually and technically effective manner.

In retrospect, members of the film crew should have been more deeply involved in planning and scheduling with the on-site coordinators who were also anthropologists. Insufficient time was allocated for the filming of each cast member, for travel between filming sites, and for food and rest breaks. This issue was aggravated further by the amount of time spent with each cast member on location developing an effective way to present that individual's career. These problems could have been minimized by meeting

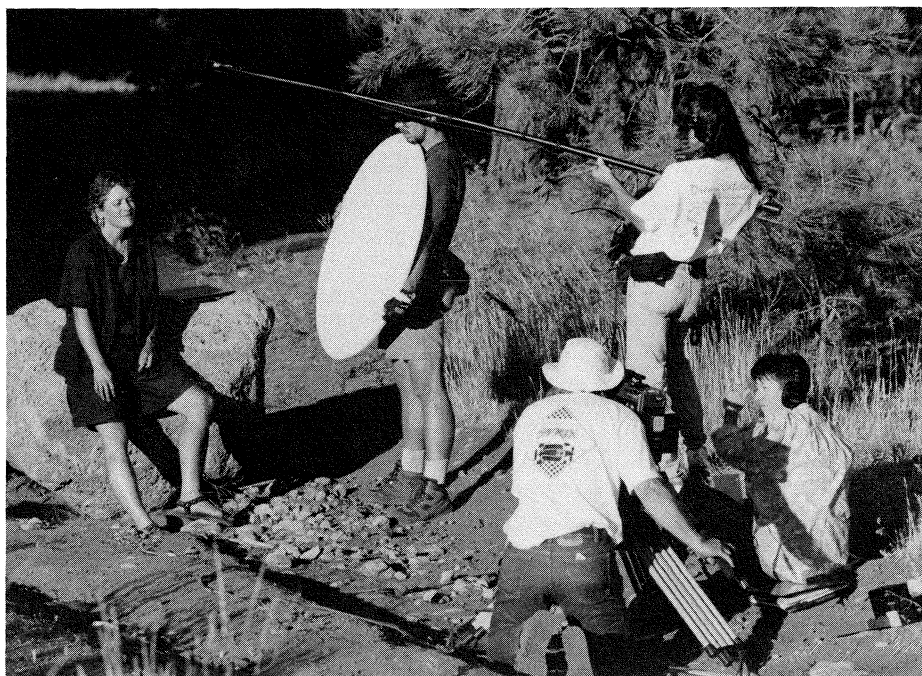


Photo by David Clements

*Laurie Price (Left) with Film Crew on Location in Flagstaff, Arizona*

with potential cast members in advance, conducting thorough location surveys, and booking fewer cast members per day.

### Scriptwriting and Editing

Once the filming was completed, the anthropologists played more of a support or advisory role in the project. The writer, Joanne Walker-Ewald, produced an expanded outline and later a complete draft of the script. The script was reviewed by fourteen members of the various video committees. Then, additional video footage from other film sources was sought for the narrated sections of the video. The anthropologists were not prepared for the multiple forms required for copyright release or for negotiations with film distributors whose interests were largely in making a profit rather than in contributing to an educational effort. Once this difficult and time-consuming task was completed, the editing process commenced.

An editing studio, TelePost, Inc. of Southfield, MI, was selected to combine filmed interviews, video footage from the three film locations, video footage from a wide variety of public and private film sources, and the narration and produce a "pre-line" edit version of the video. Although a number of elements were missing (e.g., music, graphics), this version was sent to a five-member AAA panel for their review. Based on the comments of this panel, the video was shortened by six minutes. The final "on-line" version was completed in time for the video premiere at the AAA Annual Meetings in Washington, D.C., in November 1993.

### Viewings

Since the completion of the "on-line" version, the video has been shown in a wide variety of settings. At the first public viewing (at the AAA meetings in November), over two hundred individuals stood in a crowded room to see the video; their response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic—both during the showing and at the recognition ceremony for volunteers which followed. However, the purpose of most early

viewings was to gather reactions to the video, and a few technical changes were subsequently made to the video in response to concerns of professional audiences. To address concerns raised

necessary. Issues were raised about single vs. joint copyright, duplication and distribution costs, and financial remuneration should video sales yield a profit. By mid-February, NAPA and the

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by student audiences, NAPA formed an ad hoc committee which ultimately prepared a twelve-page document entitled, "Anthropologists at Work: Responses to Student Questions About Anthropology Careers." This document has been distributed to all who contributed to or have purchased the video.

### Contract Negotiations

Most contacts and agreements with the anthropological community, the technical community, and the donor communities were informally arranged—in conformity with NAPA's grassroots approach to the production and with the ways anthropologists generally conduct field work. Verbally based arrangements appeared to be effective in recruiting and maintaining volunteers for the video committees and for the production and post-production positions. Exceptions to this pattern were cast members, anthropologists submitting photographs of themselves at work, and others who submitted video footage or photographs, all of whom were required to sign release forms prepared by a volunteer attorney. In addition, the composer and recorder of the original music, Edie Herrold, prepared a formal music license agreement for NAPA.

It was not until the video was completed in early February 1994 that the writing of a formal contract became

technical production community (hereafter referred to as EXPOSE: Communications Network) had worked out a joint copyright and financial arrangement concerning the duplication and sale of the video. After some further negotiation with the AAA, a formal contract was drawn up and signed by both parties.

### Marketing and Distribution

NAPA has followed a two-pronged approach in its marketing and distribution activities. Efforts were directed first towards the anthropological community at large. Various domestic anthropology newsletters reviewed the video, while the Society of Applied Anthropology in Canada and the Group for Anthropology in Policy and Practice in England have agreed to review the video for their members in 1995. Advertisements were placed in selected anthropology newsletters and on the ANTHAP Computer Network. Video screenings were held by the Society for Applied Anthropology and by several local practitioner organizations across the U.S. The video was submitted for several film awards, and the Society for Visual Anthropology chose it for a "commendation" at the 1994 AAA Annual Meetings in Atlanta, GA.

NAPA is now actively involved in marketing the video beyond the anthropological community. Both the National Career Development Associa-



tion and *Anthro•Notes*, a publication of the Smithsonian Institution directed at teachers, have published reviews of the video. National organizations of high school social studies teachers, guidance counselors, college admissions officers, and career planning and placement professionals, among others, will be contacted in 1994 and 1995; a professionally developed flyer has been prepared for these organizations. NAPA has also contacted several museums to gauge their interest in using the video either in a stand-alone exhibit or as part of staff training, so far without success.

EXPOSE: Communications Network also has been involved in marketing the video. The video was reviewed by *Central Cities Sight and Sound*, a midwestern-based sound, film, and video publication, and a news release was submitted to a dozen other production-related publications. EXPOSE: Communications Network entered the video into the Detroit International Television and Video Association Awards in May 1994 where it won two silver medals—one for animation (with services donated by CDI Computer Services, Inc., of Madison Heights, MI) and one for music. Contacts have been established with the Discovery Channel which is considering the production of an entire series on anthropological careers.

Since the video's release in March 1994, 127 complimentary copies have been distributed and about 250 copies have been sold (as of December 1994). The reaction to the video has been overwhelmingly positive. Students have responded enthusiastically to its focus on careers—both on written surveys and orally in classrooms and at other viewings. Faculty have recognized its usefulness in providing a broad overview of the field of anthropology and as a career tool. Practicing anthropologists have indicated that applied/practice work has been portrayed succinctly and accurately. Viewers without any background in anthropology have commented on the level of interest it generates and its understandability. Anthropologists and nonanthropologists alike have remarked on the demographic diversity of the cast, which they

believe sends a message that the field of anthropology is open to a wide array of individuals.

## Conclusions

A number of lessons from this video project should be useful to anthropologists in their own work. First, gathering and validating information pertaining to the project's overall objectives can serve as a useful foundation for content decisions. Second, project direction also is enhanced by input and collaboration with individuals bringing specialized skills, knowledge, and experience to the endeavor. Accessing personal and professional networks can be an important component in furnishing the necessary talent and providing the project with visibility and credibility. This networking often involves a system of reciprocity in which the various parties both give and receive from the experience. Third, flexibility is a critical factor in project performance. Learning by trial and error, rectifying errors as the project progresses, and allowing sufficient time and resources can enhance overall project success. Finally, publicizing project results to the appropriate audiences not only enables the dissemination of the final project deliverables, but also lays the groundwork for project feedback and new project goals.

The success of this video project is attributable to at least four factors:

First, there was an identifiable demand for career information from the student community and from many anthropology faculty. The video fills a void within the discipline by clearly and concisely linking academia and practice, and by describing careers all along the academia-practice continuum.

Second, the anthropological and technical production communities worked together to identify goals, develop ideas, evaluate data sources, set schedules, use personal and professional networks, solve problems, and meet deadlines—while remaining focused on the end product. The project team was well organized and persevered over many months, and project management was effective in coordinating people,

information and services.

Third, the technical execution of the video is superb. NAPA was able to recruit talented technical professionals to commit time, effort, and energy to the project, and it was able to attract high-quality post-production audio, video, and graphics firms as well. Indeed, with all of the donated services, the video is valued at approximately \$200,000. The two technical film awards and the one anthropological film award announced to date attest to the video's excellence.

Finally, NAPA's fundraising and marketing efforts were critical. While convincing individuals and organizations of the importance of this project (in light of time and budgetary restrictions) clearly was difficult, developing creative strategies to target and appeal to diverse groups of potential purchasers has proved even more challenging. Much time recently has been devoted to learning more about potential customers—particularly those beyond the anthropological community. More than ever, NAPA has been acting as a group of practicing anthropologists in a very pragmatic sense.

[Thanks go to Gheri Arnold, Linda A. Bennett, Dawn Bodo, Shirley J. Fiske, Marc S. Robinson, and John van Willigen for reviewing earlier drafts of this paper. The video, "Anthropologists at Work: Careers Making a Difference," is available for purchase at a cost of \$25 for students and NAPA members, \$30 for individuals, and \$35 for organizations and institutions through the American Anthropological Association at 4350 North Fairfax Dr., Suite 640, Arlington, VA 22203.]

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