Going Digital

As we head into summer 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic is slowly and erratically releasing its grip on global society. Lock-downs are lifted and then reimposed. Distribution of vaccines accelerates in some places but lags in others. Despite resistance in some quarters, mask-wearing remains part of public life in much of the world.

At SAR, we are monitoring this situation with an eye toward restarting in-person events when we can safely welcome members to the campus. Until then, we continue our ambitious schedule of online webinars, artist interviews, book talks, and non-credit classes.

We’re also engaging in a sustained period of strategic planning that draws on lessons learned over the past year.

Two of these lessons:

Online events dramatically increase the diversity and scale of our audience, whose size at last count numbers in the thousands and whose location encompasses all fifty states and nineteen countries. Our local audiences miss the more intimate experience of in-person events yet also express appreciation for the ability to view YouTube recordings of our events at more convenient times. As some have wryly pointed out, this also solves the problem of parking on campus.

In 1996 SAR Press published Senses of Place, an edited volume that originated as an SAR Advanced Seminar co-chaired by Steven Feld and Kath Basso, two anthropologists working at the forefront of their field. Feld studies the anthropology of sound and worked for many years in the Basavi rain forest of Papua New Guinea, researching environmental sounds, bird calls, weeping, poetic, and song. Basso worked with the Western Apache to understand how they use their landscape to generate, reflect upon, and share knowledge—and wisdom—with each other.

“Place is the most fundamental form of embodied experience,” argue Feld and Basso, “the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time.” And yet, wrote Basso, “Place” and its profound effects on human life were rarely studied by cultural anthropologists. Feld, Basso, and their collaborators were among those who changed the conversation in anthropology, and this book was one of the first to show what we could learn from a study of place. Its importance is reflected by its status as our best-selling scholarly book.

To celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of its publication, SAR Press hosted Steven Feld (distinguished professor of anthropology emeritus, University of New Mexico), Amalí Bishara (associate professor of anthropology, Tufts University), and Kristina Lyons (assistant professor of anthropology, University of Pennsylvania) for a virtual conversation about the book’s impact, as well as more recent developments in the field. “Like anthropology more generally,” says Feld, “I have shifted in the last fifteen years from intensely rooted and bounded place experience, like in Papua New Guinea, to work with deeply rooted cosmopolitans in Ghana. The field of place studies has moved into globalized, diasporic, and cosmopolitan place identities.”

During their talk, Feld and colleagues addressed current topics of refugees and displacement, cosmopolitanism, and feminist studies of science and environment, especially in relation to Indigenous place-making and transnational politics, all of which have changed anthropological thinking about place over the last twenty-five years.

Above all, we are at home, at work, or, as we have been over the last year, somewhere in between. More than ever, adds Feld, “place is no less at the center of so many cultural conversations about what’s at stake for localities and research in the contemporary world.”

IS THAT A FACT?

UPDATE ON THE CREATIVE THOUGHT FORUM

Who do we trust to tell us what is true and what is not? The profusion of new technologies and social media platforms that undermine public understanding of science, politics, and truth itself had us wondering how we could contribute to a better understanding of how communities and individuals distinguish fact from misinformation. To that end, and as part of SAR’s commitment to providing intellectually adventurous content to our members, we dedicated our signature public program series, the Creative Thought Forum, to presenting online lectures and discussions following the theme “Fact and Fraud in the Digital Age.” The series offered virtual attendees informed perspectives on the challenges and opportunities that our digitally saturated world has created when it comes to understanding facts and the importance of questioning sources in our daily lives.

Grounded in Place—SAR Summer Series

In 1996 SAR Press published Senses of Place, an edited volume that originated as an SAR Advanced Seminar co-chaired by Steven Feld and Kath Basso, two anthropologists working at the forefront of their field. Feld studies the anthropology of sound and worked for many years in the Basavi rain forest of Papua New Guinea, researching environmental sounds, bird calls, weeping, poetic, and song. Basso worked with the Western Apache to understand how they use their landscape to generate, reflect upon, and share knowledge—and wisdom—with each other.

Watch the Senses of Place book talk and the rest of the summer series on SAR’s YouTube channel, sarinfoyoutube.com.

// continued on page 3

// continued on page 2


Each program can now be found on our YouTube channel. Highlights from this spring include a discussion of the long history of conspiracy theories and their persistence despite contradictory evidence, shared by journalist Anna Merlan, author of Republic of Lies: American Conspiracy Theorists and Their Surprising Rise to Power (Macmillan, 2019).

// continued on page 3
**Beyond the Page: SAR Press Publishes Books and More**

As a scholarly and public resource, SAR Press offers not only books, but also community events, project support, and access to experts. We recently hosted our first book talk to celebrate the publication of Archaeologies of Empire, featuring co-editors Anna Boazer and Bleda Düning in conversation with Peter Perdue, co-editor of Imperial Formations. We have planned and hosted several more, including one to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of Senses of Place with co-editor and SAR senior scholar Steven Feld.

**In our new blog series, How to Publish Your First Book, we interview diverse scholars who have recently published or are in the midst of publishing their first book and who can offer guidance and encouragement to colleagues who are just getting started. We are hoping that these interviews offer some support to junior scholars as they begin the publishing process. “I think the best thing that I was able to do was reach out to colleagues who were already in that process, who had recently finished their books,” says 2020 Adams summer scholar Nicholas Barron. “Having the opportunity to hear other people’s experiences and what they did is vital.”

The blog also hosts SAR Press Top Reads, selections of books from SAR Press and other publishers on topics including Chaco Canyon, politics, resident scholar favorites, and Indigenous identity. Felicia Garcia, IARC curator of education, describes the books on the Indigenous identity list as “important because for too long Native peoples were not in control of our own narratives and representation. Being able to tell our own stories on our own terms through scholarly works and literature is critical to our process of healing from the wounds of colonization.”

Anyone looking for more information about scholarly publishing can find two guides on our website: Writing & Publishing Resources and Promote Your Book. Both contain a wealth of knowledge and advice on all aspects of academic writing and publishing—turning a dissertation into a book or publishing open access—and are updated regularly. Every week on Facebook and Twitter we share new resources like these, as well as stories of interest to our readers and new publications from our authors.

As we continue to publish, we are always thinking about new ways to connect and to support the communities that readers, writers, and publishers build together.

**What I’m trying to do,” says Alanna Warner-Smith, “is recover the complexity of the life stories of the people who became part of the collection—to rehumanize and rerepresent this collection with identities and place them back on the landscapes where they lived. They contributed to and shaped these landscapes, and in doing so, they became a part of these landscapes. They were so critical to the formation of New York City. Their bodies were foundational to anthropological knowledge. And yet those stories haven’t been fully told.”

Warner-Smith is making connections between archival records and physical remains not only to learn more about the lives of these individuals, but also to reshape our understanding of the historical relationships between labor, aging, and the body. The questions that guide her research as a first-generation college and graduate student are ones she’s been thinking about since she was a child, discussing philosophy with a grandfather who loved to read or visiting cemeteries with her equally curious parents and imagining past lives. “Trying to disentangle what the archival sources and skeletal remains can tell us, not just about life in New York City, not just about a representative sample of urban labor or industrialization, but how different things are representative of rural life in Ireland and in New York City, allows them to move beyond the categories or single places that they’ve often been associated with. If we only stay at the level of disarticulated elements,” like individual bones, she says, “then we leave them disarticulated in the same way that they were when they were dissected and curated” for the collection.

Being at SAR has given Warner-Smith much-needed “space to think.” She states, “The landscape was such a wonderful part of the writing. If I got stuck with something, I would take a break and go on a hike and it was on those hikes that I would work out the problems that I couldn’t work out just by trying to type at my computer. But this process was not just about coming here to write. It was also about being with other people. I didn’t realize how much it would make me think about my own writing and the work I was doing. The power of the community here is something that I wish people knew more about.”

This fellowship is generously funded by the Palheimo Foundation.

**Is That a Fact? I continued from page 1**

Giorgio Patrini, CEO of Sensity, a “visual threat intelligence company” based in the Netherlands, introduced us to the rise of “deepfake” video technologies that can manipulate and falsify video content with unsettling realism.

This year’s President’s Lecture, the annual capstone event of the Creative Thought Forum, featured the science journalist Robert Krulwich, known to many SAR members from his long-running radio and podcast program Radiolab, as well as his reporting on National Public Radio and elsewhere. Krulwich offered witty ruminations on the complex relationship between rigorous scientific method and human intuition in a talk entitled “Why Things Are the Way They Are.”

As we move into the summer, we reflect back on the remarkable size and geographical diversity of the audiences our recent virtual events have attracted. It is through the generosity of our sponsors and SAR’s Founders’ Society members that we are able to continue the Creative Thought Forum and to share perspectives that push the traditional boundaries of anthropology and related disciplines, while still honoring our institutional heritage. Members both locally and globally can expect to see the many faces of contemporary anthropology and archaeology represented in our online and soon-to-be-in-person programming in the months to come.
Over the last year, many cultural institutions have been faced with difficult questions about the changes that need to be made within our field to move toward a more equitable future. At SAR, projects like the Guidelines for Collaboration have provided an example for other organizations on the critical importance of ongoing community input and partnerships. This year’s IARC Speaker Series, Museums Pivot: Shifting Paradigms for Collaboration, aimed to highlight meaningful collaborations that we can look to as we envision the future.

A moment that really stood out to me came from Sven Haakanson, curator of Native American anthropology at Seattle’s Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, in response to a question about how institutions should begin to approach this work: “How do you build those relationships? That means rolling your sleeves up and establishing a long-term relationship and being honest about what’s working and what isn’t working and how to build and move forward from there. We make mistakes—we’re human, and that’s okay, but learn from those mistakes and then figure out what works best for the community. . . . Find a way to build those bridges of trust. In the presentation, one of the things that’s really important is how we build that trust and how do we maintain it?”

This year’s speakers represented institutions from across the country, from New York City to Chicago, Phoenix, and Seattle. Each presentation provided insights about what makes for a successful collaboration. Collectively, the speakers also demonstrated the wide range of roles and support necessary to build meaningful relationships.

During our opening event, we heard from three Apsáalooke intellectuals and artists, Nina Sanders, Ben Pease, and John LaFrance, who described how they successfully bridge their cultural values with the work that they do within museums and other cultural institutions. In our second event, Heard Museum curator Erin Joyce spoke with artists Ian Kuali’i and Marie Watt about the importance of collaborative relationships between museum staff and artists in exhibition development. For our third conversation, Sven Haakanson was joined by traditional kayak builder Alfred Naumoff, and they shared the lasting impact that these types of relationships can have on both museums and communities.

To close out the series, keynote speaker Dr. Patricia Norby spoke about the importance of Indigenous representation and shared her vision for the future of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the museum field at large. Reflecting on this incredible lineup of speakers, we feel inspired and energized to take what we have learned and continue moving forward.

Watch the IARC Speaker Series on SAR’s YouTube channel, sarsfinfo/youtube.
I met Neebin Southall over jasmine tea, which prompted a conversation on Ojibwe hosting practices, British colonialism on tribal lands, and the transformations that occur with trade and exchange. This is the type of artist and scholar Neebin is: someone who thoughtfully engages with their own background, keen on asking questions and drawing connections.

Neebin, whose full name is Neebinnaukzhik, meaning “Summer Evening” in the Ojibwe language, is the 2021 Eric and Barbara Dobkin Native artist fellow at SAR. A member of the Chipewa of Rama First Nation, they are a graphic designer, illustrator, writer, and owner of the Santa Fe–based Neebin Studios. Though multifaceted in practice, Neebin’s work is unified in promoting positive representations of Native people. This vision grounds their project at SAR. While on campus, Neebin will be developing a set of free, culturally informed Anishinaabe digital illustrations for the Native community. Beyond visibility, Neebin’s work centers on accessibility:

“Neebin’s work is unified in promoting positive representations of Native people. This vision grounds their project at SAR.”

SAR is grateful to Eric and Barbara Dobkin for their generous funding of this fellowship.

Why Consider a Legacy Gift?

Did you know that legacy giving is one of the best ways to show your support for and loyalty to an organization you care about? By including SAR in your will or estate plans, you can make a lasting impact that will help promote creative thought and support innovative scholarship and Native American arts for years to come.

“With your support, SAR continues to be a resource for scholars, artists, and the intellectually curious.”

To inspire these designs, Neebin is studying Anishinaabe works at SAR’s Indian Arts Research Center. From baskets to quillwork boxes to illustrations by Anishinaabe artists, they’re engaging hands-on with materials that are specific to their own culture.

“The main point of the project is for people to have resources to pull from. Instead of using something generic that they find online, there could be something that has resonance with Ojibwe communities.”

To inspire these designs, Neebin is studying Anishinaabe works at SAR’s Indian Arts Research Center. From baskets to quillwork boxes to illustrations by Anishinaabe artists, they’re engaging hands-on with materials that are specific to their own culture.

“And when you have the chance to work with materials,” Neebin explains, “I think it helps influence the art and design work.”

Connecting to culture through tactile study and research is integral to Neebin’s design practice. While majoring in applied visual arts at Oregon State University, they found Native aesthetics to be underrepresented within the coursework. As a result, they began investigating their own culture’s design principles, examining clothing, foodways, and long-standing world views. These Anishinaabe values are a guiding principle in Neebin’s work at SAR and beyond.

“Ideas of generosity and giving back to your community, that’s really what is underlying [this project]. I do think that being generous is an Ojibwe value. [I’m] trying to live my life in a way that matches up with some of the things I’ve learned—just thinking of another way to be a Native designer.”

SAR Anne Ray Intern 2020–2021

Emily Santhanam, SAR Anne Ray Intern 2020–2021

“Connecting to culture through tactile study and research is integral to Neebin’s design practice.”


To inspire these designs, Neebin is studying Anishinaabe works at SAR’s Indian Arts Research Center. From baskets to quillwork boxes to illustrations by Anishinaabe artists, they’re engaging hands-on with materials that are specific to their own culture.

Emily Santhanam, SAR Anne Ray Intern 2020–2021

“My approach, my way to be a Native designer.”