

**Folklore's Futures: Scholarship and Practice  
Pre-AFS Annual Meeting Symposium  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin, October 18, 2006**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**Introduction**

**The Fund for Folk Culture and the American Folklore Society, with financial support provided by the Folk and Traditional Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, co-sponsored a one-day pre-AFS-meeting symposium, "Folklore's Futures: Scholarship and Practice," at the Hyatt Regency Milwaukee on Wednesday, October 18, 2006.**

The Fund and the Society collaborated on this event to encourage more thoroughgoing discussions across our entire field of our visions of, assumptions about, and plans for the future of the field. The symposium fits well with other recent efforts of both organizations. The Fund has been sponsoring gatherings over the last several years to discuss the central cultural issues of the people and communities folklorists study and serve. For the Society, this event is the third of a series of three recent gatherings (the others were an Executive Board discussion of goals this past April and an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation-funded meeting last May to discuss folklore's, oral history's, and ethnomusicology's future in the academy) intended to begin articulating new visions for the Society and the field.

The symposium was comprised of three conversations on critical topics within its overarching theme:

- strategies for strengthening folklore programs of all kinds and at all levels within the academy
- the contributions folklorists are making and can make to discussions of and engagements in a variety of public policy and public service issues, and
- the sorts of educational experiences that are necessary to prepare folklorists to work effectively in the present and future worlds of folklore scholarship and public practice.

Each hour-long conversation was carried out by a group of folklorists and professionals from other fields who are deeply engaged in the matter at hand, speaking informally under the leadership of a moderator, followed by an hour of open discussion of the topic with the audience. The Summary Report presented here, prepared by Andrea Graham, captures the essential points and conversational flow of the event. Some comments have been reordered to better consolidate topics and make for a smoother flow of ideas.

**CONVERSATION 1: FOLKLORE, PUBLIC POLICY, AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

Bill Ivey, moderator

Valdimar Hafstein (University of Reykjavik)

Maria-Rosario Jackson (The Urban Institute)

Sandy Rikoon (University of Missouri)

**Bill Ivey:** Our essential partners often have perspectives quite different from ours, and we need to learn to talk to people such as members of congress, diplomats and policy planners. We need to help them understand that folklorists need to be part of planning and public policy in all endeavors.

## **SPECIALIST LANGUAGE AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST**

**Q: What could you say about folklore if you were talking in everyday language to someone who's not a specialist, to get them to understand why it's important? What do we say that gets us in the room and keeps us there?**

**Valdimar Hafstein:** We have phrases that we throw around among ourselves, but in common language what we do is think about culture of, by and for the people. There are areas of the policy world that do suffer if they don't have our input and viewpoint, and that policy-making tends to occur from the top down.

**Sandy Rikoon:** He rarely calls himself a folklorist; he teaches in a rural sociology program and works in agricultural and environmental policy. Very few people he works with know that he's a folklorist, and he feels that it would open it up to a lot of baggage if he put that forward. At meetings of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) it's fine, but in his agricultural work it's too difficult. He always emphasizes that what he can bring to the table is the ability to talk about and understand local culture in terms of its impact on human behavior, that culture is an important part of the environment. The idea of culture as part of the development, environmental and agriculture agenda is big right now. Many of us are engaged in the process of our work, which is very community-based and action oriented; increasingly public policy is including that in terms of implementation and action. Participatory community-based strategies are becoming better understood and appreciated. When he works with arts agencies he calls himself a folklorist, but cultural studies is a term he uses as well.

**Maria-Rosario Jackson:** She is an urban planner, and her concerns are with neighborhoods, community programs, space and place and how they work. She has worked with folklorists because they can help her do her work better, because of the skills they bring. We need better insights into how people organize their lives, how they understand their daily behaviors, and for this folklorists are invaluable. For example, working with architects and urban designers, you need to know how people behave, how they perceive distance and use of space. In conducting a windshield survey of the environment, a folklorist will see different things than someone else. She connects with individuals, not the field as a whole, and has found people who were available and helpful. Her colleagues at the Urban Institute aren't as interdisciplinary and don't see the usefulness of folklore as much.

## **ENGAGING THE PUBLIC POLICY ARENA AS INDIVIDUALS AND AS A FIELD**

**Q: Do folklorists have a deep discomfort with linking up with public policy activists? Do we hold back or avoid interaction with fields that challenge our unspoken ethics?**

Sandy: There are all sorts of forces exerting pressure on communities that are often negative. If we don't get involved, how are we helping? Communities are under assault. Many people think culture is an obstacle in getting things done. We need to work with those groups and try to change their ideas, either the outside groups or the communities themselves. The perfect system doesn't exist, but we need to do what we can.

Valdimar: We as folklorists have a long history of public service and policy work. We emphasize the romantic legacy of the field, we like its anti-establishment nature. But when the purpose of government changed from managing land to managing people, they had to understand the people in order to control them, and the field comes from that early documentation. We may not like it, but we need to trace our heritage back to bureaucrats responsible for social planning, who had to understand traditions and customs and mores. To know what we can contribute to public policy, we need to understand what we have contributed in the past. Our field arose out of public service.

Maria: She hadn't known there was resistance to dealing with public policy in the folklore field. Bill referred to Peggy Bulger's AFS presidential talk several years ago on the Tombigbee Dam project as an example, which described how some folklorists were reluctant to participate in a project of which they disapproved. Sandy replied that it's a personal decision. Some professors perhaps are being told they shouldn't be involved in public policy, because there are consequences for promotion, but he personally has no problem with getting involved.

**Q: As an example of collective action, should the AFS consult with the State Department on Middle Eastern culture?**

Sandy: There are obstacles to such work. For instance, few folklorists know how the public policy process operates: who has the right to do what to whom. There are folklorists who would like to be more involved, but we don't know how to get involved, how to brief legislative aides, how to give congressional testimony, how to effectively operate in the public policy arena. You need social capital with people in these networks. Do people think of you as someone to call for help?

Maria: One of the obstacles is that folklore isn't a typical field consulted. Policy researchers will put together a team of sociologists, geographers, economists, maybe an anthropologist, but folklore is not usually included. There needs to be outreach on both sides. This field doesn't have representation to the outside that we exist and can be useful. Folklore publications are not directly policy relevant either, and outsiders may not see the work as immediately useful. A policy piece will show in its first few paragraphs how it can be relevant to policy; a piece on immigrant belief systems could show how it's relevant to health policy, for instance.

Sandy: Numbers are often used by policy makers, but we don't use them much in our work. However, we can align ourselves with social scientists, economists, biologists and others who do know how to use numbers and address policy issues. Folklorists are solitary humanists; we tend to do micro studies and work with individuals rather than groups.

**RESEARCH COLLABORATION**

**Q: Is there a sense that the field doesn't have a popular front, which would make inclusion of folklorists on teams a given? Can we do something about that?**

Valdimar: The term used in Icelandic for folklore has a different meaning and connotation than the English word, so it's not a comparable situation in his country. At WIPO and UNESCO there are subcommittees that use the term folklore explicitly, and there we can and must speak as folklorists. A lot of connections are made individually, in conversations over coffee in policy settings, where one thing may lead to another. For instance, through his work on WIPO and UNESCO, Valdimar came into contact with various mid-level administrators at the ministry of culture and the patent office in Iceland, who now know that as a folklorist he can frame certain problems that need framing and answer certain questions that need answering, and have therefore invited him to participate in cultural policy discussions. He has been giving talks on cultural protectionist, and someone heard him and invited him to join another conversation. But Iceland is very small and it is easier to make those personal connections.

Maria: Some of the best research includes both quantitative and qualitative research, and folklore could benefit by doing more quantitative work. What's the relationship of different kinds of research on the same topic, and how can we make those connections?

Sandy: Research team building begins with the training of public policy professionals and training programs in universities, so that is where they can learn what folklorists do. A degree in cultural policy would be a great innovation; there are none in the US. But the information and learning need to go both ways—we need to learn the system, speak at policy conferences, as well as having them learn about us.

Bill: Outside the US this conversation seems to be more advanced. We struggle in a society that doesn't hold culture or cultural policy in high regard. At a recent meeting he attended a media policy specialist was uncomfortable with the idea of cultural policy, claiming it was "squishy." Cultural policy is at the bottom of the list of policy issues.

Maria: When she started interacting with folklorists it wasn't under the cultural policy umbrella, but more recently she has been working in arts and culture. She was doing community planning earlier, and found folklorists had insights into things that were useful for her.

Sandy: Culture is an implicit part of community development, but people in that field don't use those words. They may not be called cultural projects, but that doesn't mean we aren't doing cultural work.

**Q: We are working on the margins. Some of our concepts like heritage have been taken up by other fields, and they may not mean what we mean by the term. Can we get involved in these fields without compromising ourselves? Are they too far from what we mean?**

Valdimar: Every meeting where we are not there is a missed opportunity. If indeed our field arose at least in considerable part out of administration, then it's hard to see how we would be compromising ourselves by talking to the cultural bureaucracy, as long as we do that in a manner

that is critically informed and ethically based. We need to stop seeing ourselves as hopeless romantics and start seeing ourselves as social actors. Sandy agreed that by participating we can change people's minds.

## **TRAINING AND CONNECTIONS TO OTHER FIELDS**

### **Q: Would it be helpful for folklorists to hook up with the public policy field?**

Maria: In an ideal world of course it would. You could get students to understand early on in their training what folklore is and how it can contribute. You can also train folklore students in how they can work in policy—equip people earlier to communicate.

Sandy: New forms of interdisciplinary training programs would be great. More folklorists seem to get turned on to the public policy uses of their work in mid-career, when they can see the impacts of their work on policy. Also, they have developed connections, there is less worry about tenure, etc. He'd like to see training for mid-career folklorists.

Valdimar: They are developing a master's program at the University of Iceland in folklore, where the word for folklore in Icelandic doesn't have "folksy" connotations. There are two tracks in the program, academic and public, including classes in the MBA program; they are building bridges to other disciplines and programs.

Bill: Vanderbilt is launching a new master's in public policy, and he has been assured that cultural policy will be a track.

### **Q: Where are there particularly fruitful connections in rural sociology, urban planning and other fields?**

Sandy: Health and nutrition are areas where culture is critical; the nutritionists have no idea of the cultural components of their work and mostly just look at nutrients, etc. But culture is crucial in understanding food systems.

Valdimar: Agriculture and food are big issues at WIPO. Urban planning is also a great area where we can contribute, addressing issues such as the use of space, etc. Copyright is based on the individual author system, which often doesn't fit with traditional systems, and folklorists can have useful input there as well.

Maria: Health, education, environment, community planning, nutrition, arts, and safety are all topics that have to do with quality of life and that can benefit from the input of folklorists. At her organization diversity is important, but there are not strong insights into how that can really be included.

### **Q: What can AFS can do to advance things, both at high levels with copyright issues and in the field with agricultural issues? Is mid-career training a possible approach?**

Sandy: A public policy section on the AFS web site would be helpful. The board is currently working on a policy on policy statements, but we are behind the curve on this issue and we are a small organization. We should develop institutional capital, develop connections and relations with other organizations doing similar work.

Valdimar: We have been primarily a scholarly society, a place for critical thought. Bill remarked that there was no public folklorist on this panel, and wondered if this a topic for a university setting, or should public programs be involved? Sandy replied that a lot of public folklorists are doing work on the ground in public policy, but not many are involved in the higher levels of policy planning. Maria asked whether policy work is rewarded in academic promotion, or in public folklore work.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION ON CONVERSATION 1**

#### **First Respondent: Peggy Bulger (American Folklife Center)**

Sandy hit the nail on the head when he said he does not use the term folklorist, he calls himself whatever he has to be at the table. That is a problem for the field because then people don't know what folklorists are and do. Maria's comment on the lack of quantitative information from our field is important. Peggy thinks we are naive in thinking that by avoiding policy work we are influencing it anyway. We need to get involved head-on, or our partners and communities will speak for us. The Iceland example is interesting—we should go visit and see what they are doing.

### **CREATING INCENTIVES IN ACADEMIA FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Bert Feintuch (University of New Hampshire):** There is very little reward of this work for junior faculty in the humanities; that's wrong, but it's a fact. In the university, you have more freedom to do this work as you become established. There is more talk these days of engaged scholarship and community service in universities, but it's harder in English departments. At his university the president would be delighted to see more policy work. He likes the rubric of quality of life, people can understand it. If the AFS decided to engage more in public policy, we could do it through issues of the journal, conferences, etc. It needs to be a slow process, but there is long-range planning that the board could do in this direction.

Sandy: He knows few folklorists are social activists, but in other countries academic folklorists lead resistance groups and are very socially engaged. They participate as leaders.

Bill: The consolidation of media, WalMart's distribution of DVDs, etc., are examples of cultural policy controlled by private businesses, but there is little public outcry, and protesters are not culturally-based. The homogenization of culture is what is really happening. There is an activist heritage in the field, and maybe we can get more in touch with that.

**Bill Ellis (Penn State Hazleton):** He has served on promotion and tenure committees for 15 years, and increasingly public outreach is being considered, but more so at the advanced level. A new professor needs to prove scholarly prowess first. He has said the AFS should take a leadership role in the popular promotion of core folklore terms, make them more accessible to

the public and public policy experts, and explain their value and relevance. Our terms are not known. One possible initiative would be connecting senior folklorists to public policy realms, to help them connect and understand the field. Internships at the senior level, which could be a part of a sabbatical; training in public policy; work in a policy-making organization. The education would work both ways, too. On a small campus it is easier to make connections across disciplines—work with sociologists, etc., but it is harder to make connections in the larger realm.

Sandy: At universities there is more opportunity now to do public work, but we folklorists often have unpopular views, which is another reason that senior faculty have a better chance when they speak out. We support the small people, we're anti-corporate and anti-status quo, and that's not always popular.

## **MAKING OUR CASE: STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**Elliott Oring (California State University, Los Angeles):** He liked Sandy's characterization of folklore as local knowledge. AFS needs to take two or three people with policy experience to write an essay on folklore and public policy for a public policy journal, using and defining terms, giving examples or poor planning that doesn't include culture, etc. Follow up with a list of people who do this kind of work and who are available to be called on in working with particular cultures and communities and issues. Bill remarked that there are public folklorists who have policy connections already—Barry Bergey, Peggy Bulger, etc.

**Steve Zeitlin (City Lore):** There are stories about looking for someone to help do something and discovering it's yourself. The AFS could take this lead role, do policy papers, commission essays, and put them on the web. Universities or state arts agencies are not necessarily the right place. Bill suggested that the summary paragraph of folklore articles in our journals could indicate public policy connections. Valdimar added that we could do an entire issue of a journal with papers on public policy. Maria suggested that we could also be repackaging information we already have, and make it geared to policy. We should do e-blasts about new publications to policy organizations.

Sandy: Articles in *Science* or *Nature* get huge publicity, because they do media releases with contact information to the authors. We should do that as well. We have been asking how we get at other people's tables; a graduate student of his worked as a senator's aide and he learned that getting on the rolodex as an expert who can be called is key to making inroads. But we can also set a table ourselves and invite others in, in areas where we want to cultivate relationships.

**Betsy Peterson (Fund for Folk Culture):** When we deal with other sectors and disciplines we always have to sell what we have to offer. As Maria says, she uses what is useful to get her work done. Betsy has had more success by using the terms that resonate with funders. We have some radical ideas, so we need to use the language of our clients and colleagues. Also, we can create our own tables. The FFC has done that with their convenings, and has committed to making them interdisciplinary. We do not own culture, we need to be inclusive and listen to other voices.

## **OPPORTUNITIES AND ENTRY POINTS FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

**Kay Turner (Brooklyn Arts Council):** In looking for practical solutions, training is very important and something that AFS could be dedicated to; for instance, we could go to NEH for funding for a summer institute in folklore and policy. Some of us come out of social activism, and she thinks there are a lot of socially active folklorists, but we could use more training. There is an example from Brooklyn of a development project that is taking out two neighborhoods, and she feels lacking in ideas of how to bring local knowledge to the table. How do you work with developers, who seem to have a lot of power these days? We could take a big leap over our sense of ourselves as victims, we keep our identity as folklorists in the closet. Identifying ourselves as folklorists is very important, even if it is a wonky term. We also need to pay attention to new media like YouTube and MySpace—get the word out using these new, accessible media. She reads Business Week and makes a lot of connections with folklore, and she has noticed that there are a lot of young wealthy people who are interested in culture, and we can connect with them. “Get with the PayPal kids, forget the Ford Foundation.”

**Patricia Sawin (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill):** The key issue is persuading experts, whose disciplines work top down and who believe people are units to be moved, of the value of vernacular knowledge. She gave an example from Central America, where the local culture believes that babies should be born at home, but public health policy has been pushing clinics; they don’t understand the cultural beliefs and why their project is not successful.

Sandy: Policies and programs often fail because of cultural reasons, and cultural experts are only called in when they fail; you need to consider these things up front to avoid failure. That can be an entry point for us into the policy arena.

**Jason Morris (Independent Ethnographer, Washington DC):** He has a master’s in applied anthropology from the University of Maryland, and suggests that we consider connecting with applied anthropology meetings. He would like further training, particularly in cultural policy. He got tired of theater performances, his undergraduate work, which had no public impact, which is why he went into anthropology. He wants help as someone just starting out in this field. Bill remarked that folklore has a history of involvement in public policy, and also a history of performance activism. There was early bias against public folklore, but that has changed.

**Kathy Condon (Independent Folklorist, New York):** Many of us have anthropology training; are we competing with anthropologists for the one cultural slot at the policy table? A question for Maria: how big is the table? Would there ever be both a folklorist and an anthropologist at the table? Maria replied that there could be. There are many conferences and organizations for policy and planning, but usually the cultural person is an anthropologist. Kathy said that we don’t want to bump the anthropologists. Maria said that the size of the table varies, but anthropology is simply better understood than folklore and so is more often included. Kathy would like to think both/and and not either/or when it comes to cultural expertise. Maria said that the Urban Institute does have access to journal articles in folklore, but researchers don’t even know to look there, and can’t see the public policy connections when they do. Bill stated that in the digital world we have access to the information, but our publications don’t come in a form that is seen as useful to a policy researcher. Kathy suggested that an article needs to be promoted as an example and made accessible, and links created directly to it.



**Elaine Thatcher (Utah State University):** This topic was discussed by the board with the JAF editors. A great project would be to extract public policy issues from JAF articles. As an independent folklorist, she did a project with the Santa Fe planning commission on neighborhood character, which was great, but was done with leftover funds one year, and was not an ongoing effort. Indies often don't have time to write up these experiences in public policy. Funding is also an issue, and often dictates the size of the table and how many people and areas of expertise can be included. Perhaps we could get funding so we can approach planners to include folklorists to show what we can do. Sandy noted that anthropologists made a place for themselves at the table, and now they are included; we could do the same.

Bill: Dell Hymes has made the point that folklore is a primary discipline. A vibrant expressive life is going to become central in this changing society.

**Barbro Klein (Uppsala, Sweden):** The history of the field is important to understand, we need to go back to see how the social sciences evolved as a way to combat social ills. We can broaden the idea of what public folklore can be, include the entire world, and broaden our connection to other fields.

#### **ARENAS FOR INVOLVEMENT: LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL, INTERNATIONAL**

Bill: There is a vibrant public folklore world, but it's organized on a state and local level, and it is often hard for them to step back and think about global implications.

**Richard Kurin (Smithsonian):** We should be aware that folklore may not come wholly-formed into the public policy world. There are small pockets of activity going on already, and specialized small university projects are making progress. In public work, James Early's work on cultural diversity turned into an international conference; Frank Proschan is now at UNESCO. Policy impact will come out of doing real work, making connections, and successful examples. Posting papers might not be enough. Folklorists don't own the cultural policy field. We need to do good work on the ground and it will be seen. He was surprised that the Smithsonian's Rockefeller fellowships had few folklorists as applicants. Bill commented that good work needs to be labeled as the work of folklorists so we get recognition.

**Doris Dyen (Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area):** She uses the terms folklorist, ethnomusicologist, and anthropologist to describe herself, but she's primarily a cultural worker; she will use whatever language works because things need to get done. We need a flow between the academy and applied work—for example university team teaching with public folklorists. Public policy happens at every level—local, regional, state, national and international. There is a model for very local levels of policy development, and that is a good place for folklorists to be involved; in her area they knew about the local folklorists and wanted their perspective so she was included.

**Debora Kodish (Philadelphia Folklore Project):** It is great for AFS to be stimulating these discussions. We can speak to local processes; a lot of people working locally need better tools to work in policy, and we can be getting information out to help grassroots efforts. Bill emphasized

that we need to get in the room at the beginning, not when things go wrong. Sandy added that we need to understand who decides who decides.

## **CONVERSATION 2: STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING FOLKLORE PROGRAMS IN ACADEME**

Elliott Oring (California State University, Los Angeles, *emeritus*), moderator

Jason Baird Jackson (Indiana University)

Dorothy Noyes (The Ohio State University)

Sharon Sherman (University of Oregon)

Patricia Turner (University of California, Davis)

Margaret Yocom (George Mason University)

Elliott Oring's questions to the panel included considering opportunities and pitfalls for folklore at universities, our field's essential contribution to knowledge, what AFS could do to help university programs, and what would happen if folklore PhD programs disappeared entirely. He began by introducing the panelists and describing the structure of their university folklore programs to illustrate their variety.

**Sharon Sherman, Department of English, University of Oregon.** The University of Oregon has a certificate in folklore at the BA level, an MA in Folklore, and a PhD in English with structured emphasis in folklore. Many of the faculty have folklore degrees; some are in English, but others are in anthropology. There is a problem in lack of proximity when people are scattered in various departments, but it is good for students because they get a broad education. The pitfall is that very few people get a degree with a folklore emphasis. She has thought about leaving the English department to form a separate folklore program, but Barre Toelken warned her that they could easily cut a folklore program if she went out on her own, whereas they'll never cut English.

**Dorothy Noyes, Department of English, Ohio State University.** OSU has an undergraduate folklore minor, an informal concentration at all degree levels, and a degree in comparative studies with a folklore concentration. There is also an interdisciplinary graduate minor, and a Center for Folklore Studies. At Ohio State the program has many friends across the university, and that interdisciplinary work is good, but you have to keep working to nurture those relations. Folklore has always had interdisciplinarity, we can talk to everybody, we are used to looking outside our discipline, we have skills others can use, we have connections, and people owe us favors because we help make links. Human subject research is one place their program has been helpful to others. She sees the growth of the field in minors, not just majors, which builds a larger network. The pitfalls of interdisciplinarity are that you can diffuse yourself too far, lose your core. You have to look after your core. We have to think of ourselves as a networked discipline, rather than an interdisciplinary field, because everyone is interdisciplinary now; we need to be identified by our core issues. It's dangerous to suggest evaluating folklore programs based on their capacity for outreach, which is getting very competitive; ethnic studies is the big one now, and you can't compete with them. Outreach capacity also depends on funding, and it takes time beyond what universities define as the core academic mission. You have to be academically established before you do outreach, especially in folklore which is intellectually

suspect to many anyway. In practice, you can move from academic to applied work, but not the other way around.

**Jason Jackson, Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, Indiana University.** IU gives a BA, MA and PhD in folklore, and also has dual MAs in folklore with journalism and with library science. Indiana University's folklore program has the luxury of a long and productive history, but it is now transitioning to more ambiguous future. Everyone on the current faculty is committed to a future advancing the field of folklore, but now is a period in which many of colleagues will retire raising programmatic questions. If new faculty can be hired, what will their vision for folklore be? In the past, the department ideal has been hiring scholars with the Ph.D. in folklore, but this is becoming an increasing challenge because of demographic and programmatic changes in the field combined with a desire to hire scholars not trained at Indiana. Increased strength in other folklore graduate programs is a key disciplinary goal, one that will in turn strengthen the program at Indiana. When non-folklorists are hired into a program like Indiana's can we develop strategies to "naturalize" them in to the field? While a system of rankings such as the NRC rankings in other fields may not be appropriate to folklore graduate programs at present, some more formal comparative framework of assessment would strengthen the position of Indiana and other programs in their advocacy efforts with local university administrators.

**Peggy Yocum, Department of English, George Mason University.** George Mason's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences has a folklore and mythology minor, the Department of English has a folklore and mythology concentration, and the College of Liberal Arts has an MA in interdisciplinary studies with a folklore concentration. Undergraduate programs are important, and Peggy makes sure they are strong, and have an array of offerings. Students flock to their courses, and they keep track of numbers and use them to advocate for new faculty. She has colleagues who ask her what they're doing to attract students. Those courses are the underpinning, a form of outreach, lead students into minors, and helped her create a minor and a master's degree. She has built collaborative frameworks using our strengths. She has formed links to creative writing programs, composition, literature, Latin American studies. The pitfall is in how far you want to stretch yourself. They serve on lots of committees to keep those connections strong. At George Mason they are under pressure from human subjects review boards, undergraduates are having to go through a full review, it is getting burdensome, and they need to take action to deal with it.

**Pat Turner, Professor of American Studies and Dean of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies (with 28 departments), University of California at Davis.** UC Davis has no formal folklore program, but courses are offered though American Studies. Speaking from her role as an administrator, Pat said that a dean wants to invest in visible, high-functioning faculty members who are engaged broadly. They want a good person in a leadership role, and the potential for future leaders. Departmental efficiency helps a dean, that's what they like. People who want to start new programs often take it on top of their usual duties, carry them out of love, but when they leave their program is left with no support. The new programs that stick have resources and connections; administrators love the concept of matching money. At Davis, undergraduate body counts don't always result in extra funding; she would start at the graduate level and then build undergraduates. Scientists don't claim to do their work as a "labor of love," but we do. They

make rational arguments for support of their programs, and we can, too. We need to get folklorists on planning and curriculum committees.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR COMPONENTS AT UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS**

Elliott: Several university folklore programs have public program components—the Center for the Study of Upper Midwest Cultures, Traditional Arts Indiana, Cajun & Creole studies in Louisiana—and this allows public universities to have a public face.

Jason: Having the governor’s wife judge the Indiana fiddle contest organized by Traditional Arts Indiana went a long way with the university administration. That program also provides training for students in public folklore, which is crucial and great for community engagement. It’s a joint funding initiative with the Indiana Arts Council, which pays half the cost, and IU.

Peggy: She works a lot on internships, and they are fortunate to have the Washington, DC, folklore organizations to work with. She’s trying to work with the National Museum of the American Indian on a joint hire with the university. She’d love to be able to have AFS help, for instance in providing grants for team teaching opportunities with colleagues from other universities or having public folklorists to spend a semester at the university.

## **VALUE AND VISIBILITY IN THE ACADEMY**

**Q: What is the added value that folklore studies brings to other fields such as literature, anthropology, or area studies beyond understanding the importance of local knowledge?**

Pat: We have to be hyper-specific. Folklorists should have a menu of elevator speeches about our work, depending on what elevator we’re in. It’s hard for us to be self-promoting, but if not for ourselves we can do it for our colleagues. For instance, she talks to food researchers about her colleague Jay Mechling’s research on children’s play and its relevance in understanding childhood obesity. In New Orleans, she said they need to understand that blacks think the levees were breached deliberately during Hurricane Katrina, and rebuilding efforts need to comprehend that or they won’t succeed. Use your campus PR office to promote your activities.

Dorry: We need to pose ourselves as being complementary, enriching to what others are doing. Your close neighbors can be the most difficult to convince. At OSU they work with cultural studies, which is high theory, and talk about their ground-level work with them, try to meet in the middle. She likes Dick Bauman’s term “philology of the vernacular.” Our ground is vernacular communication, and we must not disown the ground of the field, the history. Folklore is also a primary discourse of political representation and rejuvenation, it incorporated the periphery to the nation state. Culture and heritage is the way that the developing world is getting incorporated into the global economy. Folklore is “the inner other of modernity,” everything that is not modern, not the center. We have expertise in local resistances.

## **AFS AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS**

**Q: What could the AFS do for your program? At the university administrative level, where does an organization like the AFS fit?**

Pat: In the sciences the scholarly societies are lobbying in DC for federal research funding, and AFS could do that with shoring up NEH and NEA. We can boast about the size of our society. Support letters from AFS are great for faculty awards. She noted that other scholarly organizations don't have visibility on campus, either, but on a local level membership in the Fellows, for instance, can carry weight.

Sharon: The University of Oregon is in the process of formalizing an interdisciplinary program, and that Tim Lloyd and Bill Ivey have sent letters of support, as have others. Having the national meeting in Eugene was very important for them and helped with visibility. AFS can help get your work into publications like the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and the *New York Times*; there could be a list of press contacts maintained by AFS. The society is the core of what she does and she always calls herself a folklorist. If we want to get degree programs in folklore, we need the name.

Jason: Academic folklore is in a more precarious spot than public folklore right now, but we need both; we are stronger with both. AFS's public folklorist in residence program was a great effort and he would like to see it back, but he'd also like to see a postdoctoral fellowship aimed at academic folklorists. This would provide an additional faculty resource for a folklore graduate program making a leap, such as adding a PhD program, for example, as a way to get additional faculty. New graduates who can't get work immediately often have to go into another field—this would give them an opportunity to stay in folklore during the crucial few years between completing a PhD and finding an appropriate academic post.

Dorry: Student recruitment is another area where AFS could help. We need a wider and more diverse pool to recruit from, and should work with honors programs, and black or inner city or border colleges. More centralization in the field, better communication, and the launch of the H-Folk listserv are all important. AFS could host symposia on heritage, definitions, broader topics, and synthesizing what we have learned about our core notions.

## **OPEN DISCUSSION ON CONVERSATION 2**

### **First Respondent: Diane Goldstein (Memorial University of Newfoundland)**

Memorial University also has a PhD in folklore. We need to think about how to make our programs stronger, think about student demographics, learn what our most successful programs are, decide where we should put our energies in the current world, and determine what is fundable. Memorial had an outside review recently, and reviewer Erica Brady pointed out that the strongest university folklore programs often have a strong regional base.

## **POSITIONING FOLKLORE PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITY SETTINGS**

Sharon: Regionalism is very important, their archive is called the Archive of Northwest Folklore and people respond to it. Dorry also agreed that a regional base helps a lot with outreach, but may not be the program's research goal or strength. OSU, for instance, is international. Peggy

added that regionalism is important in their urban/suburban setting around Washington, and they are seen as a regional resource, people send them materials and use their stuff. Elliott suggested including the word folklore and a regional name in a department's title may be helpful in bringing the regional element to the forefront, for instance Folklore and the Ethnography of the Intermountain West.

**Elaine Lawless (University of Missouri):** Missouri has built a strong program within an English department, which is harder to axe, and they are integrated with lots of other areas such as literature, composition and rhetoric; folklore adds new tools to the toolbox. Their graduates get good jobs because they have a strong mix of skills, including folklore. They do internships with the Missouri Folk Arts Program, which gives their students great experience in fieldwork. The people they hire look like the people they graduate—people with diverse skills and experience, people who can do more than one thing such as teach creative writing, Asian studies, rhetoric, etc.

**Jim Leary (University of Wisconsin):** A former student of his is an international scholar working in Turkey, and has 90 folklore students, so we can have global impact. Speaking of regional programs, Ruth Olson does an online course called “Local Culture and Identity in the Upper Midwest” which has lots of audio-visual material, has built links with the library, etc. However, regionalism can become parochialism, you have to tread a fine line, “every place is the center of the world.” With global movement and communication we can make good connections as well. The University of Wisconsin has a folklore undergraduate certificate, and a PhD minor and concentration. They are not periodically reviewed by the dean because they are not a separate department; AFS could send retired professors to do an external evaluation that could strengthen their reputation in the university.

**Jill Rudy (Brigham Young University):** They sponsored an archives conference several years ago and Peggy Bulger came from the American Folklife Center which had a very positive impact and helped them create stronger ties with their library; that is another area where AFS could help university programs.

**Galit Hasan-Rokem, (Hebrew University of Jerusalem):** They have a Jewish and Comparative Folklore Program, and teach Israeli-Palestinian folklore; they have MA (5-6 students) and PhD programs. Most graduates go to local institutions, and are also hired internationally. She is at Berkeley this semester, and there is an urge toward a PhD program there. She thinks AFS post-doc funding would be very helpful. We could publish in non-folklore journals, and include a lot of footnotes to folklore journals to lead people there. She recommends international connections, which are good for tenure and promotion, especially in a small country like Israel. Modularity is another helpful concept—part of her position is in literature, even though they are a folklore program. Folklore is non-hierarchic, universities are hierarchic, but are changing, becoming more modular—folklorists can help with that.

Jason: It is good to hear about other PhD programs, because having more programs makes us all stronger. The change several years ago to combine the folklore and ethnomusicology programs at IU made it less likely that either program would be cut. Their university has guidelines for dismantling a department, and others doubtless do as well—you should understand them.

## **PARTNERSHIPS WITH PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

**Keith Ludden (Maine Arts Commission):** Are there untapped opportunities for academic institutions to partner with local and state agencies, to the benefit of both institutions? For instance, it would be great for a public program to have folklore students to do fieldwork. Sharon said that she does put interns at the Oregon Folklife Program, and Peggy does that a lot, too. Dorry remarked that someone at the university has to take it on as their baby because you need follow-up and sustainability. Jason agreed that it helps to have an established ongoing partnership with a public program, so you don't have to reinvent the wheel all the time. Internships also support students financially; at IU they have a hard time supporting first year graduate students, so Traditional Arts Indiana provides that. Sharon suggested getting internships listed as a class, and then students will come to you.

## **ATTRACTING NEW STUDENTS**

**Betsy Peterson:** What is the diversity of student populations at university programs? As a potential employer in the field, she is getting pressure from funders to be diverse in her board and staff. Is there incentive for academic programs to diversify? How are universities grappling with this?

Sharon: We're all under that same gun. We have never had a lot of diversity in the society, and we don't know why that is, but we have been talking about the issue for a long time. Pat said that California is very ethnically diverse, and pressure still exists for universities to diversify their student bodies, but "incentives" is a bad word in the state, and anti-diversity police are everywhere. Jason said that he doesn't think IU has made strong enough efforts in this direction. About a third of their graduate students is from overseas, and usually return overseas. The university is seen as having an international impact, which is serving them well; in the next generation the students of those students may start coming back. Elliott remarked that at his university in Los Angeles, one third of the students were Latino and one third were Asian so there was great diversity; it really depends on where your university is located.

Peggy: Her mother didn't understand what she was going to do with a degree in folklore, and that lack of understanding of the field as a whole is an ongoing problem with recruiting students. AFS could do a slick publication on the jobs folklorists are doing—museums, parks, tourism, health care policy, media production, etc. It could profile 20 people in diverse fields and occupations. It would help promote the field to students and also to university administrators. Pat added that most campuses have major preview days, where various departments promote themselves, and that would be a place to show off such a publication. Elliott said that the AFS web site already has a section on potential jobs with a folklore degree and that we should all link our sites to it.

## **AFS ENDOWMENT-PLANNED GIVING BY THE MEMBERSHIP**

Elliott: AFS now has an endowment, and members can contribute to help fund these programs, such as fellowships, that are being suggested.

Pat: Members might use the AFS endowment to set up funds ahead of time for donations at the time of their deaths; when a faculty member dies, lots of students want to donate to a fund that may be set up at their university, but they usually end up being pretty small and not very useful, and often restricted. A planned fund at AFS for donations in the professor's memory could be very useful to the society and the field.

### **CONCERNS ABOUT INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD PROCESSES**

**Jill Rudy:** Another difficult issue for university researchers is the Institutional Review Board (IRB). She serves on BYU's IRB, which reviews research projects using human subjects, and because she's not a scientist the others members are forced to explain their non-lay terms to her. Their folklore students don't have to go through the review process, they just sign a release for their folklore archive. However, by not having IRB review they can be seen as not really researchers; it can backfire.

Elliott: IRB is a huge threat to free speech, because your ability to talk to people and write about it is subject to prior review. It's a major issue, and he thinks we should not even be willing to participate in the process. It's getting worse in some places, and it's a locally-controlled issue. AFS can address this at a high level, and there is already a statement on the web site about human subject research, but we need a more global response.

### **CONVERSATION 3: PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE OF FOLKLORE PRACTICE AND SCHOLARSHIP**

Kurt Dewhurst, moderator

Erika Brady (Western Kentucky University)

Jim Leary (University of Wisconsin)

John McDowell (Indiana University)

Dan Sheehy (Smithsonian Folkways Recordings)

Elaine Thatcher (Utah State University)

Rory Turner (Maryland State Arts Council)

Steve Zeitlin (City Lore)

**Kurt Dewhurst:** This session, the focus of which is on the professional preparation for folklore practice and scholarship, should build on the previous conversations. Summarizing some of the ideas from the first two sessions: Training in folklore gives us tools to talk about such concepts as culture, identity, and tradition, and we can approach them in a number of ways depending on the situation. Our work is becoming more participatory and action oriented. It is important for us to be thinking about the intellectual history of our field. We are becoming more international. There is more interest in public policy, and we need to understand how that realm works; maybe AFS can host summer institutes to train us to be more effective, and to understand how policy affects us and our work. We need different and stronger communication tools to promote our field and our work. There is a real ambivalence about terms like outreach and engagement; a new



Carnegie-sponsored study on outreach by scholars goes way beyond the idea of continuing education. It is interesting to see the diversity of programs in universities, and to see that the strength of higher education is in its diversity and in each institution's focus (local, regional, international, etc.). We have to figure out new technologies, especially those that are community-based and already being used by communities. This session is about the future, how we can move forward, catch the next wave of opportunity, and be at the table we talked about this morning.

## **PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCIES**

### **Q: What are the professional competencies for folklore?**

As an example, the International Council on Museums (ICOM) has a document about professional competencies for people who work in museums—they include knowledge of community development, community organizing, understanding PR and marketing, how political organizations and governments work, international policy and law related to culture, grant writing, fundraising, etc.

**Steve Zeitlin:** City Lore uses a lot of interns and hires a lot of people, so he thinks about skills and training needed all the time. Some individuals always make the field relevant because of the power of their personalities—Archie Green and Bess Hawes are two great examples. They have the self-motivation to invent the field every day—that's what we need to be doing. We need people with charisma and motivation, even more than academic training sometimes. We need to know how to work in a complex modern world and modern politics. How can we tell from student applications who can do the work? It's more than grades and GREs. When he works with people from other fields, he'd love to have a crash course in folklore for them; maybe AFS could have an online folklore course. The history of the discipline and fieldwork are the most important components of this training. When he teaches, he uses specific folklorists as examples—Alan Lomax, Ben Botkin, etc.

**Elaine Thatcher:** The importance of training in the history of the discipline is critical; you need an intellectual there there. A lot of her practical training came after graduation with on-the-job experience. She felt that we need to open doors to more diverse practitioners, those who understand the work and have a fire in the belly, and give them the history of the discipline and professional skills.

**Erika Brady:** The discipline is a great series of problems that have been satisfactorily or unsatisfactorily solved, and can provide excellent training. Sometimes at her university they get students who obviously have the fire, but in many others it's not obvious, and it's the teacher's job to ferret it out—to learn if their strengths lie in archiving, fieldwork, writing, teaching, etc. Sometimes it's not useful to say you're a folklorist, but a list of your experience can help. She also agreed that the experiential component of training is very valuable.

**Rory Turner:** Professional competencies for public folklore include the ability to work in teams on projects, and both conceptual thinking and research and presentation skills. Folklore is an art

and a craft in itself. It takes both passion and tools/skills such as photography, video, technological communication, research, interviewing, and working with communities.

**Jim Leary:** He started teaching in 1975 and started doing public work in 1976, and feels he needs to do both to be whole. Fieldwork is a fundamental, but what do you do with the products of fieldwork—both archivally and publicly (radio, exhibits, festivals, web sites)? Their students at the University of Wisconsin have lots of opportunities with the Wisconsin Arts Board and the regional humanities center at the university. He teaches about the political economy in which folklorists do their work, how folklorists and folk artists are always making choices. For instance, his introductory course looks at public folklore and public issues such as immigration, English-only legislation, cuts to the NEA, etc., and the final assignment is for students to write their congressman about the public funding of folklore. He gets them to think about democratic values and pluralism.

**Dan Sheehy:** What guides him is the passion, the fire in the belly; it is the people who have kept him going, the image of artists and their work. He feels he got into this field by accident and has learned largely on the job. In response to Kurt's question, he made a list of ignorances rather than competencies; his incompetencies include management, grant making, grant writing, the music industry, design, manufacture, marketing, e-marketing, sales, software, business planning, policy development, copyright law, royalties, IT, and stress management. He is arguing for as wide a net as possible in training for the field.

## **TRAINING AND PREPARATION**

### **Q: What sort of preparation is already underway for the field?**

**John McDowell:** No one program can provide all the necessary competencies to any one student. He created a basket metaphor: if you want to put something new in, you have to take something else out to make room. He agrees that the basics are the history of the field and critical thinking, current theories, adjacent disciplines, genres and forms of expressions, a specific community or region. IU added a course called Reading Ethnography and stronger fieldwork preparation. They are now adding a Public Arts & Culture concentration, building on existing courses and using courses in other parts of the university—museum studies, an internship course, etc.

Erika: You can also teach students the skills to make a bigger basket. You can teach agility, entrepreneurship, how to recognize opportunities. The faculty can also provide models for the range of work available.

Steve: The public sector has to be part of the metaphorical basket, it can't be ignored. Folklorists have always been activists, and those skills have to be taught.

### **Q: What realities of contemporary communities now developing will change our work and the necessary preparation?**

Dan: Currently one in seven residents of the US is Hispanic, and predictions are that by 2025 the ratio will be one in four; 60 percent of these are and will be of Mexican descent. We are not yet dealing with this fact in our work.

Elaine: Communities now are more self-aware and proud of their cultural heritage, are more interested in managing their own cultural affairs, and they need tools for access to funding and training. Folklorists can mentor, then step aside so communities can set their own direction. Another change is that there is a growing need for outsourcing some work, and there are more independent folklorists. To survive as an independent you have to understand institutions and be able to translate between institutions and communities. Keep your ear to the ground, notice changes in local politics, technologies, etc.; we must be able to move and adapt quickly. An indie has to be responsive and entrepreneurial and observant. There are lots of niches available for independent folklore work.

Rory: There is going to be a role for people to midwife their cultural expressions, and it may be folklorists or maybe not, but we should be in that space. It's part of the dynamics of globalization; localism is under threat and also increasingly important, technology makes it accessible. The model of engaged scholarship is a good one. Leaders in the new cultural communities can benefit from training in folklore, since they are already doing the work.

## **NEW FRONTIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Q: How can these new contacts renew our disciplinary energy?**

Jim: One example on the AFS program is a session with a local museum which is working with community members to develop exhibits. Also, at the University of Wisconsin they are housed with Chicano Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian Studies, and it has led to a lot of valuable partnerships. One of our frontiers is to understand history, how this country is going through some of the same things now that immigrants in the 1890's faced.

John: Online and virtual communities are increasingly important, and need to be studied and understood. "Communities under assault" are everywhere, the forces tearing communities apart are growing stronger, and we can help them fight and survive. Remember that the basket can't be too big for students to carry, there are limits. The successful students he sees today are very entrepreneurial, finding new pathways, doing dual degrees, etc.

### **Q: What can AFS do, what role can they have in training and professional preparation?**

Dan: If the "we" can be extended we can do more, build a community as a conscious act. When the Colorado Folk Arts program was cut, Dan went to visit the arts council and the director told him he'd taken a folklore course with Archie Green, so Dan asked him why not re-start the program, and he said "okay." In another example, he went to lunch with an entertainment lawyer, who it turned out had interned at Folkways, so they then had an entertainment lawyer to help them. Internships are wonderful; most of the NEA internships were people of color. We're all tribal—skills development and networking are the keys, as Dale Carnegie said. Folkways has 80 interns a year, they are from a huge range of fields, and having young people is very

energizing, and the staff also learns about new culture. Kurt added that there is a new drive among foundations to get young people on boards for those same reasons.

Rory: AFS should go open source; publish more things online, create a free online course.

Elaine: We need to find ways to get more students to AFS, have more events focused on them, set up networking opportunities. Erika agreed that the meetings have been transformative for many students.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION ON CONVERSATION 3**

#### **First respondent: Robert Baron (New York State Council on the Arts)**

Learning about professional practice needs to encompass informal professional learning as well as formal academic training. Informal learning is, after all, constitutive of folklore, our subject of study, and as folklorists we have unique perspectives about the acquisition of knowledge and enculturation. We need to be resourceful about developing multiple modes of learning which draw from new models for acquiring professional knowledge and competencies, and which should occur both during formal academic training and throughout a career. Folklore is now, like many other disciplines, a practicing profession as well as an academic discipline, which raises important issues about our disciplinarity that need to be better understood in considering training and the direction of our field. Other disciplines have developed more formal training, and licensing procedures, for their practicing professions. He would like to see lifelong learning opportunities, and internships that are really deep, practical, and linked to academic curricula. Some ideas he suggested for training included practicums, job shadowing, team teaching, alliances with professional schools, technical assistance involving both visits to model projects and conventional consultancies, sabbaticals for public folklorists, summer seminars, deep reading of texts and online courses.

### **PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCY, TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT**

Dan: There are multiple competencies and multiple intelligences. The more people we can pull into the folklore sphere the better. Steve thought that the community scholar model has been very energizing for public folklore, it involves collaboration with communities, not just studying them. How can we provide training for community scholars?

**Barry Bergey (National Endowment for the Arts):** A useful skill is the ability to write from an expressive dimension about the work that we do. We need to bring the work to life, for grant panelists, the public, etc. We need to be brave enough to address expressive dimensions of culture. Steve agreed that writing ability is as important a skill as anything else. We need to make the material come to life. Dan said that there is a parallel with formal musical training, which you often have to unlearn to communicate well. Training in writing has to start very early. Erika said that teaching writing is very difficult, and is a core university issue across all disciplines.

Jim: It is important to send students to do fieldwork experientially, then share their successes and mistakes with each other. They need that visceral experience.

**Kathy Condon (Independent Folklorist, New York):** Learning to learn is something we need to teach; some people are natural at it, and some people have to be taught how to do it. Collaborative and cooperative learning happens on the job, and that is an important skill as well.

John: One of the attractions of IU's new public arts & culture component is the required teamwork; the lone scholar model is hard to break.

Erika: When she talked about learning how to make a bigger basket, she was talking about learning how to learn. Our field and the environment are shifting so fast that we have to be adaptable and entrepreneurial. Students can keep a portfolio of how they learn.

Dan: Retirees tend to drop out of the society—maybe they want to feel needed and could be recruited as mentors and teachers.

**Bill Ellis (Penn State Hazleton):** He needs to use extra time to prepare to come to AFS, and this year his wife asked why he was doing this, what AFS had ever done for him. He replied that it has inspired him both mentally and spiritually. We need to be inspired, not just smart. He's been pushing the AFS to attend to our bodies, providing practical things and employment support, "taking better care of our own" by providing more benefits, creating a listserv, etc. But we can do better, for students and practitioners. We can provide a broader range of professional development activities—internships, sabbaticals, workshop training.

**Guha Shankar (American Folklife Center):** A wonderful recruiting campaign would be to advertise folklore as a rabidly promiscuous field. We use many modalities. The problem is that the core is always expanding, we have to always be learning new stuff. "Live in fear, terror and exhilaration" could be our motto. Who is the next generation of folklorists? Who will replace us? That's a job for AFS. We can also recruit within our own organizations, from people working in allied fields like videographers, archivists, IT people. As an example, he started in media work, and went on to study folklore.

## THE FUTURE OF THE FIELD

Rory: Is anything we're talking about going to have relevance or purchase with university administrations? He's not sure. Folklore can engage students and connect with communities, and could be a real boon for a university.

**Betsy Peterson (Fund for Folk Culture):** What do we mean by public folklore in this discussion? Cultural representation, cultural democracy? We are shifting into a different phase now where the environment is changing, communities are under assault with privatization, etc. It demands a different kind of action and different skills. We need to think about public folklore 20 or 30 years down the road. She'd like to see folklorists in think tanks, public health, public policy.

Jim: He thinks of policy on the community and state level because of the nature of his work and his location, but he feels further away from the national and international level; his work is more grassroots. But there is clearly a need for this work at all levels.

Elaine: We've talked about the ability to collaborate, to learn new things. We need people on the panel who are 25, because we don't know what the future's going to bring. She would like students to have broad readings in health, environment, etc. to make them aware of these upcoming issues. We have to be light on our feet, because we don't know what's going to happen.

John: The current interest in intellectual property issues turned out to be the key in getting a new faculty member for their public program track.

## **CONNECTING TO COMMUNITIES**

**Art Laughton (Graduate student at IU):** He called what we do "midwifing cultural expression in community."

John: We have the model of endangered languages, so what about a parallel model of endangered communities?

Erika: She has been trying to "de-Dorsonize" her approach to communities, to where she puts attention. For example, when she receives calls from a public library asking her to come tell stories, she doesn't immediately say no, but instead tries to find out where the interest is coming from and how they could connect in other ways.

## **PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY**

**Scheri Smith (Western Kentucky University graduate, working as a reporter at a daily paper):** Their editor recently told them they work for an information center, not a newspaper—they are writing blogs, doing video, taking their own photos, in addition to reporting and writing stories. Folklore training has helped her be a better journalist, and she is adapting better than some off the older reporters. But she thinks a lot of folklore grads like her are not working in the field.

Jim: He thinks she is in the discipline. We don't train in folklore only to work specifically in that field, our skills are widely applicable. You can be a folklorist in many situations and bring your training to bear in many jobs. Steve said that before he became a folklorist he wanted to be a writer, and he encourages students to find a subject they can write about. She can do something great and unique as a journalist because of her folklore training. Elaine commented that even though Scheri wants to be in the field, she may not have a choice now because she needs paying work. But she could do some work on the side and be entrepreneurial. We don't have enough jobs in the field. Being an indie is tough, it takes tolerance for not knowing where your money will come from. Rory suggested that we need to create more jobs, convince organizations that folklore positions are needed. Dan also thought that Scheri is part of the field. Cultural

journalism is in a sad state, we need better cultural journalists, and she has the potential to be a leader in that field.

**Doris Dyen (Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area):** Responding to Dan's characterization of his career as a series of accidents, she says "There are no accidents," according to her Aunt Esther. She came from ethnomusicology, graduated when there were only 3 tenure track jobs in that field, and so had to make her own opportunities. Individuals can create their own jobs. There need to be courses on discovering personal mission for students and others. Dan agreed that if we follow our own paths and passions, we open ourselves up to possibilities.

**Diana N'Diaye (Smithsonian):** Is being a folklorist a skill set or a job? She thinks we need to look at it as a skill set. She just came from two conferences on intellectual property where people were talking about processes and skills that we have. We can repurpose ourselves in terms of a much larger framework with those skills.

Kurt: He was at a South African museums conference with Diana where the word folklore was used regularly in discussions of intangible heritage, you couldn't *not* use it. African museums are very new and are jumping right to the intangible, whereas our museums have focused on the tangible and are only now turning to intangible heritage. We can learn from them.

Erika: We can be folklorists without necessarily labeling ourselves that way. But we as teachers need to prepare the ground in the general environment, so people know what folklore is when a new student talks about it.

John: Our mission is to reproduce ourselves and infiltrate all the other disciplines, to rehumanize them.

### **SUMMARY SESSION: WHERE CAN WE GO FROM HERE?**

Kurt Dewhurst, Bill Ivey, Dorry Noyes, Elliott Oring, Steve Zeitlin, respondents

Bill Ivey: We organized this day in part because we see real problems in the field, we are reduced to one PhD program in the US, we need more than just fine tuning around the margins. If we are going to replicate ourselves we need a lot of hard work and deep thought. We're not as strong as we were. His interest in these issues comes from his experience; he's never had a job with folklore in the title or been at an agency with folklore in the name. But there was not a day in which his training as a folklorist didn't help him operate with a framework of how human beings behave within society, see the value of tradition and creativity, and understand how the people who talked to him were operating from their own culture and traditions. How do we get to where students say they want to be a folklorist, whatever kind of work they will end up doing? He thinks AFS can play a leading role in achieving some of these goals. There are things we have to do if the discipline is going to remain strong, we have unique things to contribute.

Steve Zeitlin: He was especially happy to have Maria-Rosario Jackson and Pat Turner here and to hear their outside views on folklorists. We need to constantly hear voices from outside the field. The academy is suffering, the public field is doing relatively well, the society is doing very

well and has a strong staff, and is willing to take responsibility for the field and willing to take it to a new place.

Dorry Noyes: "It's the network, stupid." You get yourself into a conversation by having something useful to contribute to it; then you mention by the way that you're a folklorist. We need to think about more than broadcasting folklore work outside the field: we need also to improve communication within the field, and most of all we need to integrate our segregated conversations--the ones we have with outsiders and the ones we have with each other. "The strength of weak ties" in network theory: many folklorists can bridge conversations outside the field to ones within it and vice versa. What AFS can do is make the field's learning cumulative--commission reports, synthesize research, teach. She thinks the climate actually favors us at the moment.

Kurt Dewhurst: This day-long conversation is a luxury, it is inspiring, but it should also serve as a challenge. Things he wants us to remember is that the social sector is changing radically, globalism is a reality, and there is a new kind of cultural work and cultural worker. There is a crisis in the humanities, and Research I universities are questioning the use of the humanities, so we need to find a new kind of public humanities work, we can't be complacent. Many other professional and academic organizations are having these same conversations. There are also huge changes in the structure of higher education, such things as tenure, sabbaticals, etc. Evaluation is now based on accountability and benchmarking. We need to form alliances, think creatively and positively; he liked Robert Baron's list of new ways to provide training. We look at the world differently because of our folklore training, and we have sophisticated ways of examining expressive culture, and in multiple arenas. He feels we have built an amazing set of national resources in this country—AFS, FFC, AFC. We need a friendly, nurturing, inspiring AFS.

Elliott Oring: The president of Columbia University stated, in considering the global future for the university, "The arts, humanities, and social sciences must...provide a counterbalance to the corrosive impact of globalization on local traditions. At a time when economic, political, and cultural patterns that have originated in the West are celebrated, often uncritically, as universally applicable, the arts, humanities, and social sciences can provide detailed data and informed interpretations of particular traditions that continue to shape the attitudes and behavior of billions of people the world over."

In Elliott's view, this not only sounds like a job for folklore, it sounds like the job folklore has been doing for quite some time.