



## OPENING ACCESS: Publics, Publication, and a Path to Inclusion

**BRAD WEISS**  
College of William and Mary

For many years, members of the Society for Cultural Anthropology (SCA), as well as our executive board and editors, have been interested in pursuing an open-access option for our flagship publication, *Cultural Anthropology*. The decision was not up to the SCA alone, as we are a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), which maintains a contract with Wiley-Blackwell to publish the journals of more than twenty of its sections. In August 2012, the AAA director of publications, Oona Schmid, proposed that one of the publishing sections be permitted to become open access for the duration of the Wiley-Blackwell contract, which expires in December 2017. Our board formed a task force, including some real experts on publishing and open access, and the group determined that it would be worthwhile to pursue this possibility. As it happened, we were the only AAA section that raised its hand, so we were authorized to make the transition. What you see before you is the result of the collective work of a diverse set of actors interested in producing *Cultural Anthropology* as an open-access journal.

The effort to relaunch *Cultural Anthropology* as an open-access journal is not without its difficulties. In effect, the SCA must now become a publisher, responsible for its own publishing systems, production processes, and relationships with external service providers. Among other important tasks, we must ensure that the journal will be indexed and cataloged properly, so that it can readily be found

by the many readers we know will be searching for it—connecting with new readers is, after all, the primary aim of open access. The AAA has agreed to help subsidize some of these new publication costs, but, as you might imagine, this is not an inexpensive proposition. The SCA will be diligent about evaluating the costs of open access even as we remain uncompromising in our commitment to rigorous editorial review and exceptional production quality. These have been the hallmarks of *Cultural Anthropology*, and they will remain so in the future.

A transition of this magnitude undoubtedly will bring unanticipated challenges—we look forward to them. The economic impact of open access is very difficult to gauge at this point. The SCA is fortunately well positioned to handle even major expenses in the years between now and the end of 2017. Beyond that, the SCA hopes to show that a major journal can remain viable through a combination of grants, institutional sponsorships, and, crucially, membership support. Even more important, the SCA is extremely interested in developing a model that might be taken up by other sections of the AAA, and perhaps even other scholarly societies that share our vision of the production and dissemination of knowledge. It is our sincere hope that our experiments in seeking funds, setting-up infrastructure, and arranging labor will allow us to develop a model that will move scholarly publications forward in the coming years. By giving an ever wider community of scholars greater control over their time and resources—as they provide the essays, peer reviews, and other contributions that constitute our journals—we seek to help democratize our academic institutions. This is an ambitious goal but one that we hope each of you reading the first open-access issue of *Cultural Anthropology* is as eager to pursue as we are.