REPORT OF THE AAHM PROGRAM COMMITTEE FOR THE 2008 ANNUAL MEETING IN ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

The Program Committee (hereafter PC) for the 2008 AAHM meeting in Rochester included: Alan M. Kraut, Chair, Ted Brown (Local Arrangements Committee Liaison), Florence Eliza Glaze, Ann Laberge, Howard Markel, Michael North, and Lisa Smith. The chair wishes to thank all the members of the PC for their hard work and adherence to the schedule. He also wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Walton O. Schalick III who skillfully and good-humoredly tutored him in the use of PASS and the kindness, generosity and support of former PC chairs Philip Teigen and Hughes Evans. Finally, he wishes to express his gratitude to LAC co-chairs Stephanie Brown Clark and Ted Brown for their patience, collegiality and good cheer. It has been a delight to work with them.

The PC used the Program Abstract Submission System (PASS). In addition, several AAHM members chose to submit written proposals. Several members in other countries also submitted via e-mail. All non-PASS submissions were duplicated and mailed to members of the PC.

This year's program includes 109 papers in 37 sessions. Seven luncheon sessions, Anne Harrington's Thursday evening lecture, John Parascandola's presidential address and John Harley Warner's Garrison Lecture complete the program.

Numbers of submissions and their disposition were as follows:

Submitted electronically	135
Mail and E-mail	4
TOTAL	139 (lunch + session abstracts)
Accepted	111 = 79.86%
Rejected	28 = 20.14 %
Waitlisted	5 (5 of 28 were waitlisted and 1 made the program)
Additional solicited luncheon sessions	3

Of the 139 submissions 5 were submitted as parts of panels, but per AAHM rules each paper was judged separately. It should be noted that this year's 139 submissions is down from 179 in 2006 and 215 in 2007.

The schedule followed by this year's PC was as follows:

Deadline for submission of abstracts: September 15

PC ranks abstracts: completed November 1

Sessions organized by chair: late November and early December

Notification of Acceptance and Travel Grant information: December 14

Invitations to Session Chairs: December 27

Submission of Program Copy to LAC: January 15

Rejections and Waitlist: January 23

Instructions to Chairs and Presenters: February 24

Program Content:

The chair tried to shape sessions by topic rather than chronology or geography. Sessions such as "Hospitals: Research and Care," "Alternative Therapies and Alternative Perspectives on Disease Prevention" and "Disability and Its Definitions" include papers dealing with several different eras. The goal was to create a program that reflected the broad range of interests of our membership and to schedule sessions dealing with similar topics at different times so that attendees with very specific interests were not conflicted about which session to attend. The significant number of international scholars allows for a rich comparative dimension within many of the sessions such as the session on "Public Health Campaigns" that includes papers on western Europe, Serbia, and New Zealand, or the session on "The Colonial Experience" which includes papers on Cuba, pre-1948 Palestine, and French West Africa.

There are seven luncheon sessions, three on Friday and four on Saturday. The sessions on Friday include a session featuring a discussion of cross-cultural exchanges in the neurosciences, a session describing an exciting new resource for scholars, the European Union's Archives, and a very practical panel on how to write a successful paper abstract. Saturday's offerings are equally varied and include a session on using web resources for studying 18th century Philadelphia, a session on how two distinguished journals are utilizing computer technology, a session on global health and a session on the electronic resources available for doing history of medicine as explained by several veteran librarians and archivists.

Topics for Discussion:

1) In spite of Walt Schalick's skill and good humor in assisting the PC chair in the use of PASS, it is a cumbersome system that continues to have formatting problems and a variety of quirks large and small that suggest the need for an improved system.

2) Although only one paper per submitter can be accepted, multiple authored papers raise issues of fairness and multiple submissions cause confusion. In the future it might be wise to limit paper submissions to one per author (which would include papers where the author is one of several).

3) Perhaps the greatest need is for the AAHM to employ a staff person to handle the routine but abundant e-mail traffic that is generated by the program process. While it is quite necessary and appropriate to place abstract vetting and program construction in the hands of scholars, most scholars do not have staffs to assist in responding to all the inquiries, requests, and complaints from presenters and moderators that beset the PC and its chair. It is this endless stream of detail and e-mail that make the task of program chair so time-consuming. The AAHM truly needs to hire full or part-time clerical help to assist.

4) This PC chair agrees with previous program chairs who have called for a system whereby individuals wishing to moderate sessions could volunteer through the AAHM website. Such a system would alleviate the time-consuming process of PC chair's soliciting colleagues to serve as panel chairs.

In conclusion, this PC chair believes that the PC is presenting to the AAHM a diverse and intellectually stimulating program in 2008. For me personally it has been an honor and a distinct pleasure to serve the AAHM as Program Chair this year and to collaborate with an array of such hard-working and good-spirited colleagues.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan M. Kraut, Ph.D.

Program Committee Chair