Mirra Komarovsky (1907-1999)
Old World Grace and New World Ideas

by Jonathan Rieder, Chair
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When Mirra Komarovsky died on January 30, Barnard lost more than a beloved colleague who could boast three quarters of a century connection with the college. We lost a totem of the institution itself, the emblem of its sacred values.

Mirra was born in Russia in Baku, in 1905, into an upper-middle class Jewish family that prized the life of the mind, for women no less than men. In 1922, in the wake of anti-Semitism and Bolshevnik efforts to exterminate the middle class, her family fled Azerbaijan for Wichita, of all places. After a brief stint in the heartland, she moved to New York.

Mirra came to Barnard in 1923 and never really left. She studied with Boas, Ruth Benedict, and William Ogburn. When she was a senior, Ogburn asked her about her plans; she told him she wanted to teach college sociology. He countered, “Not a realistic plan: You are wanted to teach college sociology. He

Undeterred, Mirra began teaching as an instructor at Barnard in the mid-1930s, received her PhD from Columbia in 1940, and was soon a full-time member of the Barnard faculty. She flourished under the reign of Mildred MacIntosh, whom she credited as an exuberant champion of female intellect.

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Mirra chaired the department for 17 years, retiring in 1970, only to return as

Section Journals Now Possible
Council Approves New Guidelines for Establishing and Retaining ASA Journals

ASA Council approved new guidelines for the ASA publications portfolio at its February 1999 meeting. The guidelines were prepared after almost a year of study by the Committee on Publications and review from the “seated” journal editors. In approving these guidelines, Council voiced its enthusiasm about establishing a process that would support and encourage a dynamic publications portfolio at ASA.

One aspect of the guidelines relates to the possible adoption of journals by an ASA section or sections. In 1997-98, the Committee on Sections undertook an extensive review of section guidelines recommending a number of changes including lifting the constraints on sections potentially publishing journals under their aegis. In August 1998, Council approved the final language for the Manual on Sections. As stated in the Manual:

The Association encourages innovation by sections consonant with the Association’s publication policies and procedures and the Association’s overall publication objectives. Publication ideas from sections for journals, annuals, or other periodicals (whether print or electronic) should be brought to

the ASA Publications Committee for review and recommendation to ASA Council. Based on the recommendation from the ASA Publications Committee, the ASA Council may determine to pursue idea as an ASA-wide publication or will advise the section whether it may pursue a publication prospect and, if so, under what circumstances.

When the Committee on Publications began the task of developing guidelines, it was with benefit of the knowledge that new guidelines would need to be framed to guide sections in potentially considering journal publications. Also, at this same time, several sections, learning of the Association’s more flexible policy, approached the Publications Committee about how to develop such proposals.

The guidelines set forth the substance and procedures for evaluating proposals for either new Association-wide journals or for ASA section journals, and for evaluating the ongoing viability of existing ASA-wide and section-sponsored journals. The preamble to the guidelines makes clear the ambition and orientation of the Publications Committee and of Council in adopting this new framework. As specified in the preamble:

...[the guidelines] are designed to guarantee the ongoing vitality of ASA’s publications program by ensuring that the range and quality of journals that the Association owns and supports over time are publications of the highest quality and cover the full intellectual range of the discipline. In considering the establishment of new journals or the retirement of ongoing journals, the Publications Committee and Council anticipates giving careful attention to the role of each journal in the Association’s publication portfolio.

“Having guidelines in place to shape the ASA publications portfolio sends an important signal to ASA members and the discipline,” said Executive Officer Levine. “No priority is higher than the role of ASA as publisher, and we need a process that ensures the health, well-being, intellectual exchange, and excellence of this program now and for the future. This means over time creative development of our publication program.” The new ASA “Perspectives” journal launched by Council in August 1998 is another indicator that the Association is looking ahead.

1999 Annual Meeting
Chicago With Kids

Fifth in a series of articles in anticipation of the 1999 ASA Annual Meeting in Chicago

Chicago, 12th street beach.

Along with the fountain, Grant Park boasts diverse musical concerts and food fests with the kind of spontaneous activity and beautiful grounds that say “Summer” in the City by the Lake. The Park also serves as the main pedestrian thoroughfare for destinations such as Lake Michigan’s waterfront. Directly east of the Park, for instance, you can rent rollerblades and bicycles for the 30-plus miles of bike trails that run alongside the Lake.

Heading south on the east side of the Park is the stunning and most excellent Shedd Aquarium, with a remarkable oceanarium for Northwest Pacific sea mammals. Brush up on your Raffi for we hope to have healthy baby Belugas by the time of our meetings. Continue south and out onto a small peninsula for the recently renovated Adler Planetarium. Older parts definitely are for patient readers, but the newly added top floor has some exciting exhibits that the young ones will enjoy. And everyone loves the domed StarRider Theatre shows, even the tired parents and babies who frequently fall asleep during them. Just to the south is the family-friendly and newly restored 12th Street beach. In August, the water temperature should be fine. The kids will like it, anyway; especially if you remember to bring along a (space ice) bucket and spoon/shovel. Flight fanciers will relish the planes and helicopters that fly overhead. Meigs Field is right next door—a remarkable small craft airport on the Lake that hosts our famous summer Fly-In.

The Field Museum of Natural History with its utterly exhaustive collection is at the south end of the Park. It includes a dynamite new exhibit on dinosaurs (home of the world’s largest T-Rex and a lab in the lobby where fossils are restored), traditional taudierum’s contributions, an awesome exhibit on Northwest Pacific culture, an Egyptian exhibit ("real live mummies") and a great deal of Margaret Mead’s collection, to name a few. Behind this museum, farther to the south, is Soldier Field stadium. Here you...