Anniversaries evoke reminiscences. For organizations, they present opportune moments for building institutional memory. In that spirit, I offer the following few reflections of my term as journal editor.

For much of that period, it seemed unlikely that *City & Society* would live long and prosper. In the 1990s, the journal fell on hard times. SUA (Society for Urban Anthropology, SUNTA’s Predecessor) had initiated the publication with the aid of a time-limited seed grant from the AAA. It was understood that the unit needed time to develop a membership base that would be large enough to underwrite a regular publication. In turn, the fledgling journal would comprise a benefit of SUA membership, making the unit more attractive. Shortly after I began my tenure as editor (1990–1994) the subvention period ended. Under then-President Walter Zenner, and with the generous assistance of Robert Van Kemper, we began an active membership campaign. Despite the effort to increase awareness and interest, our roster did not expand enough to compensate for the loss of sponsorship. Indeed, our student membership was disproportionately high, a much appreciated circumstance that was intellectually promising for the future but limited in its material capacity to get us there.

Disappointed, and with bankruptcy looming, the adventure continued. We soon altered our course diametrically, adopting a belt-tightening survival strategy. The AAA had been providing professional copy-proofing, page layout, and printing services. By 1993, it was clear that we could not afford the cost of these services, and we thus began to investigate other options. Specifically—and perhaps naively, for those of us who harbor pretensions of political-economic savvy—we sought more economical price quotations from small, independent publishing houses.
houses. Since SUA was a unit of the AAA, however, its journal was an AAA journal, giving the Association the right to maintain quality control by managing the publication process. That is, SUA would not be permitted to outsource. Thus, no issues were published in 1993.

City & Society was saved through negotiations, between the journal’s executive and the AAA’s production management, that devised a route around the impasse: SUA would produce, under its established publication title, not a journal but, rather, an “annual review.” This reconceptualization would free City & Society of the costly constraints governing AAA journal production. In effect, that is how, in the interest of cost efficiency, a computer goof took one short step toward becoming a computer geek. That is, armed with desktop publishing software (from my editorial budget), a color monitor (from a supportive dean), and patient assistance (from my husband), I began my fortunately short-lived career in production editing.

City & Society’s woes were a mere microcosm of a much larger economic downturn, of course. The great Post-War period of economic expansion that had driven growth in post-secondary education was over. The late baby boomers who had followed the GIs into college and university classrooms had reached the age of matriculation by about 1980. During the age of Aquarius—an era of rights and radicalism conducive to studies in anthropology—early baby boomers cornered the market on academic appointments. Post-graduates were being warned about poor job prospects in the academy. At the same time, neo-liberal fiscal policies were causing contraction in the budgets of many public institutions, including educational ones. Many college and university libraries were more likely to drop than add to new journal subscriptions, and many of us had fewer “professional development” dollars to spend on scholarly publications. In short, City & Society was struggling through inauspicious times.

At an intermediate level, disciplinary dynamics seem to have played a role in the tribulations of the unit and its journal. The very notion of “urban” anthropology has been unclear. It can be understood in (at least) two ways: as anthropology in the city or as anthropology of the city. The former is the older of the two, despite early exceptions (like some of the work by Redfield or Miner) that suggest the contrary. From the 1960s onward—for a variety of reasons, practical, political, theoretical—more and more sociocultural anthropologists were choosing urban field sites. In fact, Alvin Wolfe, a founder and first editor of the journal, was one of them. From 1966 to 1968, with a major grant from the Office of Economic Opportunity, he directed a team of young researchers (including me) studying “Adaptations of Urban White Families to Poverty.” Situated in a neighborhood of south St. Louis, the project’s focus was on how rural migrants coped with change and struggled toward the American Dream. The city here was context; it represented conditions; it served not as object but as field. Besides
demonstrating anthropology’s “real-world” relevancy, urban sites also accentuated the discipline’s growing awareness of superlocal forces and, in turn, its sensitivity to victim-blaming orientations. While I was not party to naming the publication, I suspect that—beyond the fact that Urban Anthropology had been trademarked by Jack Rollwagen in 1971—this perspective was implicated in the choice, “City and Society.” That was the title’s signification, for me at least. But, it was less than universally shared: I recall, in fact, the surprise expressed by a much younger colleague whom I invited to submit a paper on gender issues among women in an urban setting. (In fact, Urban Anthropology had gone further in acknowledging a macro-systems perspective by adopting, as its subtitle “Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development.”)

In title, City & Society connoted both major forms of “urban anthropology.” The abstract image on the cover of its early issues seemed less encompassing. To my eye, clusters of vertical lines of differing heights signified the second form of urban anthropology, the anthropology of the city. While a few papers focused on the nature of the city, anthropologists have never been especially adept at analyzing large-scale sociopolitical structures. Others featured particularly urban institutions, like transportation infrastructure or condominium living. The anthropology of “space and place” was, also, blossoming as a specialty at this time.

Upon accepting the editorship, I took advice from a respected and more senior colleague, who commiserated with me—editing is in many ways a thankless job—but pointed out the authority invested in the role. That is, editors have the ability to steer, to set directions for their publications. For better or for worse, and for two reasons, I opted against privileging either form of urban anthropology. Ideologically, I saw it as my duty to accommodate the membership as fully as possible, irrespective of my own intellectual leanings. From the start, City & Society’s official editorial policy was a broad one. On a practical note, that orientation made it easier to maintain quality standards. I never wanted for submissions, or felt pressed to compromise reviews, or was tempted to seek lenient referees.

It was after my time in office that the unit expanded its name, signaling the breadth of its mandate and the discipline’s ever-growing cognizance of systems integration. At the same time (in 1998, just before the return to bi-annual status), the old, abstract, cover image was abandoned. With each new issue, we are presented with a unique photograph of urban places and people, signifying that the journal speaks to the heart of our discipline, the study of humanity in whatever form. As I receive each new issue—with articles that transcend that rough-and-ready dichotomy between in and of—I am pleased that the journal has survived and is prospering. May hard times come again no more!