



## Physical Anthropology Section – 2003

---

### H51 Supply and Demand: Trends and Training in Forensic Anthropology

*Joanne L. Devlin, PhD\*, and Michelle D. Hamilton, MA, Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, 250 South Stadium Hall, Knoxville, TN*

This presentation will address patterns in forensic anthropology casework over the last decade and reflect on training programs.

The year 2001 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Physical Anthropology section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, and the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology. A review of the past three decades since Forensic Anthropology was accepted within the Academy shows the evolution of the discipline, with key advancements in analytical techniques, and a new and increasing popularity of the field in both academic and popular arenas.

The 1970s were characterized by the development and refinement of approaches to determine the age, sex and ancestry of decedents. The following decade saw an increase in the application of these techniques, as forensic anthropologists became integral players in the medico-legal field. During this time several universities created and supported centers that specialized in the training of future section members. The 1990's reflected an ever-increasing commercial popularity of the field, coupled with a reduction in the influence of major research universities.

A presentation in 1994 at the Academy meetings in San Antonio recorded the patterns in casework during the 1980s at The University of Tennessee Knoxville. During that decade, the number of cases steadily increased with a large percentage involving field recovery by forensic anthropologists. A review of cases in the 1990s demonstrates a reversal in this trend, with fewer requests for field assistance in the latter half of the 1990s. The majority of cases during that period were conducted at the request of the medical examiner within the morgue setting, reflecting a change in the focus of cases from field recovery to morgue-based analyses.

To investigate whether this trend is a Knoxville phenomenon or a pattern noted by other anthropologists as well, a questionnaire was distributed to members and diplomates. The focus of the questionnaire was twofold: to ascertain patterns in casework and to address the issue of training. Specifically, respondents were asked about the nature of their casework, including whether the majority of cases were field recoveries by anthropologists, cases transported to the anthropologist by law enforcement personnel, or medical examiner requests. An additional line of inquiry addressed what training these members and diplomates provide to students, law enforcement agents, and the general public in the form of classes, short courses, seminars, or field schools.

This presentation will discuss the results of these questionnaires, and trends and patterns in case work during the three decades of the Physical Anthropology section will be reviewed. The information provided will illuminate the new and changing role of the forensic anthropologist in the medico-legal setting, and may help to better train members of the agencies forensic anthropologists interact with.

**Forensic Anthropology, Case Reviews, Training Programs**