

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 22 – 24, 2014
Chicago, Illinois**

**Discussion: Code of Conduct for SAA Annual Meetings,
SAA-Sponsored Events, and Online SAA Spaces
(Prepared by Terry Baxter, Lisa Mangiafico,
Mark Matienzo, and Rebecca Goldman)**

BACKGROUND

The idea of creating a code of conduct or anti-harassment policy was submitted to the January 2014 SAA Council meeting for discussion by SAA members Mark Matienzo and Rebecca Goldman (see 0114-III-D). Their petition asked the Council to consider drafting a code of conduct for SAA events and online spaces. The intent of a code of conduct is to increase the diversity of participation in SAA events by encouraging open and safe places for members to meet.

The SAA Council discussed this petition and instructed Council members Terry Baxter and Lisa Mangiafico to work with Mark and Rebecca and SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont to develop a draft code of conduct for discussion at its May 2014 meeting.

DISCUSSION

The ability of SAA members to participate fully in the various events and forums that SAA hosts is a key component in the Society's diversity and inclusion efforts. Members who feel unwelcome, unsafe, constrained, or silenced are not able to participate fully (or even at all) in SAA.

The draft anti-harassment policy presented in the Appendix is intended to provide a way for members to report harassment with the expectation of some sort of resolution. This is not the only way in which SAA could approach member concerns. At the January 2014 Council meeting, some Council members expressed the opinion that a code of conduct/anti-harassment policy is a "solution looking for a problem" and that SAA's Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy is sufficient protection for members. Also expressed was the concern that by having a policy on the books, SAA would open itself up to legal liabilities if it could not guarantee a harassment-free environment, and that the Society would be better off not having a policy than having one it couldn't enforce.

Both in casual research into the issue and in conversations with a wide variety of colleagues, it would seem that Nicholas Schiller gets it accurately when he writes:

This harassment is not visible to those not targeted by it. It is easy to ignore what we do not see. Responses to the panel included many library technology women sharing their experiences and commenting that it was good to hear others' stories. Even though the experience of workplace harassment was common, those who spoke of it reported feelings of isolation. While legislation and human resources policies clearly state harassment is unacceptable and unlawful, it still happens and when it happens the target can be isolated by the experience. (<http://acrl.ala.org/techconnect/?p=3985>)

Andromeda Yelton lists the following benefits to an anti-harassment policy:

- Clarifying expectations, hence reducing bad behavior by well-intentioned people who simply don't know the local norms.
- Encouraging targets of harassment to report incidents and seek help.
- Empowering bystanders to step in if problems develop.
- Assisting conference staff in resolving incidents.
- Advertising to the world that this organization values safe spaces for, and participation from, diverse attendees at its conferences.

(<http://lj.libraryjournal.com/2014/01/opinion/backtalk/why-ala-needs-a-code-of-conduct-backtalk/>)

The proposed policy is not intended to solve all problems nor will it guarantee a harassment-free environment in SAA events and online spaces. What it does attempt to do is let our members know that SAA is creating a culture of concern, a place where members can participate freely in professional and social interaction knowing that harassment is not part of that culture and will be opposed by all members of the SAA community. It puts our organization on record as being on the right side of this issue.

This will place a burden on staff, especially the Executive Director. She has reviewed the draft policy and finds it acceptable as it stands. There will also be some training required for SAA staff members related to responding to reports of harassment.

We propose that the Council discuss the draft as well as the questions for discussion below and that, if the Council chooses to proceed, the draft be fielded for member comment followed by a Council vote.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is a code of conduct/anti-harassment policy a reasonable mechanism for protecting and expanding diverse participation in SAA's events and online spaces?
2. If so, what is the best method for ensuring that this policy represents both the Council's and staff's intentions as well as member needs and concerns?

DRAFT: SAA Anti-Harassment Policy¹

In keeping with the core principles stated in its “Code of Ethics for Archivists”² and “Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy,”³ the Society of American Archivists is committed to providing a harassment-free environment for its members and others who participate in its conferences, events, meetings, and online spaces, regardless of age, color, creed, disability, family relationship, gender identity/expression, individual life style, marital status, national origin, physical appearance, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. SAA does not tolerate harassment in any form.

Harassment may include offensive verbal comments and/or discriminatory images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, unwelcome following, harassing photography or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

Conference, event, meeting, and online participants who are asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. Those who violate these rules may be expelled from the conference, event, or meeting at the discretion of the organizers or denied access to the online space at the discretion of the administrator.

If you feel that you are in immediate danger at any time during an SAA Annual Meeting or event, contact law enforcement (by dialing 911) or the facility front desk without delay. If you are not in immediate danger but feel that you are being harassed or that someone else is being harassed, or if you have other concerns, please contact the SAA Executive Director immediately.

At the SAA Annual Meeting: Go to the Onsite Registration Desk and ask the SAA staff member there to contact the Executive Director. You may be asked for a cell phone number at which the Executive Director can reach you.

At Other SAA Events/Meetings: Discuss your concerns with the presiding officer or instructor and/or contact the SAA Executive Director at 866-722-7858 or nbeaumont@archivists.org.

In SAA Online Spaces: Contact the administrator or the SAA Executive Director.

¹ This policy is based on *US OpenGLAM Friendly Space Policy* (https://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/US_OpenGLAM_Launch/Friendly_space_policy), which in turn is based on the *Geek Feminism Wiki sample policy* (http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Conference_anti-harassment_policy).

² See <http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>, and particularly “Archivists cooperate and collaborate with other archivists, and respect them and their institutions’ missions and collecting policies. In their professional relationships with donors, records creators, users, and colleagues, archivists are honest, fair, collegial, and equitable.”

³ See http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/appendices/app_a/EONDP.

Content presented at SAA conferences or meetings or online may at times deal with sensitive subject matter, ranging from visually sensitive historical material (such as images related to acts of genocide) to sexually explicit language or images (such as in archival letters, nude photographs, or film or audio recordings). This policy is not intended to constrain scholarly or professional presentation, discourse, or debate, as long as these exchanges are conducted in a respectful manner.