

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 11-12, 2014
Washington, DC**

**Standards Committee: Review of
Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives
(Prepared by Standards Committee Member Trevor Thornton and
Committee Co-Chairs Lisa Miller and Dan Santamaria)**

Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives is a set of suggested guidelines for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers. The guidelines were prepared by SAA Council members based on Council discussions, subsequent feedback by SAA members, and review by legal counsel. It is a companion to *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*, which was approved by the Council in January 2014.

BACKGROUND

Issues related to new archives professionals, employment, compensation, and archival education have been widely discussed by SAA members via formal and informal channels during the past several years. Many of these discussions are summarized in the January 2014 Council agenda item for the *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*. (See <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0114-III-C-StdsComm-BestPractices-Internships-Final.pdf>.) In particular, SAA members have voiced concerns about the possible misuse of volunteers, especially of volunteer graduate students or new archives professionals. The issuing of the joint SAA-NARA publication *Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives* in 2012 was a particular flashpoint for some people holding these views and prompted criticism of SAA among some members.

In response to these discussions the SAA Council developed the *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education* in early 2014. Member comments during the review period for the internship best practices suggested other topics that might be addressed within the best practices document, including unpaid internships, under-graduate internships, and use of volunteers. The drafting group determined that, given the complicated nature of these situations, there should be an effort to address the issues of undergraduate internships and use of volunteers separately and directly.

These guidelines are intended to provide guidance to archives organizations on the use of volunteers. The initial draft of these guidelines was prepared by a subgroup of the SAA Council based on Council discussions in September 2013 and January 2014 and in response to member feedback. It was presented to the Council by email in March 2014 and, following feedback from

the Council, the draft was distributed to selected SAA component groups for initial comment in April 2014. A second draft was prepared and made available for public comment on the SAA website in May 2014. After consideration of members' comments and incorporation of changes recommended by SAA's legal counsel, a final draft was prepared and submitted to the Standards Committee in June 2014.

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee is recommending that this document be adopted. These guidelines are intended to complement *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education* and describe the function of volunteers as distinct from that of paid staff – and particularly from new professionals and students, for whom volunteering in archives and historical societies provides experience that may be viewed positively by prospective employers. The current guidelines serve to clearly define the relationship between volunteers and archival organizations in order to provide a more positive and rewarding experience for all parties.

In order to be relevant to the widest variety of archives organization, these guidelines are not overly prescriptive but rather outline general principles that should govern the use of volunteers. This satisfies the concerns of members that the guidelines should not place an undue burden on small or community-based organizations that are run by volunteers, while balancing the need to ensure that volunteers do not displace paid staff. The guidelines recommend compliance with applicable legislation or bargaining agreements governing volunteer activities, where such exist. They also stress the need for equitable practices in recruiting and working with volunteers and for providing a safe work environment.

In addition to concerns about volunteers displacing paid staff, members also expressed concern that the work done by volunteers might not comply with accepted professional practices and thereby undermine the integrity of the profession. The guidelines address this issue by recommending that professional staff provide training, oversight, and regular review of the work done by volunteers.

In terms of procedures, the Standards Committee thought the consultation process was solid and well documented, and the submitters incorporated the many comments received on the draft into a final, stronger version.

The package submitted to the Standards Committee does not address section III.B.4. Maintenance and Review Plan. We suggest that the Council consider a review cycle for this best practices document of 3 years. This matches the 3-year review cycle that the Council set for *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*.

Soliciting feedback prior to submitting “Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives” for approval was important, given the charged nature of some of the discussions surrounding these issues. It would likely be beneficial for the Council to publish summary information about the feedback received from component groups and members. Because the package submitted to the Standards Committee was very thorough, much of that information could be summarized and repurposed to

make the process transparent to members. Alternatively, a link could be provided to the package submitted to the Standards Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* (Appendix A) be adopted;

THAT the review period for *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* be set at three years; and

THAT summary information on the solicitation of comments and responses to *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* (see Appendix B) be made available with the document for the purpose of providing context.

Support Statement: *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* provides basic guidance for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers to ensure a positive and productive experience for all parties involved. As a complement to *Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*, this document provides a necessary and appropriate context for volunteers as distinct from student interns and distinguishes the work of volunteers from that of paid staff.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* assists in achieving portions of all four of SAA's Goals as stated in the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. The clear statement that "volunteers should not replace or displace paid employees in the course of normal business" contributes to achievement of Goal 1 ("advocating for archives and archivists"). The guidelines were developed in response to member comments, notably those representing small organizations, thus contributing to Goal 4 ("meeting members' needs"). Issues of privilege have been prominent in the discussions noted above, particularly the realization that in many cases people experiencing various socio-economic circumstances cannot afford to volunteer to gain archival experience. The statement that "volunteers should not replace or displace paid employees" is a step toward addressing Strategy 4.3 ("Continue to enrich the association and the profession with greater diversity in membership....").

Fiscal Impact: None.

Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Prepared and submitted by the SAA Council, June 2014

Best Practices for Volunteers is a set of suggested guidelines for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers. The best practices may also be of interest to individuals who are considering volunteer work in an archives institution or organization. *Best Practices for Volunteers* includes the following sections: Background; Introduction; Recommendations; and Additional Resources. It is a companion to [*Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Education*](#).

INTRODUCTION

Some 65 million people volunteer each year in the United States.¹ Volunteers may provide unpaid, charitable assistance to nonprofit cultural organizations or public institutions with responsibilities for archives. In turn, voluntary service provides volunteers with valuable experiences and personal satisfaction. Individuals who volunteer their time and expertise provide important services that help further an organization's mission and ensure the survival of and access to our nation's heritage. Volunteers can be essential to community-based archives that help ensure the diversity of our historical record. There are community-based historical organizations whose doors would close without the support of local volunteers. Volunteer opportunities help increase community involvement in and support for an organization and the archival enterprise. There are also online opportunities for volunteers to assist in increasing access to the archival record. Volunteers require a significant commitment on the part of the hosting institution, however, as organizations must invest a great deal of staff time and expertise in creating and managing a volunteer program.

SAA members have voiced concerns about the possible misuse of volunteers, especially of volunteer graduate students or new archives professionals. In lean economic times, some institutions might be tempted to turn to skilled but unpaid volunteers to get work accomplished. These best practices recognize that there is an important role for volunteers in the preservation, use, and appreciation of our cultural heritage, but also caution institutions against using volunteers as substitutes for the knowledge and skills of fairly compensated, professional archivists. Volunteers must enhance, not depreciate, the value of professional archival work. Similarly, in a competitive job market, new professionals and graduate students may seek volunteer work to gain additional professional experience. In these situations, it may be more appropriate to define an internship and clarify expectations about learning outcomes. Volunteers are distinct from interns. An internship is an educational experience designed to benefit the intern and is under the mentorship of a professional. SAA has also provided [*Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education*](#).² A volunteer offers

¹ In the United States, about 64.5 million people (about 1/5 the population) volunteered for an organization at least once between Sept 2011 - Sept 2012. For more information, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics report on "Volunteering in the United States in 2012" at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>.

² "Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education," Society of American Archivists (2014). Available at <http://www2.archivists.org/standards/best-practices-for-internships-as-a-component-of-graduate-archival-education>

service for a civic, charitable, religious, or humanitarian purpose without any promise or expectation of compensation or reward.

These guidelines are intended for institutions that employ archivists and also use volunteers. Some recommendations may not be applicable to smaller archives or historical societies that are sustained exclusively by volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For institutions that employ archivists but seek additional volunteer assistance, SAA recommends the following best practices:

1. Organizations should be aware of and follow all applicable labor laws, regulations, and bargaining agreements governing volunteer activities.³
2. Individuals may volunteer their services to public institutions or religious, charitable or similar non-profit organizations, “usually on a part-time basis, for public service, religious, or humanitarian objectives.” Individuals should not serve as volunteers to for-profit, private sector institutions.⁴
3. Volunteers should not replace or displace paid employees in the course of normal business.⁵ Volunteers should support and augment the work of paid employees.
4. Volunteers should volunteer their services freely, without pressure, coercion, or promise of compensation or future employment.
5. To ensure success, an institution should ensure that volunteers have adequate training and supervision and have access to a designated staff member for questions. Volunteer work should be evaluated periodically by a designated staff member and volunteers should receive feedback about their contributions.

³ The U.S. Department of Labor has provided online resources to clarify the definition of volunteer work under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). See the U.S. Dept. of Labor, FLSA Advisor on Volunteers at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>. Several opinions offered by the Wage and Hour Division provide further guidance, for example: “**In determining whether a particular activity involves ‘ordinary volunteerism,’ the Department considers a variety of factors, including the nature of the entity receiving the services, the receipt by the worker (or expectation thereof) of any benefits from those for whom the services are performed, whether the activity is less than a full-time occupation, whether regular employees are displaced, whether the services are offered freely without pressure or coercion, and whether the services are of the kind typically associated with volunteer work.**” (FLSA2001-18 at http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/FLSA/2001/2001_07_31_18_FLSA.htm)

State laws, institutional policies, and bargaining contracts may also apply to volunteer labor in certain contexts.

⁴ See the U.S. Dept. of Labor, FLSA Advisor on Volunteers, at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>.

⁵ See, for example, FLSA2002-9 at http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/FLSA/2002/2002_10_07_9_FLSA.htm: “**The Wage and Hour Division has recognized that a person may volunteer time to religious, charitable, civic, humanitarian, or similar non-profit organizations as a public service and not be covered by the FLSA. ... Typically, such volunteers serve on a part-time basis and do not displace regular employed workers or perform work that would otherwise be performed by regular employees.**”

6. Organizations should consider developing written policies and procedures for volunteers so they know what is expected of them. This documentation might include position descriptions, tasks and instructions, professional ethics and standards, expectations for confidentiality, required qualifications, preferred schedules, and expected time commitments.⁶ Organizations should also consider keeping records about the number of volunteers and the number of hours contributed.
7. Organizations should provide a safe work environment for volunteers. When feasible, organizations should consider liability insurance to cover volunteers, or investigate options for protecting the volunteer and the organization from risks.
8. Organizations should recruit, interview, and screen volunteers in equitable, nondiscriminatory ways that respect the diversity of their communities and ensure protection of their communities' historical assets. Volunteers and organizations should share responsibility for ensuring that their expectations about the volunteer experience are compatible.
9. An equitable procedure should be followed to resolve conflicts with volunteers or when a volunteer is asked to leave.
10. Organizations should strive to give volunteers a satisfying experience. An organization should consider ways to recognize or celebrate the important contributions of its volunteers.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

“Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives.” National Archives and Records Administration and the Society of American Archivists (2012). Available at http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources_for_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf. This publication contains valuable information and tools, but does not fully consider the ethical and legal contexts of volunteer activities.

“Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs in Museums,” American Association of Museum Volunteers. (Revised May 2012). Available at <http://web.archive.org/web/20130205020010/http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>.

National Park Service Director's Order #17: Volunteers in Parks
<http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DO-7.htm>.

“Advice for Volunteers,” RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Available at <http://www.servicleader.org/volunteers/advice>.

⁶ *Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives*, compiled by the National Archives and Records Administration and published by SAA in 2012, provides some examples. See http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources_for_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf

“Volunteer resource management: What is it and how is it done?” RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Available at <http://www.serviceleader.org/leaders>.

Herman, Melanie Lockwood, “Employee or Volunteer: What’s the Difference?” Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Available at http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/employee_or_volunteer.shtml.

“Need to Know Basics of Managing Volunteers.” Volunteer Maine: Maine Commission for Volunteer Service (2008). http://www.volunteermaine.org/shared_media/publications/old/E245B0A4d01.pdf.

“Best Practices for Volunteer Management Professionals,” Action Without Borders/Idealist.org. Available at <http://www.idealists.org/info/VolunteerMgmt/Best>.

“Volunteer Management Resource Library,” Energize, Inc. Available at <http://www.energizeinc.com/art.html>.

Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives Supplementary Material

Prepared and submitted by the SAA Council, June 2014

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Introductory Narrative

Best Practices for Volunteers is a set of suggested guidelines for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers. The best practices may also be of interest to individuals who are considering volunteer work in an archives institution or organization. *Best Practices for Volunteers* includes the following sections: Background; Introduction; Recommendations; and Additional Resources. It is a companion to [*Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Education*](#).

The document was drafted by a subgroup of the SAA Council based on Council discussions in September 2013 and January 2014 and in response to member feedback. It was presented to Council by email in March 2014, and after feedback from Council, the draft was distributed to selected SAA component groups for initial comment between April 4-21, 2014.

Approximately 50 comments were received on the first draft. The majority of comments suggested other topics that might be addressed within the best practices document, including differentiating between larger institutions and those organizations which rely primarily on volunteers; developing more specific language in regards to volunteers not doing the work of paid staff; stating the difference between interns and volunteers; revising the language regarding voluntary work must be voluntary (and not coerced); fixing the links to various urls; expanding the categories of volunteers; and developing additional resources.

The drafting group considered all the comments received, coming to consensus on the following major revisions:

- 1) Stating the applicability of these guidelines for larger institutions with paid staff as opposed to smaller institutions who rely on volunteers to function;
- 2) Providing definitions of interns compared to volunteers;
- 3) Being more specific about volunteers not permanently replacing paid staff;
- 4) Adding language regarding voluntary work not being coerced; and
- 5) Removing examples of unacceptable volunteer examples, and focusing on the positive examples instead.

Several comments requested additional specific information on community service in archives for offenders, recommendations for advertising for volunteers, and aligning volunteer opportunities more clearly with lifelong learning. The drafting group chose to emphasize broad parameters applicable to a wide variety of institutional differences and to add additional resources for further information about implementing or managing a volunteer program.

A second draft was made available for public comment on the Society of American Archivists' web site between May 1-21, 2014. Nine comments were received. The comments were more positive, but some commenters suggested revisions to recommendations 3, 6, 7, and 9. The drafting group addressed these by adding language about not replacing volunteers in the "normal course of business;" encouraging organizations to inform volunteers about professional ethics and standards, such as confidentiality or privacy; recommending that organizations carry liability insurance to cover volunteers only when feasible or that organizations consider other options for

reducing risk; and replacing mention of grievance procedures with processes for resolving conflict. One commenter suggested that we encourage use of retirees, but another suggested that using retirees was problematic; the drafting group decided that the guidelines could apply to retirees without explicit mention. One commenter suggested that we emphasize the amount of work required to manage volunteers, so a sentence was added to the first paragraph. Two commenters also suggested revisions to example 4, so the drafters revised the language to emphasize that volunteers should assist a professional archivist with processing.

The drafting subgroup then had SAA's legal counsel review the document. Based on this feedback, the examples were removed because, when read on their own, could be construed as employment relationships.

The Council submits these Guidelines to the Standards Committee to review in hopes that Council may review the recommendation at the August 2014 meeting.

Call for Comments on the Second Draft

Presented on the SAA Website, May 1-21, 2014



The screenshot shows the top navigation bar of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) website. The logo is on the left, and the navigation menu includes: Home, The Archives Profession, About Us, Education & Events, and Publications. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: Home » About Us » News & Press Releases » 2014 » Call For Member Comment: Best Practices For Volunteers. The main heading is "Call for Member Comment: Best Practices for Volunteers". The text below the heading describes the document's purpose as a set of suggested guidelines for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers. It mentions that the document was drafted by a subgroup of the SAA Council based on Council discussions in September 2013 and January 2014, and in response to member feedback. After feedback from the Council in March, it was distributed to selected component groups for initial comment from April 4 to 21, 2014. More than 50 comments were received, and the draft was revised. The revised draft is now available for public comment on SAA's website. The call for comment will also be distributed via discussion lists, *In the Loop*, and social media feeds. Comments will be received through May 21, 2014. This current draft and additional comments will be reviewed again at the May Council meeting (May 22-24). After this draft is revised based on member and Council feedback, it will be submitted to the SAA Standards Committee in June 2014. In addition, the document will be reviewed by legal counsel to ensure that it provides accurate information that is consistent with federal law. The Council will review the Standards Committee's recommendation at its August 2014 meeting. A note at the bottom of the text says: "To comment on this draft: Log in to post comments publicly to the website or send an email message containing your comments to saahq@archivists.org. The deadline for final comments on this revised draft is 5:00 pm Central time on May 21, 2014." Below the text is a link: "Download *Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives* (PDF)".

This call for comments was also distributed to the SAA Leaders Listserv on May 2, and the leaders were asked to distribute to their component groups.

The call for comments was also published *In the Loop* on May 14, 2014.

This document and all of the received comments were discussed at the May Council Meeting on May 23, 2014.

Second Draft as Presented for Member Comment

Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

May 1, 2014

Timeline for review and comment:

- April 4 - 21, 2014: First draft distributed to selected SAA component groups (boards, committees, working groups, sections, and roundtables) for comment.
- May 1 - 21, 2014: Revised draft posted to SAA website for member comment.
- May 22 - 24, 2014: Revised draft and member comments discussed at Council meeting.
- Before June 20, 2014: Final draft shared with Standards Committee.
- Before July 14, 2014: Standards Committee makes recommendation to August 11 Council meeting.

To comment on this draft: Post comments publicly to the website or send an email message containing your comments to saahq@archivists.org. The deadline for final comments on this revised draft is 5:00 pm Central time on May 21, 2014.

SECOND DRAFT: Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

BACKGROUND

Best Practices for Volunteers is a set of suggested guidelines for archives institutions and organizations about the use of volunteers. It is a companion to [Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education](#).

The document was drafted by a subgroup of the SAA Council based on the Council's discussions in September 2013 and January 2014 and in response to member feedback. After feedback from the Council in March, it was distributed to selected component groups for initial comment from April 4 to 21, 2014.

Approximately 50 comments were received (as of 4/24/14). The majority of comments suggested other topics that might be addressed within the best practices document, including differentiating between larger institutions and those organizations that rely primarily on volunteers; developing more specific language in regards to volunteers not doing the work of paid staff; stating the difference between interns and volunteers; revising the language stating that voluntary work must be voluntary (and not coerced); fixing the links to various URLs; expanding the categories of volunteers; and developing additional resources.

The drafting group considered all comments received and reached consensus on the following major revisions:

1. Stating the applicability of these guidelines for larger institutions with paid staff as opposed to smaller institutions that rely on volunteers to function,
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3. Being more specific about volunteers not permanently replacing paid staff,
4. Adding language regarding voluntary work not being coerced, and
5. Removing examples of unacceptable volunteer arrangements and focusing on positive examples.

Several commenters requested additional specific information on community service in archives for offenders, recommendations for advertising for volunteers, and aligning volunteer opportunities more clearly with lifelong learning. The drafting group chose to emphasize broad parameters that are applicable to a wide variety of institutions and to provide additional resources for further information about implementing or managing a volunteer program.

This draft is now available for public comment on SAA's website. The call for comment will also be distributed via discussion lists, In the Loop, and social media feeds. Comments will be received through 5:00 pm Central time on May 21, 2014. This current draft and additional comments (received May 1-21) will be reviewed again at the May Council meeting (May 22-24).

After this draft is revised based on member and Council feedback, it will be submitted to the SAA Standards Committee in June 2014. In addition, these Best Practices will be reviewed by legal counsel to ensure that it provides accurate information that is consistent with federal law. The Council will review the Standards Committee's recommendation at its August 2014 meeting.

INTRODUCTION

Some 65 million people volunteer each year in the United States.⁷ Volunteers may provide unpaid, charitable assistance to nonprofit cultural organizations or public institutions with responsibilities for archives. Individuals who volunteer their time and expertise provide important services that help further an organization's mission and ensure the survival of and access to our nation's heritage. Volunteers can be essential to community-based archives that help ensure the diversity of our historical record. There are community-based historical organizations whose doors would close without the support of local volunteers. In turn, voluntary service provides volunteers with valuable experiences and personal satisfaction. Volunteer opportunities help increase community involvement in and support for an organization and the archival enterprise. There are also online opportunities for volunteers to assist in increasing access to the archival record.

In the past five years, SAA members have voiced increasing concerns about the possible misuse of volunteers, especially of volunteer graduate students or new archives professionals. In lean economic times, some institutions might be tempted to turn to skilled but unpaid volunteers to get work accomplished. These best practices recognize that there is an important role for volunteers in the preservation, use, and appreciation of our cultural heritage, but also caution institutions against using volunteers as substitutes for the knowledgeable, skilled, and fairly compensated professional archivists. Volunteers must enhance, not depreciate, the value of professional archival work. Similarly, in a competitive job market, new professionals and graduate students may seek volunteer work to gain additional professional experience. In these

⁷ In the United States, about 64.5 million people (approximately 20% of the population) volunteered for an organization at least once between September 2011 - September 2012. For more information, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics report on "Volunteering in the United States in 2012" at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>.

situations, it may be more appropriate to define an internship and clarify expectations about learning outcomes.

Volunteers are distinct from interns. An internship is an educational experience designed to benefit the intern and is under the mentorship of a professional. SAA has also provided [Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education](#).⁸ A volunteer offers service for a civic, charitable, religious, or humanitarian purpose without any promise or expectation of compensation or reward.

These guidelines are intended for institutions that employ archivists and also use volunteers. Some recommendations may not be applicable to smaller archives or historical societies that are sustained exclusively by volunteers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For institutions that employ archivists but seek additional volunteer assistance, SAA recommends the following best practices:

1. Organizations should be aware of and follow all applicable labor laws, regulations, and bargaining agreements governing volunteer activities.⁹
2. Individuals may volunteer their services to public institutions or religious, charitable or similar non-profit organizations, “usually on a part-time basis, for public service, religious, or humanitarian objectives.” Individuals should not serve as volunteers for for-profit, private-sector institutions.¹⁰
3. Volunteers should not replace or displace paid employees.¹¹ Volunteers should support and augment the work of paid employees.

⁸ “Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education,” Society of American Archivists (2014). Available at <http://www2.archivists.org/standards/best-practices-for-internships-as-a-component-of-graduate-archival-education>

⁹ The U.S. Department of Labor has provided online resources to clarify the definition of volunteer work under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). See the U.S. Dept. of Labor, FLSA Advisor on Volunteers at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>. Several opinions offered by the Wage and Hour Division provide further guidance, for example:

“In determining whether a particular activity involves ‘ordinary volunteerism,’ the Department considers a variety of factors, including the nature of the entity receiving the services, the receipt by the worker (or expectation thereof) of any benefits from those for whom the services are performed, whether the activity is less than a full-time occupation, whether regular employees are displaced, whether the services are offered freely without pressure or coercion, and whether the services are of the kind typically associated with volunteer work.” (FLSA2001-18 at http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/FLSA/2001/2001_07_31_18_FLSA.htm)

State laws, institutional policies, and bargaining contracts may also apply to volunteer labor in certain contexts.

¹⁰ See the U.S. Dept. of Labor, FLSA Advisor on Volunteers at <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/esa/flsa/docs/volunteers.asp>.

¹¹ See, for example, FLSA2002-9 at http://www.dol.gov/whd/opinion/FLSA/2002/2002_10_07_9_FLSA.htm:
The Wage and Hour Division has recognized that a person may volunteer time to religious, charitable, civic, humanitarian, or similar non-profit organizations as a public service and not be covered by the FLSA. ... Typically, such volunteers serve on a part-time basis and do not displace regular employed workers or perform work that would otherwise be performed by regular employees.”

4. Volunteers should volunteer their services freely, without pressure, coercion, or promise of compensation or future employment.
5. To ensure success, an institution should ensure that volunteers have adequate training and supervision, and have access to a designated staff member for questions. Volunteer work should be evaluated periodically by a designated staff member, and volunteers should receive feedback about their contributions.
6. Organizations should consider developing written policies and procedures for volunteers so they know what is expected of them. This documentation might include position descriptions, tasks and instructions, required qualifications, preferred schedules, and expected time commitments.¹² Organizations should also consider keeping records about the number of volunteers and the number of hours contributed.
7. Organizations should provide a safe work environment for volunteers and ensure that volunteers are covered by their liability insurance.
8. Organizations should recruit, interview, and screen volunteers in equitable, nondiscriminatory ways that respect the diversity of their communities and ensure protection of their communities' historical assets. Volunteers and organizations should both ensure that their expectations about the volunteer experience are compatible.
9. An equitable procedure should be followed when a volunteer is asked to leave. Volunteers should have access to grievance procedures.
10. Organizations should strive to give volunteers a satisfying experience. An organization should consider ways to recognize or celebrate the important contributions of their volunteers.

EXAMPLES OF ACCEPTABLE VOLUNTEER ARRANGEMENTS

1. An individual volunteers his or her time, expertise, and services after a natural disaster to rescue historical materials.
2. An individual volunteers to assist with the archives of his or her local religious congregation.
3. An individual volunteers to assist a grassroots, community-based archive.
4. As a public service, an individual helps process an archival collection that might never get processed otherwise
5. Under supervision, an individual performs a public service in assisting an archivist to complete a range of archival tasks.
6. An individual compiles an online catalog of archival resources in his or her area of interest and shares this reference resource with the public and staff at archival institutions.
7. An individual volunteers to help an organization increase its open hours for the public to access its collections.
8. An individual volunteers to microfilm records from an archival repository for his or her church.
9. An individual volunteers to conduct oral histories within his or her community.
10. An individual volunteers to serve on an archives' advisory board and offer his or her time and services in support of the archives' initiatives.

¹² Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives, compiled by the National Archives and Records Administration and published by SAA in 2012, provides some examples. See http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources_for_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf

More acceptable examples are certainly possible.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

“Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives.” National Archives and Records Administration and the Society of American Archivists (2012). Available at http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources_for_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf. This publication contains valuable information and tools, but does not fully consider the ethical and legal contexts of volunteer activities.

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National Park Service Director’s Order #17: Volunteers in Parks
<http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DO-7.htm>.

“Advice for Volunteers,” RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Available at <http://www.serviceleader.org/volunteers/advice>.

“Volunteer Resource Management: What Is It and How Is It Done?” RGK Center for Philanthropy and Community Service. Available at <http://www.serviceleader.org/leaders>.
Herman, Melanie Lockwood, “Employee or Volunteer: What’s the Difference?” Nonprofit Risk Management Center. Available at http://www.nonprofitrisk.org/library/articles/employee_or_volunteer.shtml.

“Need to Know Basics of Managing Volunteers.” Volunteer Maine: Maine Commission for Volunteer Service (2008).
http://www.volunteermaine.org/shared_media/publications/old/E245B0A4d01.pdf.

“Best Practices for Volunteer Management Professionals,” Action Without Borders/Idealist.org. Available at <http://www.idealists.org/info/VolunteerMgmt/Best>.

**Compiled Responses on the Second Draft
Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives
May 1 – May 21, 2014**

From: **Marcia Stein** <mstein@uscsvd.org>
Date: Wed, May 21, 2014 at 1:22 PM
Subject: Comment on Second Draft of Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives
To: "michelle.light@gmail.com" <michelle.light@gmail.com>

I am responding to commend the committee on a concise, and specific document of best practice guidelines for volunteers. I think the second draft answered the issues described in the background section. I admit that I did not follow all the links in the footnotes and additional information, but the inclusion of the links provides the necessary supplemental information. Thank you for providing this best practices document.

I have to comment that I have never come across the use of “coerced” volunteering other than employees of a candidate running for public office requiring them to work for his/her campaign. Is this what is meant?

My Outlook program refused to use saahq@archivists.org , which was provided for email feedback.

Marcia Stein, Archivist
Robert M. Myers Archives
Society of the Divine Word
P. O. Box 6038
Techy, IL 60082
(847) 753-7431 Fax (847) 753-7464

From: Floyd, Jeremy J [<mailto:floydjj@buffalostate.edu>]
Sent: Wednesday, May 21, 2014 12:47 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Call for Member Comment: Best Practices for Volunteers

I am writing in support of the draft of Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives. As a new professional, who not long ago sought out volunteer opportunities to gain experience in the archives field, I see that it is vitally important to establish guidelines that allows institutions to best make use of the skills and enthusiasm of volunteers in archives without being exploitative of a volunteers efforts, or undermining the value of professional labor done by trained archivists. I feel that this document is an excellent step towards this goal. Thank you for addressing these concerns and working to make our use of volunteers within our field to be fair, equitable and mutually beneficial for archivists, our institutions, and our volunteers.

Thank you,

Jeremy Floyd
Processing Archivist
E H Butler Library
SUNY Buffalo State

[submitted online]
[COMMENTS ON VOLUNTEERS IN THE ARCHIVES DRAFT](#)
mjgascoine - 05/15/2014 - 1:30pm

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft. Overall, I believe it to be excellent and on-target. But, being a professional archivist myself I have a few red flags:

- Example no. 4. under Acceptable Volunteer Arrangements:

"As a public service, an individual helps process an archival collection that might never get processed otherwise." - I think you are stepping over a line when you ask a 'volunteer' to 'process a collection'. I think that should be the exclusive purview of the archivist. Processing is an art and requires training and EXPERIENCE. Volunteers don't have that. I could see perhaps, having a volunteer assist an archivist with this task, but I think an intern would be a better fit. I consider this experience to be closely associated with a hands-on training exercise or even an archival apprenticeship. I think it can be taken out and that example no. 5 is the right one.

From: Chris Prom (Publications Editor, SAA)

Sent: Monday, May 12, 2014 12:53 PM

To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: Publications Board Comments on the proposed Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Dear SAA HQ-

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft of "Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives." The Publications Board offers the following feedback.

1) The first paragraph in the intro should be reworked so that it goes from a general discussion to more archives-specific points. In its current iteration, it goes from general to archives to general again. Not a major thing, but there's likely a better way to introduce the topic and the document.

2) There's been discussion about how many non-profits actively encouraged retirees to volunteer and how this was valued (when it didn't mean that the institution could get away without paying a staff member). The *AARP Bulletin* published the attached graphic from the Corporation for National and Community Service and it is very telling in this regard. (They also have a very interesting website <http://www.nationalservice.gov/> in the 'ask not what your country can do for you...' vein.) The draft Best Practices document does a good job placing new archivists' concerns about being 'exploited' with unsalaried volunteer positions in context with the larger national support for a volunteer culture.

3) Here are a few minor suggestions/corrections:

Under "Examples of Acceptable..."

a. #4 doesn't have a period at the end of the sentence.

b. #8: should it be "microfilm or scan/digitize" or something to that effect? There's nothing about digitization and that seems to be more prevalent. (Also, why does this specify "for his or her church"? Is this type of request common?)

c. Would a Friends of an archives/library fall under #10, and if not, should that be incorporated?

That's It!

Chris Prom

SAA Publications Editor and Chair of the Publications Board

[submitted via SAA HQ email]

May 9, 2014

To: SAA Standards Committee

From: Frank Boles

Re: Comments re Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives (Second Draft) issued May 1, 2014

This is a very interesting and useful document, but in its aspirational statements recommends as best practice specific work place rules that are beyond the control of most archival administrators. As such, it unfairly and unwisely limits the use of volunteers in archives with paid staff.

Specifically:

- Point 3 assumes that the archival administrator controls the salary budget for the archives. This is often not the case. Archives in financial distress, or archival administrators faced with staff reductions mandated by more senior management, may in part attempt to salvage the archives from chaos with volunteer help. Thus the suggestion that volunteers never replace paid employees violates the more important, core responsibility of our profession that we care for and make accessible the material entrusted to archival care. I would strongly suggest that this point be restated, in more realistic and more neutral terms, such as:
 - o “Volunteers should not in the normal course of business displace paid employees. Volunteers should support and augment the work of the archives.”
 - o This language suggests that replacement is acceptable for the broader good of the archives, if staff reduction is unavoidable. It also recognizes that the point of adding volunteers should be employee neutral. The ultimate objective of utilizing volunteers should be to expand the reach of the archives, and some volunteers may do so in a way that goes beyond work undertaken by paid employees.
- In a footnote point 3 makes note to the FSLA. Although I take the point, I would note that the FSLA clearly states volunteers are not employees, something relevant to points 7 and 9, where in both instances the recommendation is that volunteers be extended certain benefits associated with employment.
- Point 7, liability insurance. Most non-profit organizations go to considerable length to not extend liability insurance to cover volunteers. Legal counsel strongly encourages such limitations. Indeed many organizations require that volunteers sign a waiver regarding liability insurance. To ask an archival administrator to reverse institutional policy unilaterally is to ask for the impossible.
 - o I strongly encourage deletion of the words “and ensure that volunteers are covered by their liability insurance” from this point.
- From an administrator’s viewpoint, Point 9 raises two peculiar possibilities, one of which will run afoul of senior management, the other of labor law. Non-unionized institutions that lack clear grievance procedures will be loath to create such processes for volunteers. Particularly since employees can be expected to ask for similar consideration, this idea will simply not be implementable within the archives. In contrast, unionized institutions (such as my own) may find themselves faced with a union grievance if they extend contractually agreed upon benefits to non-bargaining unit members. A grievance process is, for many unions, one of the principal benefits for paying union dues. Thus it is perfectly rational for a suspicious union to argue that the policy recommended here is a form of union-busting (the argument being that management is voluntarily giving union-benefits to non-union members in order to undercut the argument that union membership is needed and necessary) that violates federal law.

- o This is a well-intentioned but unimplementable suggestion. Please delete it.

Finally, under “Examples of Acceptable Volunteer Arrangements” I strongly object to point 4 which suggests that it is acceptable to use volunteers to redress an irresponsible archival collecting policy. One has to ask why a responsible archives is bringing in the door collections “that might never get processed” without volunteers? SAA should not encourage in any way archives extending collecting activity that cannot be supported within the resources found in the archives.

[submitted online]

[GENERAL COMMENTS.](#)

nnasr - 05/05/2014 - 7:15am

It seems like this document provides thorough guidelines for the use of volunteers in archives, particularly where it emphasizes that volunteers should be covered by one's liability insurance.

I have a few thoughts to offer for consideration.

Guideline #5: I think that this is implied throughout the document, and may be already well understood, but I wonder if it would be worth making a statement prefacing the text in this recommendation with language about how the use of volunteers involves a significant time commitment by paid staff that in essence takes them away from other work. It's a trade off, and particularly if there is high turnover among the volunteer workforce then more time is spent bringing volunteers up to speed, checking their work, and conducting evaluations, and there is the potential that the quality of work done by both the volunteers and those supervising volunteers will decline as a result. The more volunteers one takes on, especially in a smaller institution, the more time is spent managing them and the less time is spent doing other work.

Guideline #6: Again, this guideline implies that there is a significant time investment necessary to establish and maintain a volunteer program. It seems worth emphasizing, if not in this guideline and in guideline #5, then perhaps in an additional paragraph in the introduction (between the first and second paragraph). I am imagining a scenario where an individual may be trying to make a case for additional paid staff and having their request dismissed because it is thought by upper administration that skilled work can just be done by a bunch of volunteers.

My \$0.02,

Nadia Nasr

From: Elizabeth Crosthwaite [mailto:emcrosthwaite@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, May 02, 2014 5:10 PM

To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: SAA Volunteer Guidelines from a volunteer perspective

To Whom It May Concern:

I read the second draft of the SAA Best Practice Guidelines for Volunteers, and I agree with many of the points. I think this second draft is an improvement. I started as an intern in the curatorial department of a museum, and when my time ended, I still had one semester left before completing my MLIS. I elected to stay on as a volunteer in order to gain further experience, and have found it to be rewarding. On the point that volunteers should not be doing the work that a paid employee would be doing, I don't feel that my work would be replacing a paid employee. Yes, I did much of the same cataloging as the paid employees, but I saw it as gaining outside experience

that I needed for job applications. This is an especially difficult job market for those in the archival/library science/museum fields, and in most cases these institutions rely heavily on well-trained volunteers. Is it unfair? Probably, but it's not changing any time soon.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Crosthwaite

From: Stuart, Lorraine [mailto:lstuart@mfah.org]
Sent: Friday, May 02, 2014 4:27 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Per the request that went out this morning, I have read the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives. I find it clear and timely. The only addition that you may wish to consider is an agreement that makes clear to volunteers that private information they may come across is to be kept confidential. Our compliance is working on formulating such an agreement.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Best regards,

Lorraine A. Stuart, CA, DAS
Archives director
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston
PO Box 6826
Houston, Texas 77265-6826
(713) 353-1557

Call for Comments on the First Draft Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

On April 4, Council members were asked to select relevant component groups for whom they were liaisons and distribute the following email for comment on the first draft. The document was attached as a pdf to the email.

Sample email distributed to selected component groups or component group leaders:

Michelle Light <michelle.light@gmail.com>

Apr 4 to aac

Hello AAC Roundtable:

Because many of you may have volunteers, I hope you will review and respond to the first draft of these best practices (attached). Thank you in advance for your input.

Regards,

Michelle Light

Council Liaison to the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable

Call for Member Comment: First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Volunteers may play an important role in ensuring the survival of and access to our nation's heritage and the diversity of our historical record. But in some instances, volunteers – including graduate students and new archives professionals – may be misused. The SAA Council has drafted a “Best Practices” document with guidelines for appropriate volunteer arrangements and is seeking member comment on the draft.

Send comments on this first draft to to saahq@archivists.org by April 21, 2014.

After revisions are completed, the next draft will be posted to SAA's website for wider comment. After all comments are received, the document will be revised and shared with the Standards Committee before final review at the August 11 Council meeting.

First Draft as Presented for Member Comment

Call for Member Comment: Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

The following draft was prepared by three SAA Council members – Michelle Light, Tanya Zanish-Belcher, and Helen Wong Smith – following Council discussions between September 2013 and January 2014 and in response to member feedback on this topic of concern. This draft pertains to item 2.3 in SAA’s Strategic Plan: “Support the career development of members to assist them in achieving their goals.” Adopting procedures from the Standards Committee’s review process, the Council subgroup is seeking feedback from SAA component groups and SAA’s general membership and proposes the following timeline for review and comment:

Timeline for review and comment:

- April 4- 21, 2014: First draft distributed to selected SAA component groups (boards, committees, working groups, sections, and roundtables) for comment.
- May 1- 21, 2014: Revised draft posted to SAA’s website for member comment.
- May 22-24, 2014 : Revised draft and member comments discussed at Council meeting.
- Before June 20, 2014: Final draft shared with Standards Committee.
- Before July 14, 2014: Standards Committee makes recommendation to August 11 Council meeting.

To comment on the draft: Send an email message containing your comments to saahq@archivists.org. The deadline for comments on this first draft is April 21, 2014.

FIRST DRAFT: Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

BACKGROUND

Some 65 million people volunteer each year in the United States.¹³ Volunteers may provide unpaid, charitable assistance to nonprofit cultural organizations or public institutions with responsibilities for archives. Individuals who volunteer their time and expertise provide important services that help further an organization’s mission and ensure the survival of and access to our nation’s heritage. Volunteers can be essential to community-based archives that help ensure the diversity of our historical record. There are community-based historical organizations whose doors would close without the support of local volunteers. In turn, voluntary service provides volunteers with valuable experiences and personal satisfaction. Volunteer opportunities help increase community involvement in and support for an organization and the archival enterprise. There are also numerous online opportunities for volunteers to assist in increasing access to the archival record by crowdsourcing or tagging.

In the past five years, members of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) have voiced increasing concerns about the possible misuse of volunteers, especially of volunteer graduate students or new archives professionals. These best practices offer a strong statement against the exploitation of volunteers, particularly those with professional archival expertise, but recognize that there is an important role for volunteers in the preservation of our cultural heritage.

¹³ In the United States, about 64.5 million people (about 1/5 the population) volunteered for an organization at least once between Sept 2011 - Sept 2012. For more information, see the Bureau of Labor Statistics report on “Volunteering in the United States in 2012” at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/volun.pdf>.

Archivists should be aware that there are many other information resources for volunteers and volunteer programs as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For archival organizations seeking volunteers, SAA recommends the following best practices:

1. Organizations should be aware of and follow all applicable labor laws, regulations, and bargaining agreements governing volunteer activities.¹⁴
2. Volunteers should not do the work of paid employees, nor should they be used to replace work that was done previously by paid employees. The role and contribution of volunteers should be unique and should not duplicate work performed in an organization.
3. Volunteers should not be used in full-time, long-term assignments. Volunteer activities should be part-time, sporadic, or of fixed duration.
4. Volunteers should be given adequate training and should be supervised appropriately. Their work should be evaluated by professional staff trained to supervise volunteers.
5. Organizations should develop written policies and procedures for volunteers. Volunteers should have written position descriptions, including the tasks to be performed, the qualifications required, and the time commitment expected.
6. Organizations should keep records about the number of volunteers and the number of hours contributed, and should develop information about how volunteers contribute to the institution. An organization should find ways to recognize or celebrate the important contributions of their volunteers.
7. Volunteers should work in a safe environment and should be adequately covered by the organization's insurance policies.
8. Volunteer work should allow volunteers to render charitable, religious, civic, cultural, public, or humanitarian services for an organization. Professional, administrative, or operational tasks may not be appropriate in certain contexts.
9. Volunteer work must be voluntary.
10. Organizations should recruit and screen volunteers in equitable, nondiscriminatory ways that respect the diversity of their communities and ensure protection of their communities' historical assets. An equitable procedure should be in place and followed when a volunteer is asked to leave. Volunteers should have access to grievance procedures.

¹⁴ For the federal law concerning volunteer labor, see: [29 C.F.R. §§ 553.100-.106](#). The Wage and Hour Division of the Department of Labor has also made available multiple opinions describing how to use and treat volunteers. For examples, [search for "volunteer"](#) on the site. The following language is common:

"It is also important to note that the FLSA recognizes the generosity and public benefits of volunteering and allows individuals to freely volunteer in many circumstances for charitable and public purposes. The Wage and Hour Division has recognized that a person may volunteer time to religious, charitable, civic, humanitarian, or similar non-profit organizations as a public service and not be covered by the FLSA. Such a person will not be considered an employee for FLSA purposes if the individual volunteers freely for public service, religious or humanitarian objectives, and without contemplation or receipt of compensation. Typically, such volunteers serve on a part-time basis and do not displace regular employed workers or perform work that would otherwise be performed by regular employees." FLSA2002-9

Many opinions point to how volunteers are not appropriate for for-profit, commercial entities, because volunteer labor or substandard wages provides an unfair, competitive business advantage.

11. Organizations that require the services of a professional archivist should be aware of the value of this specialized expertise and should compensate professional archivists appropriately. A professional archivist may elect to volunteer his or her time and services; however, volunteers are not sustainable substitutes for the knowledge and skills of a fairly compensated professional archivist. (See also: [What is an archivist?](#))

Individuals seeking volunteer opportunities in an organization should assess opportunities based on these best practices. Archivists, no matter their employment status or level of experience, should be mindful of the potential positive and negative effects of volunteers on an organization and the archives profession. Volunteers may help ensure the preservation, use, and appreciation of our nation's archival records, but the work of volunteers should not depreciate the value of paid staff members' professional knowledge or skills.

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER ARRANGEMENTS

Examples of unacceptable volunteer arrangements:

1. An uncompensated graduate student or professional archivist performs the same or comparable work that is currently performed or was previously performed by a paid employee.
2. An organization uses volunteers to replace previously paid archivist positions.
3. An organization encourages volunteers with the promise of eventual paid employment.
4. A professionally trained archivist volunteers his or her services when an organization might otherwise hire another qualified archivist to do similar work.

Examples of potentially problematic volunteer arrangements that warrant careful consideration:

1. An intern seeks to extend his or her learning opportunity and continues to volunteer and perform the same work. (See also: SAA's [Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education](#).)
2. To gain experience, a new archives professional volunteers to process a collection in a backlog.

Examples of acceptable volunteer arrangements:

1. A graduate student or professional archivist volunteers his or her time, expertise, and services after a natural disaster to rescue historical materials.
2. A graduate student or professional archivist volunteers to assist with the archives of his or her local religious congregation.
3. A graduate student or professional archivist volunteers to assist a grassroots, community-based archive serving a diverse community.
4. A graduate student or professional archivist volunteers to serve on a board or committee within a nonprofit organization.
5. To gain experience or help a nonprofit in need, a graduate student or professional archivist performs limited archival tasks that would not otherwise have been addressed by currently or previously paid employees.
6. A volunteer compiles an online catalog of archival resources in his or her area of interest and shares this reference resource with the public and staff at archival institutions.
7. A local community member volunteers several days a week to enable a local archives to have open hours for the public to access its collections.
8. Church members volunteer to travel to local archival repositories to microfilm their records.

9. Long-time residents in a community volunteer to conduct oral histories within their community.
10. Community members volunteer to serve on an archives' advisory board and offer their time and services in support of the archives' outreach, collection development, and fundraising initiatives.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

American Association of Museums: Standards and Best Practices for Volunteers in Museums:
<http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>

National Park Service Director's Order #17: Volunteers in Parks:
<http://www.nps.gov/policy/DOrders/DO-7.htm>

[Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives](#), compiled by the National Archives and Records Administration and published by SAA in 2012, contains valuable information and tools but does not fully consider the ethical and legal contexts of volunteer activities.

Compiled Responses on the First Draft Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

(Sent to targeted groups, 4/4 – 4/21/14)

50 comments received

From: Tansey, Eira (tanseyem) [mailto:tanseyem@ucmail.uc.edu]
Sent: Thursday, April 17, 2014 12:17 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Comments on the First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Hi SAA,

Just reviewed the first draft of the volunteers guide. Below are my comments:

--I think #11 under best practices (p. 3, re: a professional archivist) deserves to be higher up on the list, if not the first. Having it down so low has the effect of burying the lede.

--Some of the examples of acceptable arrangements are confusing. Are they acceptable simply because religious or community archives might have less money? If this is the case, this needs to be acknowledged.

--"Acceptable arrangement #7" is questionable -- how is this not replacing a reference archivist on duty?

Thanks for soliciting feedback, I look forward to future versions.

Eira Tansey
Digital Archivist/Records Manager

Archives and Rare Books Library
University of Cincinnati Libraries
806 Blegen Library
2602 McMicken Circle
PO Box 210113
Cincinnati, OH 45221-0113
Direct Tel: 513-556-1958
Library Tel: 513-556-1959
Email: eira.tansey@uc.edu
Web: www.libraries.uc.edu/libraries/arb/

From: Jonathan Schmitz [mailto:jschmitz@ciweb.org]
Sent: Tuesday, April 15, 2014 2:53 PM
To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: Guidelines for Volunteers

I wish to make a very simple three-part suggestion as a basic guideline, one that all in the archival profession, both as employers and employees should be expected to follow.

1. All those working in or for archives are entitled to fair compensation for their labor.
2. This compensation is usually monetary compensation, but can be made by other means, e.g. tickets to performances or sporting events or tuition. However, the value of the alternative means of compensation should approximate value of the wages that would otherwise be paid.
3. A person may elect to waive a fee altogether, and work pro bono. But both employer and employee must honestly believe that this work is for the public good (pro bono public is the full phrase).

I believe this will allow us to avoid making distinctions between 'professional' and 'volunteer' archivists, a distinction that is not always easy to make. It also allows for non-monetary compensation, but not in such a way that allows abuse. Finally, it permits archivists to offer their services for free without permitting one to work just for experience or simply to get a foot in the door. I realize it is tempting to turn to government regulations as a guide, but these are designed to protect workers, not the profession. What is required is an ethical guide.

May I say that I am very happy to see the SAA address this problem. I have been trying to raise this problem for many years. It a difficult and very serious problem, which must be addressed considering the peculiarities of our particular profession.

Thank you,

Jon Schmitz
Archivist
Chautauqua Institution
716-357-6332

From: Linda Whitaker [mailto:LWhitaker@azhs.gov]
Sent: Monday, April 14, 2014 12:32 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: FW: [archmgmt] Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"

I shared this with our Tucson branch because they have the bulk of volunteers. Please see the comments below this response is detailed and well considered.

Linda A. Whitaker, Director
Arizona Historical Society Division of Library & Archives
Arizona Historical Society at Papago Park
1300 North College Avenue
Tempe, AZ 85281
480-929-0292 X174
<http://www.arizonahistoricalsociety.org/>

Subject: comments on best practices for volunteers draft

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this document. To be blunt, with apologies as it is not my intent to hurt anyone's feelings -- I find the entire document so unhelpful, useless, negative, and counterproductive that I would suggest starting over from scratch. Example: "Volunteer work must be voluntary." REALLY?

I have worked successfully with volunteers for well over a decade in archives and special collections. Volunteers state that they are happier volunteering for me than anywhere else they have volunteered. My volunteers accomplish a great deal. They are happy doing good work. Nothing in the draft helps me in any way to establish best practices for archives volunteers.

Dawn Youngblood

Dr. Dawn Youngblood
Tarrant County Archivist
200 Taylor Street 5th Floor
Fort Worth TX 76102
817-884-3272
Website: <http://www.tarrantcounty.com/e-archives>

From: JFChild [mailto:pocockj@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Wednesday, April 09, 2014 11:08 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Member Comment: First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Here's a slightly different perspective from a retired professional archivist who now volunteers, helping to process archival collections.

This work is a joy because it is free from administrative annoyances. In my situation the repository is very short-staffed, and I'm not taking anyone's job. Being retired I have a pension so do not suffer from not being paid for my work.

Because I was not employed in this particular repository, there is not the awkwardness created when a professional returns to the workplace as a volunteer, most likely to work with persons of higher or lower employment status.

Furthermore, short-staffing means workers must staff the reference desk, rather than supervise volunteers closely. Thus the need for a volunteer to process collections who has the necessary training to work more independently.

Being retired, I am not a candidate for employment at this repository; am not seeking to bolster my resume; am not trying to gain more varied experience for these reasons.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my concerns.

Jeanie Child

Subject: Re: Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"

From: Bryan McGraw <bryan.mcgraw@nara.gov>

Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2014 13:30:28 -0500

X-Message-Number: 2

Elizabeth, thanks for sharing. Just a few observations and comments.

I'm not SAA best practices item # 9 is needed. It goes without saying volunteer work must be voluntary. Right?

Second, I'm not supportive of # 2 in that volunteers should not do the work of paid employees. I agree completely that they should be working on project, short-duration work, however, many archival operations have a difficult time delineating the difference between what a paid employee is doing vs. an intern or volunteer. That is one way volunteers get valuable experience is to work in a variety of areas. Furthermore, given the fiscal realities many of us face with hiring freezes, restrictions and resource constraints, we are often forced to find creative ways to get the job done. Just my .02.

Bryan

BRYAN K. McGRAW

Access Coordinator - St. Louis & Director, National Archives at St. Louis

National Archives and Records Administration

1 Archives Drive, Room 340F

St. Louis, MO 63138

bryan.mcgraw@nara.gov

314-801-9132

314-801-9187 (Fax)

314-517-0915 (Blackberry)

Subject: Re: Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"

From: Bob Kosovsky <bobkosovsky@nypl.org>

Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2014 15:00:37 -0400

X-Message-Number: 3

For those of us who work in unionized areas, the criteria "volunteers should not do the work of paid employees" is a serious matter. If a volunteer can do it, then there's no reason to pay someone to do it—hence loss of positions.

Bob Kosovsky, Ph.D. -- Curator, Rare Books and Manuscripts,
Music Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

blog: <http://www.nypl.org/blog/author/44> Twitter: @kos2

Listowner: OPERA-L ; SMT-TALK ; SMT-ANNOUNCE ; SoundForge-users

- My opinions do not necessarily represent those of my institutions -

Subject: RE: Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"
From: "Logsdon, Stephen" <logsdons@wusm.wustl.edu>
Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2014 21:56:46 +0000
X-Message-Number: 4

I believe the "volunteers should not do the work of paid employees" part should be clarified. I think the intent behind this statement is to support the idea that the work of unpaid volunteers should not depreciate the value of the paid professional staff. I agree with that sentiment. The problem with the wording is the fact that no professional in any line of work performs solely professional-level work. In the archives profession in particular, there are a large number of archivists who work in environments where they have to run the entire operation themselves, or with the support of very few paid coworkers. For this reason, the "lone arranger" type of archivist has numerous job responsibilities, not all of which require extensive archives management expertise to complete. For many of us, routine office work is a part of our job duties as archivists. I can see no reason why preventing volunteers from helping with this kind of work should be considered a "best practice".

Also, I simply don't agree with this document's position on unpaid graduate students. In fact, I take the opposite position: a graduate student shouldn't volunteer at an institution unless they get to perform professional-level work. More than any other type of volunteer, graduate students stand to benefit the most from the opportunity to work at your institution. It's obvious that they want to perform professional-level work, so what sense does it make to prevent them from doing so? It's one thing to keep an unpaid graduate student around year after year, but in my experience, the typical unpaid graduate student works about 10 hours per week for one semester. I think allowing unpaid graduate students to perform professional-level work serves more to support the future of our profession than it does to depreciate the value of the paid professional staff.

Stephen Logsdon
Archivist
Washington University School of Medicine

Subject: Re: Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"
From: Christina Lee Wyles <cwyles@email.arizona.edu>
Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2014 15:41:48 -0700
X-Message-Number: 5

A graduate student perspective:

Mr. Kosovsky's comments struck a nerve because I have had related thoughts as a graduate student. Recently I have actively pursued "entry level" graduate student internships. I was surprised to learn that I do not qualify for many of the "volunteer" experiences because I do not have the working expertise required, though I have done well in the necessary graduate course work.

Additionally from a "volunteer" student perspective it makes me contemplate how the profession views itself. Expertise that is not compensated, even minimally to help off-set parking, has the appearance to minimize the worth of the profession. Because of this I have started to contemplate if the profession expects students to work for free, is this reflective of how the profession values itself? And how does unpaid student internships translate into the bigger picture of how society views our professional worth? Lastly, how do we expect others to value our professional worth if we do not compensate, even minimally, for the work we consider within our professional domain of knowledge?

Because my nursing background perhaps I am over sensitive to how society views a profession. However, the nursing profession has worked hard to gain society's appreciation of its value. One of the first places to start is for the profession to value its contributions. I think this situation of unpaid-student-internships is penny wise but pound foolish.

Sincerely,
Christina Wyles RN, MS
SIRLS Student

Subject: Re: Please comment on "Best Practices for Volunteers"
From: Mark Sprang <sprangm@umich.edu>
Date: Mon, 7 Apr 2014 20:14:51 -0400
X-Message-Number: 6

Early on in graduate school I learned to accept the fact of life that many internship opportunities in archives are unpaid. I believe this mainly reflects the fiscal reality that many institutions find themselves in, especially after the economic downturn in 2008. My summer internship last year actually used to be a paid position until recently. I have talked to archivists who are more than willing to pay interns, but the funds simply aren't there. They have to make do with what's available: the cultural heritage sector continually has to justify itself in order to maintain support. The professional literature is

I agree with Stephen's stance about graduate students. They are there because they want/need the professional experience. Coursework alone will not get them where they need to be. My program requires 8 credit hours of practical experience (out of 48 minimum credits to graduate), with one credit hour gained per 60 hours of work. It also requires that internships provide professional-level experiences for students. Internship mentors must provide a description of the position and its duties that must be approved by our career office before the student can begin. In all the places I have worked and interned during school (archival vendor, government archive, and academic library) I have been treated as an equal whether the position was paid or not. I can honestly say that the archival community is immensely supportive of its members and wants to do what it can to help others succeed. I do not believe that our profession is devalued by providing a preponderance of unpaid internships. They are unpaid because of financial reality, not because institutions are trying to save a buck. The will is there, but often the means are not.

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Mark Sprang

My biggest concerns about the best practices document are the #2 and #3 recommendations.

What about historical institutions that depend on long-term volunteers who do not want/expect to be paid? I work in Tyler, Texas, where the essentially the “head” of the local historical society and her husband have been running the society for over two decades. They do not expect to be paid—they do the work because they enjoy the history, their community, and the availability to contribute back in some way. I do think guidelines are necessary in some form, but we cannot create ones from complaints from a small number of emerging new professionals who are upset that they can’t find well paid entry level positions. Seems like, the people who are complaining about it aren’t thinking about the experience but the monetary value. Do we become archivists to be rich? Or do we because we are interested in giving back to history and preserving? The standards should revolve around making sure people get quality education experiences not on getting paid. Best practices should focus on how volunteers create engagement, outreach, support, and benefit for both themselves and institutions—not to be paid.

What are institutions supposed to do then if they lose funding for paid employees? Shut down? Wait and apply for competitive, barely funded grants? It is unreasonable. I have interns who get class credit to do the same level of processing as the Archives Assistant. Sure, they are gaining credit and are considered interns, but they are doing the same work. I refuse to give projects to volunteers that will not provide them with some education and an end-product they can be proud of—the same standards for paid employees. Hosting interns and volunteers is not free for the organization, it takes up valuable time for those professionals who run the organizations.

Unacceptable volunteer arrangements:

I graduated with an MLIS in 2010 and have archival colleagues who have ALL fit into the categories listed as unacceptable. Because they wanted the experience, because they relocated and needed to keep working to stay involved in the archives profession, because they were interested in learning about the archives they volunteered in. Best practices like these make it impossible to acknowledge the wide range of issues, lifestyles, and habits of archivists across the country. As for #4, that sounds more like the volunteer’s problem—if they want to be paid they should find a paying job. Almost every archivist I know had to move in order to get their first professional position. If you want to be paid for your services, apply for a job that pays you.

I run an entire archives with one assistant and one student worker. I follow best practices set forward by SAA whenever I can, but I just don’t think these are feasible. We rely on volunteers to help with over 40 years of archival backlogs. I cannot pay them, nor do I anticipate a time when I’ll be able to get funding for these positions. So, I try to provide them with a fun, educational experience that they will be able to use in the future. My volunteers become excited about the archives profession, they advocate for our archives across campus and in the community. I’ve had two volunteers who have actually gone on to graduate school to become archivists. I don’t think they were concerned at the time that I couldn’t pay them. Instead they

were grateful for the opportunity, and I would hate for everyone to lose that experience because they aren't being compensated financially.

Overall, I'm concerned that a small portion of our new professionals are arguing against something that can't be controlled by best practices. I do agree with the recommendations that volunteers should be trained, projects should be educational, and they should feel safe in their work environment, but the financial issue is something we can't control—we can't control the economy.

Thank you for your time,

Terra Bianchi, MLIS, CA
Head of University Archives and Special Collections
University Archives and Special Collections Department
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From: Salvador Guerena [mailto:guerena@library.ucsb.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 6:03 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Re: [aac] Call for Member Comment: First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

We reviewed this draft with our intern, a recent graduate from the library science program at Simmons College. Everything looks good on the draft except that there should be an exception for recent graduates who initiate a request for internship volunteer experience specifically to gain processing experience as long as it is for a specific, limited period. It would need to include a statement of responsibilities and a set of goals that the intern in mutual agreement with the repository, agrees to so that it can become an enriching and valuable experience for the intern.

Thanks,

Sal Guerena, Director
California Ethnic and Multicultural Archives

From: Chute, Tamar [mailto:chute.6@osu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 2:17 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: FW: [collegeuniv] Call for comments!

In response to the call for member comments on the draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives, I wanted to note two things. In #7, it states that volunteers should be covered by the organization's insurance policies. This may be problematic for an institution. I know our volunteers are not covered by the university's insurance. I suggest adding a phrase at the end to convey that this can be done if/when appropriate.

Finally, in your examples of appropriate volunteers, I would suggest adding retirees. We have had great success with university retirees (not former archivists) who want to give back to the university.

Sincerely,
Tamar Chute
University Archivist

From: Ellen Ryan [mailto:ryanelle@isu.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 1:19 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: re: Best Practices for Volunteers

This is indeed an interesting discussion, and I think perhaps there should be a distinction between the types of volunteers. Meaning: if the proposed draft for Best Practices for Volunteers is intended for graduate students in archives programs or new archives professionals, then the title should probably reflect that.

Establishing Best Practices for volunteers obviously raises a lot of issues. There are those of us who rely heavily on volunteers, be it students (undergraduate and graduate) who are either looking for experience or need to fulfill course requirements, or the general public/retirees who have the time to volunteer and are willing and able to assist in any way possible. Many of us are lone arrangers with very limited budgets and do not have the means to hire staff other than a few work study students. Many of us are also in situations where hiring paid interns is not even a possibility, unless as part of a grant funded project. Add to the mix any number of variables, and the proposed Best Practices do not apply to every archives.

For example: No. 2 states that "Volunteers should not do the work of paid employees, nor should they be used to replace work that was done previously by paid employees." As a lone arranger I do everything from break down boxes for recycling to dusting/vacuuuming, to processing collections, creating finding aids, digitization, supervise, and on, and on..... So what exactly would a volunteer do? In addition, the one FTE that was here left due to an injury before I arrived, and that position (she was paid as a LA1) has yet to be filled. I'm not even sure it will be re-filled, although I have been arguing for another FTE faculty position rather than the LA 1 (I can dream, right?). So yes, the volunteers I have are essential to fulfill the work she did; mind you, I am starting them off slowly and training them as they move along, but their time is valuable in helping us move our collections forward. If I didn't have the volunteers I do, we'd have to keep the doors closed and be open by appointment only on a permanent basis, which is something I'd rather avoid.

No. 3 states that "Volunteers should not be used in full-time, long-term assignments. I agree with volunteers not being full-time, but I disagree with the long-term assignments: if a volunteer happens to be a non-graduate student, and not new to the profession, but happens to be retired and willing to put in the time on a long-term assignment, I don't see what the issue is.

No. 9: If there is any type of volunteer work that is not voluntary, please advise, as perhaps I am missing something.

I also think we have an obligation as professionals to assist those who are either considering an advanced degree in our field or are about to enter into a program and are seeking some experience. If that means teaching them how to process collections, which is work we all do, then I see no reason why not. I'm not advocating handing over my administrative and teaching duties, but providing some hands-on, practical experience.

Ellen M. Ryan, MA, MLIS
Head of Special Collections and Archives
Assistant Professor

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From: Christine Di Bella [mailto:cdibella@ias.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 12:36 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: comments on draft volunteer best practices

Dear SAA,

Thank you for calling for comments on the draft volunteer best practices. I think the draft is a good step toward addressing this thorny issue.

A few disjointed comments:

- Based on the discussion I've seen so far on the Archives Management Roundtable listserv in particular, it seems like it would be helpful to explicitly state the difference between an intern and a volunteer in this document, including stating that an unpaid intern is not the same as a volunteer.
- Though the document acknowledges that some organizations are dependent on volunteers to remain viable, the best practices seem relevant primarily for larger or more well-funded institutions with multiple full-time staff members. I imagine a number of people will argue that recommendations such as 2, 8, and 11 are not practical in other situations and will take it as an opportunity to dismiss the need for best practices entirely. I'm not sure what the solution to that is, but perhaps it needs to be made more explicit what is still applicable when an organization is primarily volunteer, and for what kinds of organizations it's appropriate (or a necessary evil) to be primarily volunteer.
- Not sure how to do this, but is it worth acknowledging somehow that volunteering in larger archival institutions is especially appropriate for people outside the archives field – i.e. people who want to help, but don't have archives-specific training and aren't planning for an archival career? Those with archives-specific training, or working toward such training, should be

employed as interns or in paid positions. (Of course, retired archival professionals are another story, though their talents could probably be better directed to smaller institutions.)

- Best practice #9, “Volunteer work must be voluntary” needs to be explained. While it seems clear what is implied, that people shouldn’t be coerced into giving their time for free in exchange for something else they need, tangible or intangible, that really should be made explicit within the enumerated best practices.
- The URL for the American Association of Museum Volunteers (not the American Association of Museums as in the draft) standards guide for volunteers no longer works, though I was able to look at the content in the Wayback Machine.
- I note that SAA’s public response to the NARA closings stresses archival advocacy and the unfortunate but very real necessity of cutting back on services in the wake of cuts in federal funding, as opposed to criticizing NARA’s specific decisions. It may be worth considering whether a similar statement is appropriate here (i.e., instead of throwing volunteers at the problem, archives should consider what services they can reasonably provide and advocate for commensurate resources).

Thanks for taking this on!

Best,

Christine

Christine Di Bella

Archivist

Shelby White and Leon Levy Archives Center

Institute for Advanced Study

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Phone: 609-734-8368

Website : <http://library.ias.edu/archives>

From: Jodi Allison-Bunnell [<mailto:jodiab@orbiscascade.org>]

Sent: Tuesday, April 08, 2014 12:23 PM

To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: Comments on volunteer guidelines

Hello:

This is a good set of guidelines that effectively addresses many of the concerns that have been so avidly discussed and debated over the last two years, and I commend Council for their work on this.

I have but one suggestion, on #9: “Volunteer work must be voluntary.” Properly supervised, volunteer work that is not voluntary (e.g. community service requirements for youth, either as part of high school senior projects or for those in the youth or drug court system) can play an important role in rehabilitating members of communities. Organizations that take on these types of volunteers must be prepared to adequately supervise and mentor these types of volunteers, but I would caution against ruling it out entirely. I think that this point could be qualified and put on the list of “grey area” situations.

Best, Jodi

Jodi Allison-Bunnell
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(406) 829-6528
fax (860) 540-8281

I am in the Mountain time zone (two hours ahead of Alaska, one hour ahead of Pacific, one hour behind Central, two hours behind Eastern)

Researcher website: <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/index.shtml>
Member website: <http://orbiscascade.org/index/northwest-digital-archives>

From: Lisa Lobdell [mailto:llobdell@feinsteininitiative.org]
Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 1:07 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Best Practices for Volunteers

I just quickly read through the “Best Practices for Volunteers.” The AAM link under “Additional Information” doesn’t work. I thought the rest of the document was fine.

Regards,

From: Fr. Peter, OSB [mailto:fr_peter@stmartin.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 5:11 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: RE: Best Practices

Colleagues,
As a ‘lone arranger’ at a smaller institution I must echo Stephen Logsdon concerns. I depend on volunteers and the occasional graduate student to aid me in processing the backlog of materials we have. It is either me working alone or allowing volunteers to work under guidance.

Fr. Peter Tynan, OSB
Archivist
Saint Martin's University
(360) 486-8828

From: Kevin Hollis [mailto:KEVINHOLLIS@mc-ala.org]
Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 1:53 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

I’m not sure that I agree with #2. I realize that because of labor laws we cannot take advantage of unpaid volunteer and interns. It is a different matter when they are paid whether a salary,

stipend or sometime of fellowship. Most of the tasks assigned in archives is repetitive and simple and requires very little training or experience. However, the work is supervised by an archives technician, archives specialist or archivist. It difficult to come up with creative and new things for a volunteer. With funding being cut short in most museum, archives and historical societies it very hard to find part-time employees let alone full-time staff to work on processing collection and re-housing with are vital in tackling backlogs.

Kevin Hollis
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Email: KevinHollis@mc-ala.org

From: Drees, Ronald Henry [<mailto:rhrees@bcm.edu>]

Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 8:37 AM

To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: RE: Where is the draft of best practices?

After a quick review;

My wife volunteers at a hospital. She had to have a background check before being accepted. Screening of volunteers was not mentioned. I think it needs to be covered.

I am thinking of volunteering after retirement at a public facility to process a large collection that has been ignored for 20 years. What about a volunteer doing something that staff has been unable to touch for decades?

Now, time for your comments.

Thanks.

Ron

From: Haury, David [<mailto:dhaury@pa.gov>]

Sent: Monday, April 07, 2014 8:35 AM

To: SAA Headquarters

Subject: RE: [rao] Call for Member Comment: First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

I have a few comments on the proposed best practices:

Most of the recommendations are appropriate, and increasingly non-profit historical organizations of any size have highly organized volunteer programs, complete with signed documentation such as position descriptions, evaluations, and so forth (even contracts in some cases). However, I am not sure these recommendations are all in sync with the situations found in the vast majority of smaller historical organizations, which have one or no paid staff and rely almost entirely on volunteers. The recommendations of particular concern are:

2. Volunteers should not do the work of paid employees, nor should they be used to replace work that was done previously by paid employees. The role and contribution of volunteers should be unique and should not duplicate work performed in an organization.
3. Volunteers should not be used in full-time, long-term assignments. Volunteer activities should be part-time, sporadic, or of fixed duration.

The guidelines should account for the historical society staffed by one paid professional (most often with a museum background) which has several volunteers who care for the society's photograph and document collections. What does it mean to "do the work of paid employees" when you have no paid archivists and no money to pay an archivist?

Numerous historical societies have faced significant budget and staffing cuts over the past five or six years. Many are technically non-profits, but they may also be the official county historical society and receive (or formerly received) public funding. If your budget and staff have been cut due to circumstances largely beyond the institutions' control, why shouldn't they seek volunteers to replace the archivist they were formerly able to pay? This sort of pronouncement makes SAA seem elitist and out of touch with the real world.

One or more of the volunteers in a small organization may be retired professional archivists. One or more of them may volunteer close to full-time, perhaps just with a little more flexibility regarding vacations but often working nearly 40 hour weeks. I had one such volunteer who started working in the small college archives where I first worked in the early 1980s and who just "retired" last year after thirty years of nearly full-time volunteering with the photo collection. These guidelines would seem to discourage this sort of dedication.

How often are we really dealing with bad actors when it comes to volunteers? By that I mean an organization which has the money to pay an archivist and then doesn't fill the position because it has recruited or found a volunteer instead. Is it wrong to have the money for one position but need both a museum curator and an archivist – then when you find a volunteer for one or the other of these roles, you seek a volunteer for the other. These are the choices administrators and boards make in the real world. Museums use volunteer docents alongside paid professionals, they use volunteer clerks in their stores next to paid store managers, etc. In other words, volunteers do the same work as paid professionals and supplement the work of the professionals in hundreds of small museums and historical societies which have extremely limited budgets. SAA should think of a way to oppose abuses while not condemning the vast majority of historical institutions in North America.

Several of my staff volunteer some time with their local city or county archives – they process collections just like the professional archivist on staff who has twice as much work as they can do – so is this wrong?

The guidelines should probably make a more clear distinction between an internship and volunteering since on several occasions graduate students are mentioned. I understand unpaid internships are somewhat controversial, but every organization should draw a very clear line between interns and volunteers, with the interns having numerous requirements to be identified as such. I think these guidelines should at least clarify the difference between a volunteer and an intern.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

David

PS 3. A graduate student or professional archivist volunteers to assist a grassroots, community-based archive serving a diverse community. Are you saying this wouldn't be appropriate in a small Midwestern town this isn't particularly diverse? I would leave off the qualifier regarding diversity.

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From: Stacey Baldrige [mailto:smbaldrige@alaska.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 5:42 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Comments on Best Practices for Volunteers

Hello, I have some comments on Best Practices for Volunteers.

1. Provide some mention of advertising for volunteers. A post on the archive's Facebook page or website, for instance.
2. A good portion of the information in Best Practices for Volunteers exists in NARA's Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives, so if this is meant to be short and widely read, I'd shorten it.
3. I think the Examples of Volunteer Arrangements can be left out, except to maybe mention the difference between internships and volunteering (SAA's Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education.) Much of what is said in Examples of Volunteer Arrangements is already mentioned throughout the main body of the best practices.

I think this addresses some of the issues with volunteers, and is a helpful guide for institutions looking to take on volunteers. Thank you for the opportunity to give input on this!

Stacey

--

Stacey Baldrige
Alaska Native Language Archive
Collection Manager
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P.O. Box 757680
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From: Escamilla, Manuel [mailto:MEscamilla@santa-ana.org]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 3:42 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: First Draft of the Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Dear Draft Committee ,

I thought that this a reasonable and well articulated set of guidelines for working with volunteers. However I feel that there was one crucial point missing in the draft related to investing in volunteers as more than just helpers.

I suggest adding a line or two about working to find ways to help the volunteers align their assigned tasks with other goals in their life. For example, institutions working with high school and undergraduate volunteers might be able to provide informal mentoring for their volunteers by informing them of ways they can market their experience in the archive to future employers, scholarship committees, and other areas of life. Being new to the professional world, this volunteer experience could be a more rewarding learning experience than they had initially signed up for. In the long run this investment strengths the archival institution by creating a corps of outgoing volunteers with a better chance of future success than those that would not have been provided informal guidance during their volunteer experience.

As many of us in the profession know, our love of archives usually came after some sort of volunteer experience. We cannot report to serve the public interest if we do not serve those members of the public that voluntarily give their time and energy to the continued maintenance of archival institutions.

I wish the committee well in their endeavors.

All the best,

Manny Escamilla
Archivist
Santa Ana History Room
Santa Ana Public Library
(714) 647-5280

mescamilla@santa-ana.org

From: Jody DeRidder [mailto:jody@jodyderidder.com]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 1:39 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: feedback on Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives proposal

Hi --

I'm responding as a member of the publications board.

My first comment is that the embedded links in this document do not work, so I was unable to further explore the references made (such as "What is an archivist?"). Given that shortcoming, I may address points that have been covered adequately via those links.

The preface states that this draft pertains to item 2.3 in the strategic plan: "Support the career development of members to assist them in achieving their goals. Based on that statement, I expected the document to address the efforts of members to gain salable experience as a volunteer, but instead, the document seems to be focused almost entirely on preventing any volunteer work that could be paid labor (if indeed there were any money to make that payment). Although I understand the fears behind it, I find that to be unrealistic, short sighted, and unhelpful. I don't think anyone is going to do work for free if instead they could be paid for it, but there are many situations where the money simply isn't there, and valuable materials will rot, unused, if volunteers are not allowed. If we do not care about valuable archival content, then we are denying a central tenant of what it means to be an archivist. One way to address this is to allow volunteers to be trained as archivists, and to use that experience then to obtain gainful employment. This means we need to draw a line at some point as to what level of expertise and education should be expected from an entry-level archivist who expects to be paid. I don't think anyone has done that yet. That would indeed be helpful.

The comment about "numerous online opportunities for ... crowdsourcing or tagging" made me laugh. It seemed so out of context with the rest of that paragraph, as if you are throwing someone a bone that no one wants.

The line that "Archivists should be aware that there are many other information resources for volunteers and volunteer programs as well" should provide a listing of such resources that you recommend, with a comment as to why each is recommended. Otherwise, why mention this? Is it to say you don't want to address this here?

Under the best practices, I disagree with number 3, particularly the duration part. Some archives, particularly religious ones, are often handled by retirees who work full time and for years. Why should archives that cannot afford to pay for help not be allowed to benefit from the amazing amount of knowledge gathered by long-term employees?

On number 4, please add the word "regularly" after "evaluated." Without regular feedback, very few employees (volunteer or otherwise) are going to stay on track and provide the work you need.

On number 8, you need to add text as to how to delineate when "professional, administrative, or operational tasks" are or are not appropriate for volunteers.

In your examples of acceptable volunteer arrangements, numbers 7 and 10 both indicate that you approve of volunteers doing work that duplicates work done by those who are paid. This is inconsistent with your best practices described in number 2. Perhaps you should delineate WHICH paid tasks can be unpaid as well? :-) Or reword number 2.

Hope this helps.

Jody L. DeRidder
Head, Digital Services
University of Alabama Libraries
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Phone: 205.348.0511

From: Saretzky, Gary [mailto:Gary.Saretzky@co.monmouth.nj.us]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 1:21 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Cc: Christiansen, Tara
Subject: Comments, Best Practices for Volunteers

Here are a few comments:

The document should define, and make distinctions between, interns and volunteers. My personal understanding is that interns work to get educational credit or complete an educational requirement. Volunteers are any others who work without pay.

Page, 2, number 2, needs serious revision. Many volunteers do archival work that could be done by archival employees and for good reasons but the archives cannot pay them even if it wanted to. For example, there are retired archivists and librarians that want to keep busy and are glad to volunteer their services. Others are in between archival jobs and want to keep their hand in and gain experience and network. What should be prohibited is cutting archival staff for the purpose of replacing paid employees with volunteers. Note that some historical societies and archives that acquired paid archival staff with grant funds could not continue to pay them after the grant was over and could only maintain services with volunteers. Much more flexibility needs to be built into #2 to account for circumstances where it is reasonable for volunteers to do archival work.

On page 2, number 5, I agree that interns should have written position descriptions but in many cases, this is not necessary for volunteers. Interns should have written position descriptions in order to validate the educational process. Writing such documents for volunteers, some of whom may be very short term, is an unreasonable burden on supervisors and often unnecessary.

Page 3, Examples of "unacceptable," number 1. As worded, this is too restrictive. Grad students need to do meaningful archival projects in order to develop their professional knowledge and abilities. We can't just give them tedious tasks that are beneath the dignity of professional archivists. Giving grad students archival processing projects, preparing finding aids, and performing editorial tasks involved in exhibit development, to name a few possible duties, are just what they want to do and what archives often need help with because they are understaffed with no prospect whatsoever of adding paid staff to carry out these projects. I think what you want to say here is that graduate interns should be paid. Note that in the Rutgers Public History Internship Program, which I coordinate for Undergraduate history majors, we do not permit the students to be paid, although they are eligible for travel expenses.

Page 3, examples of potentially problematic, number 1. I think what's mainly behind this is that SAA appropriately wants to discourage exploitation and encourage archives to hire students after their internships but the reality is that many archives simply do not have the budget to hire additional full or part time employees. If there are no openings, I do not why an intern can't stay on as a part time volunteer, as long as it is not a condition for future employment.

Hope this is helpful.

Gary D. Saretzky
Archivist, Monmouth County
Coordinator, Internship Programs, Rutgers History Department
732-308-3771 x5

From: Topper, Kate [mailto:ktopper@amfin.com]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 1:02 PM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: First Draft Best Practices

Hi there,

I think this looks great! If I were to comment on any point, it would be number two. My concern is that it may be difficult to identify a role for a volunteer that wouldn't have been done by a paid employee if there were a larger staff (thus the necessity for volunteers). Perhaps it could be reworded to emphasize that it shouldn't be work that a professional in the field would be doing? I understand clarifying that volunteers should not be exploited and you point out nicely that their work ought to be defined by a written policy. That may be enough to balance any abuse.

I do not have volunteers (just an intern or two during summers) so I may not be the best to suggest; just thought I'd share my two cents!

best!

Kate Topper
Information Specialist
IRC Corporate Archive

American Financial Group
513.579.2116

From: Bryce Henry [mailto:bhenry@pdx.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 11:18 AM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Comments on Draft of Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives

Recommendation 1 is good. Its footnote is useful and it would be even more helpful if following the best practices statement that SAA would create some resources compiling information related to laws and regulations for volunteer activities. This could also include assembling information related to the Recommendation 7.

Recommendation 2 seems difficult to imagine let alone implement. This would seem to basically exclude volunteers from doing the most necessary things in the institution such as reference services, processing work, metadata management, etc. In a high functioning shop it would seem like everyone would contribute to those things on some level. By establishing that the work of volunteers must be unique we are in danger of having them assigned only the most menial or time consuming of jobs that we may be reluctant to assign to paid staff.

Greetings Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives Members,

I am extremely pleased that SAA has decided to tackle the issues surrounding volunteers. I enjoyed your draft and have posted a few comments below. =

Recommendation 3 is good. Emphasis should be placed on projects with foreseeable conclusions along with fixed durations.

Recommendation 4 is good. Again it would be helpful to have some followup work performed resulting in guidance on how to appropriately evaluate and train both volunteers and supervisors. This could include some boilerplate policies and procedures as called for in recommendation 5. Unacceptable Volunteer Arrangement #3 should be either reconsidered or moved to problematic/careful considerations. It seems like there are several circumstances where paid employment may be in the wing but is not yet in place (grants, hiring unfreezes, etc.). It would be better to emphasize that organizations should be honest, transparent, and accountable if they make any such claims. Don't make promises you almost certainly won't be able to keep, but if there is a likely or maybe in the works I don't see that it is too problematic to share. The Acceptable Volunteer Arrangements could use more general scenarios. What would be especially helpful is if the acceptable examples could twist unacceptable or problematic ones into acceptable ones. It seems like most of the unacceptable or problematic examples are the ones volunteers get stuck in and that the acceptable scenarios are uncommon or directed mainly at professionals. Consider possibly breaking out acceptable volunteering practices for professional archivists (disasters, religious assistance, community assistance, etc.) and separating those from volunteers generally. This would help define the professionalism that we expect archivists to adhere to while helping to protect them from exploitation.

As a member, I would like to see either the continuation of this current work group or the formation of a new task force to help create and follow up on some of the recommendations. If additional time or assistance is needed please don't hesitate to ask.

Thank you for your time and hard work,
Bryce Henry

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From: Lolana Thompson [mailto:lthompson@dts.edu]
Sent: Friday, April 04, 2014 8:29 AM
To: SAA Headquarters
Subject: Comment from a Lone arranger

Regarding the Draft for Best Practices for Volunteers in Archives: perhaps I misunderstand #2, but since I am the only employee in the archives, anything I have a volunteer do is something that would otherwise be done by a paid employee. I think #2 is aimed at completely replacing a paid employee, but doesn't specify that. The 2 volunteers I have had did not have any archival training and individually volunteered a maximum of 6 hours per week. They are retired professionals from other fields who simply want to help our seminary in some way. They are not displacing me, but do help me accomplish a bit more than I would on my own. Sometimes one of my volunteers arranges documents chronologically and removes staples. That doesn't seem like "unique" work unless you say that no one else had to handle those specific papers.

Sincerely,
Lolana

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