Agenda Item III.B.

Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 1, 2016
Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia

Information Brief: Archives and the Environment
(Prepared by the SAA Committee on Public Policy)

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION

This information brief addresses the following priority within the SAA Public Policy Agenda: "To make accessible evidence of the diverse and complex elements of the human experience."

The Committee on Public Policy prepared this brief based on conversations with, and an overview drafted by, a group of archivists known as ProjectARCC (Archivists Responding to Climate Change). It was reviewed by Heidi N. Abbey, author of "The Green Archivist: A Primer for Adopting Affordable, Environmentally Sustainable, and Socially Responsible Archival Management Practices" (*Archival Issues*, Vol. 34, No. 2 [2012], pp. 91-115).

Unlike SAA's issue briefs, this proposed information brief does not respond to specific existing or pending legislation or regulations associated with archives and records. Instead, it is a "backgrounder" that provides an overview of the ways in which the work of archivists intersects with environmental issues and concerns. For example:

- Archivists collect material documenting all aspects of environmental issues.
- When engaged in planning, constructing, or renovating facilities, archivists should incorporate, as much as possible, the appropriate standards for sustainability and energy renewal.
- Archivists should be equipped to respond to the archives and records needs created by natural or human-made disasters.
- SAA should continually refine our efforts to provide appropriate resources, education, and training.

The brief may be revised over time as specific public policy issues (especially legislation or regulations) arise.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following information brief on Archives and the Environment be approved:

SAA Information Brief:
Archives and the Environment

SAA Position

The Society of American Archivists encourages and supports efforts to preserve and make accessible archives and records documenting the environment. To that end, SAA will assist archivists in developing and using "green" facility guidelines and standards and provide resources and training for responding to environmental changes and disasters that affect archival records.

SAA will:

- Advocate for preservation of the cultural and scientific record documenting groups, individuals, and organizations connected with environmental research.
- Advocate for resources and funding for archives to gain a better understanding of the potential impact of climate change on repositories and to more effectively protect our facilities against possible environmental changes.
- Collaborate with allied professions to monitor the impact on archives of state, federal, and international efforts in regard to climate change.
- Support opportunities for continuing education on disaster preparedness, sustainability for archival facilities, and the integration of renewable energy where possible in archival practices.
- Educate archivists about environmental standards[1] for facilities, particularly in the area of sustainable building design, as well as implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation practices.
- Monitor the impact of climate change as it affects communities, including relocation, and advocate for sufficient resources to document those communities that are significantly affected by climate change.[2]
- Work to mitigate the effects of major natural or human-made disasters on archival collections and facilities.
- Pursue sustainable choices when planning conferences and meetings.

[1] Examples of standards include the U.S. Green Building Council's Green Building and Climate Resilience recommendations and LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), an ecology-oriented building certification program run under the auspices of the USGBC. See also the Passive House standard.

[2] Coastal communities, in particular those of indigenous peoples, increasingly are affected by environmental changes, which in turn threaten their archival record. Traditional knowledge has developed reliable methods for recording historic weather and climate variability. (Therrell, M.D. and M.J. Trotter, 2011: Waniyetu Wówapi: Native American Records of Weather and Climate. Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society, 92: 583-592 . In recent years, communities have had to relocate from ancestral lands due to changes in the environment, which has, in turn, threatened sources of such traditional knowledge. Examples include the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw in Louisiana and the Inupiat Eskimo in Alaska.

The Issues

Documentation

Many archivists are preserving and providing access to archives and records documenting discussions about the environment and climate change conducted by scientists and other individuals and groups. Some archivists have developed documentation strategies focused on climate-related issues,[3] and a few archives have designated positions to focus on the documentation of these issues.[4] As a result of these steps, some of the records being collected include:

- Dated photographs of landscapes and agriculture.
- Datasets that are useful for climate research.
- All aspects and sides of environmental discussions regarding climate change, including the papers of scientists and activists.
- Government records about local, regional, or national responses to climate issues.
- Recorded lectures, interviews, and debates about the environment.

Guidelines for Sustainability and Energy Renewal for Archives Facilities

Many archivists are making concerted efforts to better integrate sustainability/energy-based decisions and standards in the construction, operation, and renovation of archival facilities, with the goal of creating appropriate environments and reducing long-term energy costs. These efforts include:

- Society of American Archivists Facilities Publications:[5]
  - *Archival and Special Collections Facilities: Guidelines for Archivists, Librarians, Architects, and Engineers* (2009)
  - *Green Is Great: Planning and Developing an Environmentally Friendly Building* (Webinar, 2009)
  - *Planning New and Remodeled Archival Facilities* (2007)
- U.S. Green Building Council's Green Building and Climate Resilience Recommendations[6]
  - LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) and the Passive House Standard (USGBC)
- National Archives and Records Administration:
  - Sustainability Plan[7]
  - Office of Management and Budget Scorecard on Sustainability/Energy[8]

Disaster Planning, Preparedness, and Response

[3] The Greater Western Library Alliance (GWLA) organized and created the Western Waters Digital Library in the early 2000s: http://www.gwla.org/Home/Announcements/westernwatersdigitallibraryannouncescompletionofanehfundedproject

[4] Water Archivist, California State University-Fresno: https://archivesgig.wordpress.com/2016/03/01/fresno-ca-water-archivist-california-state-university-fresno/

[5] http://saa.archivists.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/store/storeFront.html?Action=Store

[6] U.S. Green Building Council: http://www.usgbc.org/home.

[7] NARA: Sustainability Plan: https://www.archives.gov/about/plans-reports/sustainability/

[8] A description of the OMB's program is available here: https://www.epa.gov/greeningepa/office-management-and-budget-scorecards-sustainability-and-energy. NARA's Scorecard documentation is included as part of its Sustainability Report.

SAA continues to develop resources and training on planning and responding to disasters at the local, regional, and national levels. These include:

- The SAA Foundation's National Disaster Recovery Fund for Archives.
- Support for the development of dPlan: The Online Disaster Tool.[9]

Education, Resources, and Training

SAA continues to develop relevant resources for its members, including:

- Training workshops in preservation and protection.
- A list of vendors that specialize in disaster response.

Additional Resources

Abbey, Heidi N. "The Green Archivist: A Primer for Adopting Affordable, Environmentally Sustainable, and Socially Responsible Archival Management Practices." *Archival Issues: The Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference*: Vol. 34, No. 2 (2012): 91-116.

American Library Association, "ALA Council passes resolution on sustainable libraries." http://www.ala.org/news/press-releases/2015/07/ala-councilpasses-resolution-sustainable-libraries.

ALA SustainRT:
http://www.ala.org/sustainrt/home

Berenfeld, Michelle L. "Planning for Permanent Emergency: 'Triage' as a Strategy for Managing Cultural Resources Threatened by Climate Change." *The George Wright Forum*, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 5-12 (2015).

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Fifth Assessment Report (AR5). (2014). https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar5/.

Hansen, J., Sato, M., Kharecha, P., Hearty, P., Ruedy, R., Kelley, M., Lo, K.-W., Bauer, M. (July 23, 2015). Ice melt, sea level rise and superstorms: Evidence from paleoclimate data, climate modeling, and modern observations that 2 °C global warming is highly dangerous. Atmospheric Chemistry and Physics Discussions, 15, 14, 20059-20179. http://www.atmos-chem-phys-discuss.net/15/20059/2015/acpd-15-20059-2015.pdf.

ProjectARCC (Archivists Responding to Climate Change): https://projectarcc.org/

Tansey, Eira. "Archival Adaptation to Climate Change," Sustainability, Science, Practice & Policy 11.2 (March 2, 2016): http://archives/vol11Iss2/1509-019.tansey.html

United Nations. Framework Convention on Climate Change:
http://unfccc.int/documentation/items/2643.php

Welch, Todd. "'Green' Archivism: The Archival Response to Environmental Research. *The American Archivist*, Vol. 62 (Spring 1999): 74-99.

[9] http://www.dplan.org/ Retrieved 6/13/2016.

Support Statement: This information brief supports SAA's Public Policy Agenda by providing members and other prospective audiences with an overview of the ways in which the work of archivists intersects with environmental issues and concerns.

Relation to Strategic Plan: Addresses Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists, Strategy 1.2. Educate and influence decision makers about the importance of archives and archivists, and 1.3. Provide leadership in ensuring the completeness, diversity, and accessibility of the historical record.

Fiscal Impact: Approval of the issue brief does not commit SAA to expend funds on any particular advocacy effort at this time.