Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable (AACR) History

Final Report (Draft) Task Force

Rebecca Hankins, E. Evan Echols, Barrye Brown,

Denise Villegas Blanchet, and Yvonne Ivey

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**Dedicated to the memory of archivist extraordinaire, the late Brenda Banks[[1]](#footnote-1)**

We can view the history of AACR through the prism of this African Proverb, *“Until the lion tells his (her) own story, the story will always glorify the hunter.”*

“Archives must ensure that all people are included in the historical record of humankind.” *Karen Jefferson, AACR History interview, 2015.*

***Introduction***

AACR was established in 1987; 51 years after the founding of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), and about 10-15 years after SAA established an administrative office to handle the affairs of the organization. When viewed alongside the drastically changing national landscape: the modern civil rights movement from the 1940s-1960s giving way to improved equality in education, voting, and employment opportunity; the women’s rights movement of the 1960s and 70s; and the gay and lesbian movement of the 1960s-70s; it appears that the SAA was slow to address the diverse interests of its growing membership. Ultimately, the SAA did respond to those interests with the establishment of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable, consequently having “the lion his/her own story” was acknowledged and came to fruition.

Karen Jefferson, Records Manager at the Robert W. Woodruff Library of the Atlanta University Center, has written a history of the AACR and has graciously allowed this Task Force to integrate her writing into this report. Jefferson’s research uncovered the numerous fits and starts in the development of the AACR. Seeing the need to address the role of people of color in the archives environment, the SAA created committees, task forces, reports, held council meetings, passed proclamations, and formed diverse groups to tackle the issue of diversity in the SAA.

The SAA AACR History Task Force submits the following report that will describe the chronological history of AACR and include personal narratives from many of its early leaders and members. This report will describe the work of AACR and its strategic advocacy on behalf of diversifying the archival content, the archival profession, and critically engaging SAA on the necessity of having diverse leadership. The Task Force members are Rebecca Hankins, chair, E. Evan Echols, Barrye Brown, Jameatris Rimkus, Denise Villegas Blanchet, and Yvonne Ivey. A sincere thank you to Roundtable co-chairs Derek Mosely and Gabrielle Dudley, who were instrumental in forming this group and creating the charge. We also thank AACR co-chair Aaisha Haykal, for patiently allowing us to continue our work through her tenure.

**Early History**

In 1970, the SAA Council created the *Committee for the 1970s* to “analyze the present structure of the Society, its programs and objectives, its relationships with other professional organizations and most importantly, its needs during the coming decade”. The *Committee for the 1970s* released a report in 1972 listing several recommendations to further the goal of making the SAA more democratic, more responsive, and more relevant to the members including the following statements:

*· The SAA, through its nominations and election procedures, should strive for even more representative officers and Council members by taking into consideration such factors as archival interest (i.e., church, college, business, municipal, records management, etc.), age, sex, geography, nationality, ethnicity, and race. (p. 197)*

*· The SAA should be actively committed to the social goals of racial justice, equal employment, and reasonable access to research materials…To this end, the SAA has a moral obligation to take official positions on those contemporary public issues, however controversial, which affect the archival profession. We recommend also that the Society appoint a standing committee on minority groups to press for the rights and advancement of minorities in the archival professions. (p. 205)*

SAA Council accepted the Committee’s report and, with the approval of the membership, revised the SAA Constitution incorporating many of the changes recommended in the report.

The SAA began a collaborative effort with the American Association of Museums and the Association for State and Local History to form a Joint Committee on Opportunities for Minorities in Museums, Archives, and Historical Agencies. The SAA appointed Phil Mason, who had served as Chairman of the SAA’s Committee for the 1970s, and Elsie Freivogel Freeman to represent the Society on the Joint Committee. Outreach to minority members of the SAA was poor; as many minorities expressed that they were unaware of the Joint Committee and noted that there had been no direct communications from the representatives of the committee.

Women archivists were the first minority group to see the results of their advocacy to push for broader participation in the Society and equality in both opportunities and pay in the profession. In 1972, the SAA established the Committee on the Status of Women. Many of the concerns of women in the archival profession paralleled those of minorities. As Miriam I. Crawford noted in her article, “Women in Archives: A Program for Action.”

*We should not be drawn into divisive approaches of Black vs. Woman, for our stake is the same as the black man and woman and into in opposition to their needs; we are allies in the movement toward a society that guarantees equal opportunity*. (p. 227)

Despite the progress made by women archivists, little progress had been made in broadening participation of minorities in the Society. Diana Lachatanere notes that her first attendance at SAA occurred in the 1970s when Ann Shockley, who was the librarian/archivist at Fisk University, with her position on the Program Committee, created sessions that either was focused on African Americans or had African American representation. “So one thing she did at the session was to invite all of us, all of the young, people of color to her house for dinner ... She made it very clear that this was the first time the Society had this number of black people there.” (pg. 3-Diana Lachatanere, AACR History interview)

**The Task Force on Minorities**

The first task force “appointed to examine the role of minorities in the archival profession” was eventually created in 1981, after a resolution approved by the membership at the business meeting of the SAA 45th annual conference held in Berkeley, California in the Fall of 1981.

At the Berkeley meeting, Harold Pinkett, considered the Dean of Black archivists, chaired the session, “Minorities and the Profession: An Agenda for Action.” Discussion at the session revealed a growing frustration by minorities with the slow pace of the Society’s efforts to include broader minority participation in the profession. Diana Lachatanere, who by the 1980s was in New York at the Schomburg Research Center and a panelist notes, “...after that session there was enough fire generated that afterward, we all sat around talking, so what are going to do? Are we just going to run our mouths? Are we just going attack the leadership of the SAA? Or are we going to do something proactive?” (pg. 4 Diana Lachatanere, AACR History interview)

In an effort to push SAA forward to address the issues of minority concerns, Diana and Paula Williams, archivist for the United Negro College Fund, agreed to draft a resolution. Paula presented the proposal at the Business Meeting and, with the approval of the membership, the Council subsequently established the Task Force on Minorities. Lachatanere and Williams took the initiative to develop support for the Task Force. They sent a letter to minority archivists they knew and some of the individuals who attended Pinkett’s session on “Minorities and the Profession.” Suggestions for members of the Task Force and project ideas were sent to SAA President, Ed Weldon. Thomas Battle was appointed the chairman of the Task Force and John Fleckner, Archie Motley, Daniel T. Williams, and Paula Williams were appointed members. Diana Lachatanere was invited to replace Phil Mason as the SAA representative for the Joint Committee on Minority Recruitment, and Mason was selected as chairperson. Lachatanere, Mason, and Freivogel were appointed as ex-officio members of the Task Force.

The members immediately noted that the Task Force had no representation for Asian, Hispanic, and Native Americans. Karen Jefferson noted, “At the beginning of the minorities task force Native Americans, people of Latin American and Caribbean descent; and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender were included under the umbrella of minorities. Although minorities share some broad experiences as minorities, each group has unique concerns specific to their culture and experience” (pg. 2 Karen Jefferson, AACR History interview). Efforts were made to identify SAA members that would broaden representation in the Task Force. During the SAA meeting in Berkeley, there was a session on the Tribal Archives Caucus. This group was considered as a possible source to identify Native American representation. Efforts were made to identify Asian-American representation through some of the cultural institutions in the U.S. However, during that year no appointment for Native American and Asian-American archivists to the Task Force were made. In 1982, Idilio Garicia Pena was identified and appointed as the representative for Hispanic archivists.

The initial work of the Task Force was to identify issues and concerns relevant to minority members of the SAA and to develop a plan of action to resolve those issues. The Task Force sent out outreach letters to SAA members and received responses that provided a pool of ideas for consideration. Responses were received from Brenda Banks, John Fleckner, Ervin Jordan, Wilda Logan, Archie Motley, Harold Pinkett, and Ann Shockley. The Task Force on Minorities and the Committee on Women discussed possibilities for collaborations, although ultimately no joint efforts were pursued.

In its six-year tenure, the Task Force made many recommendations to the SAA Council. These recommendations were the basis for the work that the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable pursue today. Among the recommendations made by the Task Force were:

● Develop a roster of minorities working in the profession.

● Establish a membership committee to help in recruitment efforts for the Society.

● Develop a policy statement regarding recruitment of minorities.

● Develop an organizational handbook to increase membership’s knowledge of the Society’s structure and functions.

● Provide orientation for new members at the annual meeting.

● Lower introductory dues rates for new members.

● Establish a single-day registration fee for the annual meeting.

● Seek funds to develop programs to address needs of minorities in the profession.

● Financially support SAA’s own activities that are designed to address issues related to minorities in the profession.

● Establish a scholarship or fellowship to support the development of minorities in the profession.

The Task Force was able to accomplish many of the goals they had set, including, implementing a survey that resulted in a roster of minorities working in the archival profession. The Task Force also continued to argue strongly for the establishment of a membership committee, as Diana Lachatanere states, “the reason why we were pushing a membership committee is because then, out of the membership committee you could put together a recruitment program that could in fact target, we would target everybody, but we could specifically target black folks...” (pg. 7 Lachatanere) The Task Force understood the importance of regularly held open houses and business meetings at SAA annual meeting, ensuring that the membership was aware of Task Force activities and to garner input about its work.

The establishment of the Task Force provided an immediate vehicle for broader minority participation in SAA leadership, as all task forces and committees became part of the leadership. Other appointments soon followed. Diana Lachatanere was appointed to serve on the Joint Committee on Minority Recruitment and elected to the 1984 Nominations Committee. Lachatanere and Carol Rudisell were appointed to the newly established Membership Committee, a committee that continues as an essential function of the SAA organization. Wilda Logan was invited to serve on the 1983 Program Committee.

**Creation of a Roundtable**

In 1987, after six years of effort, the Task Force on Minorities’ members found themselves at a crossroads. They were disheartened by the SAA Council’s lack of interest and financial support for the work of the Task Force and the implementation of its recommendations. Without additional resources from the SAA, the Task Force’s effectiveness was severely restricted. The Joint Committee for Minority Recruitment disbanded because of similar concerns. The three sponsoring organizations would not allocate funds for recruitment efforts and the Joint Committee was not able to garner outside funding. The Task Force decided to bring its work to a close and recommended the establishment of a minorities’ roundtable.

Establishing a roundtable requires a signed petition with a minimum of 25 SAA members. There were less than 25 minority members in SAA in 1987 but there were other members concerned about diversity in SAA and the profession, and members who worked with collections documenting minorities. These supporters signed, allowing the petition to go forward and Council approved the establishment of the roundtable.

Diana Lachatanere and Carol Rudisell agreed to serve as the initial coordinators for the roundtable. They prepared the first two newsletters for the newly forming roundtable, established an agenda, and chaired the first meeting. The minorities’ roundtable held its first meeting at the September 1987 SAA annual conference in New York City. At the roundtable business meeting, a structure was adopted in which there would be two co-chairs with staggering terms of office so that there would be one co-chair elected annually. Carol Rudisell agreed to continue as the co-chair. Lachatanere was elected chair of the Manuscript Section and declined to serve as the co-chair for the Roundtable. Donna Wells agreed to serve as the second co-chair.

It was decided that membership in SAA would not be a requirement for participation in the Roundtable. This openness would allow the Roundtable to interact with a broader array of minorities in the profession. However, SAA membership would be encouraged and Roundtable chairpersons are required to be SAA members in good standing.

The purpose of the Minorities Roundtable was defined to:

1. Identify and address the concerns of Archivists of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent.

2. Promote wider participation of said archivists in the archival profession.

3. Promote the preservation of archival materials that pertain to people of color.

**A Rose By Any Other Name**…

One of the topics of discussion at the first business meeting was concern about the name for the Roundtable.

*…those in attendance agreed that the Roundtable would be defined racially and ethnically with a Third World context. It was also agreed that the Roundtable’s primary purpose would be to identify and address the concerns of archivists of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descent. While there was overwhelming dissatisfaction with the name “Minorities Roundtable,” we could find no name which truly captured the essence of the group. “Third World Archivists Roundtable” seemed to come closest to reflecting our goals and actual composition, and so during the past year, it has been informally adopted as our new title. (TWAR Newsletter Spring/Summer 1988 p. 1-2 v. 2 n. 2)*

The membership was given a year to contact the co-chairs with their thoughts on the new name and other suggestions for a name. However, the further debate at the Roundtable’s second business meeting in September 1988, those in attendance voted to change the name to the African American and Third World Archivists Roundtable. In the discussion, it was noted that the term,

*Minority was perceived to have too broad an interpretation that could include not only racial groups but also disabled, gay and lesbians, and other groups that find themselves without a voice in SAA. All such groups should have a voice in SAA, however, to combine the groups under one roundtable is likely to result in the groups competing over priorities and cluttering issues in an effort to represent all concerns of all the various groups. In addition, some archivists find the term minority a negative portrayal with its implications of being less than, thereby not equal to, thereby inferior. This resulting compromise in 1988 of the name Third World Archivists also met with some questions because of its general association to peoples from countries other than the United States. However, the term Third World was chosen as a term to link the archivists of color to their ancestry in Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America and Asia. The newly selected name highlights African-Americans, the largest group with the Roundtable. Recognizing one group above the others may discourage participation particularly from Native Americans who would hardly consider their ancestry outside the United States. AATWR Newsletter March 1989 p. 1-2*

The debate on the name continued and rose again at the 1994 business meeting in Indianapolis. Deborah Saito encouraged members to revisit the issue and select a name “more inviting, more inclusive and more directly associated with the statement and purpose of the roundtable.” After a lengthy discussion, the members in attendance voted to change the name to the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable. (AAC Newsletter March 1995, p 1)

**Supporting the goals of the SAA**

The mission of the AACR as stated on its website today has changed from its initial purpose having been subsumed into the larger SAA activity. It continues to act as an interest group within the SAA with the stated purposes to:

1. **Identify and address the concerns of archivists of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent**

This is accomplished by outreach activities that include a website and a newsletter published twice a year now available online. Our roster of members is a rainbow coalition with over 300 people representing multiple constituencies from Native Americans to African American, from Filipino Americans to Puerto Ricans, Chicanos to Asians. We bring a multi-cultural perspective to the Society of American Archivists and the archival enterprise.

**2. Promote wider participation of said archivists in the archival profession**

The Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable (AACR) was created twenty-seven years ago, since then, the demographics of the profession have changed. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) has seen an increase in minority members, from 2.8% to 7% from 1982 to 2004.[[2]](#footnote-2) It is impossible to say if the AACR’s existence has been a catalyst for this change, but the roundtable’s actions and outreach efforts have been focused on bringing new minorities into the profession and providing opportunities for minority archivists to actively participate in professional organizations. The mission of the AACR directly supports the core organizational value of the SAA to “ensure the diversity of its membership and leaders, the profession, and the archival record”.[[3]](#footnote-3) The roundtable also supports the fourth goal listed in the SAA’s 2013 – 2018 strategic plan by advancing the field, “keeping pace with an increasingly diverse archival record” and by “continuing to enrich the association and the profession with greater diversity in membership and expanded leadership opportunities”.[[4]](#footnote-4)

One of the major ways that the AACR affects the SAA is through the Roundtable’s seat on the Diversity Committee whose goal is to “ensure that the organization’s services, activities, policies, communications, and products support the goal of a more diverse SAA and professional archival community”.[[5]](#footnote-5) Recently, the Diversity Committee began working to create a Diversity Brochure, “explaining diversity within SAA and the profession as well as archival materials.”[[6]](#footnote-6) This project has been long overdue, a Diversity Brochure Task Force was created after a vote by the Council of the SAA at the 1997 annual meeting, but was later disbanded. A call for case studies has been solicited by the Diversity Committee on the topic of diversifying the archival record.[[7]](#footnote-7) The Mujeres Latinas Project at the University of Iowa, “Oh Freedom: An Epic Journey through Georgia” at Kennesaw State University, the Southern Colorado Ethnic Heritage and Diversity Archives at Colorado State, the Milwaukee Transgender Oral History Project, and Documenting and Digitizing the Student Experience: a Collaboration Between Iowa State University’s Carver Academy and the University Archive have all been highlighted as examples of diverse projects and collections.

Even as demographics continue to change in the archival profession, the A\*CENSUS conducted in 2004 identified “attracting archivists who will reflect the diversity of society at large” as one of the challenges that U.S. archivists face.[[8]](#footnote-8) The A\*CENSUS states, “if we measure the ethnic and racial makeup of the archival community against the U.S. population as a whole, we can see that the archival profession has a long way to go to even begin to reflect the country’s ethnic and racial composition.”[[9]](#footnote-9) In many ways, the actions and outreach activities of the AACR have supported action items recommended by the A\*CENSUS report. One of the action items listed in A\*CENSUS to recruit and retain new workers in the archival profession is to “support public awareness and education campaigns.”[[10]](#footnote-10) The AACR has supported public awareness of not only archives but archives that hold collections created by diverse communities. A graduate degree has become nearly essential for potential archivists to find employment in the profession and it is the “primary form of entry into the archival profession”.[[11]](#footnote-11) Cost is still the greatest barrier between non-white archivists and the pursuit of additional education and training.[[12]](#footnote-12) The creation of the AACR-sponsored Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award in 1993 has since helped more than twenty-nine graduate students become active in the SAA while in school by providing one year of membership in the SAA and registration and travel expenses to attend the SAA’s annual meeting in the award year.[[13]](#footnote-13) The Mosaic Scholarship established by the Diversity Committee in August 2008, has provided funding for the education of minority students in archival studies as part of the effort to advance SAA’s Diversity Strategic Priority.[[14]](#footnote-14) The Mosaic Program and scholarships are unique in that this program is a joint effort between the Association of Research Libraries and the SAA.[[15]](#footnote-15) Part of the funding for the Mosaic Program is provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, a program that is in danger of being eliminated by Paul Ryan’s proposed 201 budget. The Initiative to Recruit a Diverse Workforce funded by the Association of Research Libraries has also been promoted by the AACR on the listserv.

**3. Promote the preservation of archival materials that pertain to people of color.**

What we as individuals and as members of SAA, have sought to preserve has brought a more inclusive representation of the history of this country. With AACR’s efforts to preserve archival materials of those under-represented ethnic groups, SAA has provided opportunities to inform the greater archival community of their value via panel presentations, discussions, and poster sessions. As with other aspects of American history the civil rights movement is now widely known, resources have been collected, exhibits have been developed, and lectures are held concerning these events in repositories all throughout this nation. The stories of *Brown v Board*, the Little Rock nine, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the March on Washington, and desegregation of public accommodations, to name a few activities, are found in collections and resources in every state in this nation. These efforts would arguably have been footnotes in history if not for the work of archivists to collect and preserve this history in all its forms. This history, if not collected allows the American story to be filled with holes and gaps. For example, the history of busing could be told exclusively from the horrors of the South, but what about the North? If we did not collect the stories of places like Boston, which was a particularly nasty episode, we would only have part of the story. What happened with desegregation in Boston and New Orleans was very similar, they both divided their respective cities and were reported both nationally and internationally. We must have an accurate history that is representative of all sides irrespective of its outcome whether it’s the successes such as the case with Brown or often times its ugliness as in the case of busing in Boston and New Orleans.

What about those who are the unknown and those that challenges the narrative? Archivists of color can discuss the concepts of *collective memory* that serve to unify a group of people and provide a group identity. We understand that this can be a positive concept for documenting the history of people of color, when there is a need to identify persons within a photograph or through oral histories, especially when an event takes place in the past, but also challenges the prevailing history, *collective memory* can help to discover that missing data.

We have seen the fruits of *collective memory* in the case of two prominent individuals, U.S. President Thomas Jefferson and U.S. Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina --one a slaveholder and the other a once avowed segregationist of the 1950s and 1960s-- were both “discovered” to have fathered Black children. The African American community passed these stories around for years, but because there was nothing in writing, their oral stories were dismissed until, through DNA testing, the truth could not be denied. What is, even more, telling about these and many stories like this is the lack of credence given to these oral stories by historians and writers who have written extensively on the lives of these two men. Brent Staples of the *New York Times* puts it succinctly: “The big lesson for historians in the Hemings-Jefferson case was that the oral histories passed down by slaves and their descendants were more reliable than the official written record. This put historians on notice that they should give the oral tradition more credence, especially when working on issues of interracial intimacy.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

However, on the negative side, there can also be collective amnesia when the memory of something is so horrific people choose to remove it from their memory as a protection such as the case of many interned Japanese during WWII and some Holocaust survivors. This has also occurred more recently with Hurricane Katrina survivors. There can also be contested or competing memories that often are difficult to discern what is accurate or not, but these are all important for archivists, especially archivists of color, to capture because they provide a fuller picture of events with all of its inherent flaws. The archival community has been charged with this undertaking and it can be difficult and contentious, but it must be done.

**Vision Statement**In 2015, AACR established a set of ideas that would shape the work and intent of the Roundtables work. Titled *Our Vision*, these ideas articulate specifics of what our work as archivists and archives of color will address.

* We provide a space for discussion on issues affecting archivists and archives of color.
* We provide a platform to advocate for archives and archivists of color.
* We encourage the use of archives of color by various constituents.
* We are a resource for working with donors of color.
* We support the recruitment and retention of archivists of color through the Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Travel Award.
* We advocate for more representation of archivists of color in all aspects of SAA – awards, publications, decision making.

**Leadership**

Throughout the history of the SAA, many have served in strategic positions that have pushed the organization to adopt more progressive and inclusive policies. These policies, as noted above, have made overall changes to the organization for all of its members. They have served as Presidents, on SAA Council, committees, task forces, working groups, roundtables, and project teams.[[17]](#footnote-17) There are a number of AACR members that have also been selected as SAA Fellows, “the highest honor bestowed on individuals by SAA and is awarded for outstanding contributions to the archival profession.” The list below, by no means exhaustive, represents some of the past and current AACR members that have served in leadership positions throughout the SAA:

* SAA President/Council
  + Brenda Banks, President-1995-96
  + Danna Bell-Russel, President, 2013-14
  + Courtney Chartier, Council, 2016-19
  + Michelle Light, Council, 2016-17
  + Terry Baxter, Council, 2011-14
  + Deborra Richardson, 2009-12
  + Rebecca Hankins, Council, 2006-09
* SAA Fellows
  + Brenda Banks
  + Thomas Battle
  + Danna Bell Russel
  + Karen Jefferson
  + Wilda Logan
  + Archie Motley
  + Harold Pinkett
  + Deborra Richardson
  + Rebecca Hankins
  + Helen Wong Smith
* Awards Committee
  + Steven Booth, Co-Chair
  + Christine Paschild, Diversity Award
  + Josué Hurtado, Forman Scholarship
  + Krystal Appiah, Mosaic Scholarship
  + LaNesha DeBardelaben, Mosaic Scholarship
  + Aditi Worcester, Mosaic Scholarship
  + Lisa Cruces-Welty, Pinkett Award
* Diversity Committee
  + Tywanna Whorley
  + Jamillah Gabriel
  + Aaisha Haykal
  + Wesley Chenault
  + Lucinda Manning
  + Cecilia Salvatore
  + Holly Smith, AACR Liaison
  + Deborah A. Torres
* Committee on Education
  + Lorraine Doug
* Mosaic Program Advisory Group
  + Deborra Richardson, Chair
  + Cheryl Beredo
  + Rose L. Chou
  + Jillian Cuellar
  + Harrison W. Inefuku
* Mosaic Program Selection Committee
  + Harrison W. Inefuku, Chair
  + Lisa Nguyen
  + Tiffany-Kay Sangwand
  + Stacie Williams
* Program Committee
  + Rebecca Hankins
  + Jillian Cuellar
* Business Archives Section
  + Jamal Booker
* Archivists' Toolkit/Archon Roundtable
  + Jillian Cuellar
* Human Rights Roundtable
  + Beatrice Skokan, Chair
  + Jasmine Jones, Web Liaison
* Issues and Advocacy Roundtable
  + Sarah Quigley, Vice Chair
* Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Roundtable
  + Natalie Baur, Chair
  + Michelle Gachette, Steering Committee
  + Aaisha Haykal, Steering Committee
  + Marisol Ramos, Steering Committee
* Lesbian and Gay Archives Roundtable
  + Deborah A. Torres, Steering Committee
* Native American Archives Roundtable
  + Ann Massmann, Chair
  + Jennifer O'Neal, Immediate Past Chair
* Women Archivists Roundtable
  + Helen Kim, Steering Committee
* Task Force on Member Affinity Groups
  + Shawn San Roman, Chair
* National Historical Publications and Records Commission
  + Karen Jefferson

Many members of the AACR serve in leadership positions throughout the SAA. There are also members that do not actively volunteer for positions on other roundtables and committees in the SAA, but they demonstrate leadership in other ways. Members of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable have created an advocacy campaign to speak out against issues of importance to archives such as the sale of *Ebony* Magazines photographic archives, the closing of Clark-Atlanta’s library program, and most recently the proposed closure of the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College. A template for a letter of protest and a petition was created by members of AACR and was a major part of keeping the Center open.

**Roundtable Newsletter and Website**

The Roundtable’s newsletter has been a primary medium for communication for its members. It provides information about members, their institutions, SAA, the archival profession and documents the activities and achievements of the Roundtable. After the first year, Latchatanere and Rudisell passed on the editorship for the newsletter to Karen L. Jefferson and Ruth Hill. Through the early years, the editors have included Kathryn Neal, Cathy Lynn Mundale, and Jo Ellen El-Bashir, who served one of the longest tenures as editor. Thomas Battle acquired financial and staff support from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center to help underwrite the majority of the costs for printing and mailing of the newsletter. Under the editorship of Rose Roberta in 2003, the newsletter is now published electronically.

Brenda Square made the first attempt to establish a website for the Roundtable. However, she was not able to garner sufficient support for the project. In 2002, through the support of SAA, the Roundtable launched its website <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/aac.index.htm>. Rose Roberta spearheaded the effort with the assistance of Teresa Mora, Cathy Mundale, and Donna Wells. The website exposes the Roundtable to a national audience and informs its members of ongoing activity.

**Archivists of Color Directory**

A major effort of the Roundtable is to identify and archivists of color. In 1991 Carol Rudisell prepared the first Membership Directory in which ethnic/racial heritage was included for each member. Karen L. Jefferson compiled the *Archivists of Color Directory* in 1996. This directory focused exclusively on archivists of color rather than the entire membership of the Roundtable. The directory contained brief biographical information on each archivist, including education, work experience, and affiliations in professional archival, library, and history associations. The 2012 *Directory* is currently posted on the AACR website, however the list is limited to only the name, job title, and contact information. The Roundtable continues to maintain a membership list that includes contact information of persons interested in the Roundtable and supportive of its objectives.

**Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award**

One of the most visible achievements of the Roundtable is the Minority Student Award. Established in 1993 the award is a vehicle to encourage minority students to consider a career in the archival profession and to promote participation in SAA. It is one avenue we provide to introduce new and emerging archival students and scholars to the world of archives and SAA conference in particular. In 1998, the award was re-named in honor of Dr. Harold T. Pinkett in a proclamation encouraged by Thomas C. Battle. Dr. Pinkett, one of the first Black archivists employed by the National Archives, worked tirelessly to include minority participation and issues in the Society. SAA Council’s resolution acknowledged Dr. Pinkett’s contributions:

“Whereas, Harold T. Pinkett served with distinction during his long tenure at the National Archives and Records Service; and Whereas Harold T. Pinkett has been a scholar, archival educator, and mentor who has made important contributions to the archives profession; Therefore be it resolved that in recognition of his lifetime achievements and contributions to the archival profession, the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable supports the renaming of the SAA Minority Student Award to the Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award.”[[18]](#footnote-18)

The award is supported by donations from the SAA membership and gifts from supporters. It has become a tradition to take a collection in support of the award at the Roundtable’s business meeting held during the SAA annual conference. The donations made in “passing the hat” provide an ongoing source of revenue for the award. A high percentage of the awardees have become professional archivists and have become active members of SAA.

**Full Circle: The Diversity Task Force and Committee**

In 1995/6 SAA Council appointed the Task Force Organizational Effectiveness (TFOE). Among the issues raised in the Task Force’s deliberations was how to address diversity in the SAA and in the profession. Two approaches were suggested to address the issue, establish a diversity committee to provide oversight and implementation of activities or a diversity task force to further study the issue and make recommendations for action. In a climate of constrained resources and TFOE’s strong recommendations for streamlining SAA’s organizational structure, the Council chose to establish a Task Force on Diversity. The new task force was chaired by Brenda Banks with members Anne Difffendal, John Fleckner, Susan Fox, Karen Jefferson Deborah King (Burns), Joan Krizak, and Kathleen Roe. The Task Force was charged to investigate issues relating to diversity currently being addressed by the Society. The Task Force explored the SAA’s organizational structure and activities and how they supported or weakened diversity. Discussions considered ways to enhance or reinforce existing activities and identified initiatives to improve and encourage diversity in the Society and the profession. In its final report, the Task Force recommended:

* Develop an organizational position statement that articulates SAA’s commitment to becoming a more diverse organization
* Incorporate diversity into SAA’s strategic planning process.
* Reinforce and expand existing activities within SAA that support diversity.
* Identify and establish new initiatives that may assist SAA in its efforts to become a more diverse organization.

Upon accepting the Task Force report the Council also approved on June 13, 1999, a Position Statement on Diversity.

The Society of American Archivists is committed to integrating diversity concerns and perspectives into all aspects of the activities and into the fabric of the profession as a whole. SAA is also committed to the goal of a Society membership that reflects the broad diversity of American society. SAA believes that these commitments are essential to the effective pursuit of the archival mission “to ensure the identification, preservation, and use the nation’s historical record.”

Five years later the momentum from the Task Force on Diversity had languished and no major initiatives to increase diversity had been taken by the Society. In a session, at the 2003 annual meeting members of the audience expressed frustration at the Society’s slow and lack of action in implementing recommendations from the Task Force. In an effort to push the Society to make a more definitive commitment to diversity, the members of the 1996 Task Force on Diversity submitted a resolution to the membership for approval. The resolution directed that the SAA Council establish goals and benchmarks to measure the Society’s efforts in the area of diversity and report periodically to the membership.

In response to the resolution, the SAA Council established a Committee on Diversity “that works to ensure that the organization's services, activities, policies, communications, and products support the goal of a more diverse SAA and professional archival community. It functions as a catalyst for new diversity-related initiatives, developed in coordination with various SAA entities, and monitors, evaluates, advocates for, and reports on matters pertaining to the diversity of archival practitioners and documentation.” Diversity is also one of SAA’s three Strategic Priorities, which elevates its importance to all areas of the organization’s programming and work. Two major awards and funding streams that have developed from these efforts is the creation in 2008 of the Association of Research Libraries/SAA Mosaic Scholarship and the SAA Diversity Award started in 2011. The $5000 Mosaic Scholarship provides financial and mentoring support to minority students pursuing graduate education in archival science, to encourage students to pursue a career as an archivist, and to promote the diversification of the American archives profession. The Diversity Award recognizes an individual, group, or institution for outstanding contributions to advancing diversity within the archives profession, SAA, or the archival record.

**Task Force on AACR History**

In September of 2013, a call was emailed out to AACR members from co-chairs Derek Mosely and Gabrielle Dudley, for anyone interested in working on the AACR History Task Force. The members chosen were Rebecca Hankins, chair (Texas A&M University); and members E. Evan Echols (University of Delaware); Barrye Brown (the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), Jameatris Rimkus (the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign); Denise Villegas Blanchet (Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LACMTA)) Research Library and Archive); and after the first year, Yvonne Ivey (UT Austin graduate student). Rebecca contacted Karen Jefferson who generously shared her draft history of AACR that was unpublished and gave us permission to use any parts of it for our document. All members were encouraged to read and take notes for what areas needed updating and what was missing. Initial sharing of thoughts and ideas were exchanged in November/December 2013 in preparation for the first meeting in 2014. A Google document was created to house all of our email exchanges, reports, and work on this project. Some additions we discussed included a more definitive timeline of the early history that might change the narrative of Karen Jefferson’s work. There needs to be more on how the inclusion of minorities made a difference in who and what is archived. Was there a difference or do we as AACR members continue to collect the known and celebrated? Denise pointed out that there needs to more information on minorities in the field as leaders in the profession. More is needed on women’s roles/influence in the profession. We made an attempt to include some of these topics in this report and will explore many of these issues in a proposed article on the AACR. We will include more quotes and information from the interviews in the article.

**Institutional Review Board**

The group began with a review of our charge in January 2014 in a conference call/Google chat. Our charge was to *actively gather the history of AACR through archival research and member interviews. This Task Force will find avenues to publish and share the rich history of the roundtable.* We created a division of the work, but also discuss the idea of member interviews to add depth and the voices of the original founders of AACR by developing an oral history component. For many of us familiar with oral history work, this automatically triggered the need for an Institutional Review Board (IRB) submission. We ran into an issue with the oral histories and IRB that turned into a real nightmare. The process stopped us dead in our tracks and if we had to do this over the IRB would be something to avoid if possible. The only option for any future Task Force looking at the history of AACR would be to reduce the members of the task force and only those institutions that have set up to fast track IRB. This would have saved us two years of frustration and headache! Working to get IRB approval took almost a year to work through the challenges of having so many members obtaining approval from their institutions, and some member’s institutions changed during the process, triggering more time to get documentation. This has been a cautionary tale of trying to develop an important component of our history through oral interviews. Most of us, except for Barrye, have had a rough time dealing with our institution's’ IRB processes and having multiple institutions dealing with this has been a problem.

IRB had to be sought, not because of the interviews themselves, but because the interviews and documentation would be housed in the AACR archive at Howard University. This makes it much more than an oral history project because others will have access to the interviews and documentation unless we discard or return the interviews to the participants.

We finally received approval in September 2014 and began the process of contacting the nine individual founders on our list, Diana Lachatanere, Wilda Logan, Carol Rudisell, Karen Jefferson, Ervin Jordan, Clifford Muse, Thomas Battle, Jo Ellen El-Bashir, and Brenda Banks. Of these only five (5) individuals agreed to be interviewed, Diana, Carol, Karen, Ervin, and Thomas. The interviews took place over the phone in 2014-2015, but also through e-mail answering of our questions. We worked to transcribe all interviews and begin to fill in the history that Karen Jefferson had started. We sincerely thank those individuals that took time out of their busy schedules to speak with us and submit responses to our questions. It was these oral histories that helped to flesh out and verify the early history we all thought we knew, but were often surprised and pleased to discover. The interviews were immensely important to our work in providing an accurate timeline and stories that reflect that history.

We went through two (2) renewals of the IRB, which was necessary until the project was completed. This report represents the final portion of this task force and project. The final transcripts and oral history tapes will be deposited in Howard University’s archives and will be available for research use by others.

**Conclusion**

This report is a testament to the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable’s importance to the Society of American Archivists, demonstrated throughout the years of its history and fight for recognition. We, archivists of color, bring recognition of the diversity of our country and society, diversity of our resources and history, diversity of views and viewpoints, a voice to the voiceless. We ensure that representation of all is not an afterthought. We as archivists of color do not stop at just documenting an individual, group, or activity, but we strive to place it in the context of other events that either mirror or add value to what is or has been collected.

By committing to support the Archivists and Archives of Color, the SAA has provided the avenue to expand our collections, to think outside the box, and know that in the future these activities will result in the re-writing or appending of history, a more inclusive history that represents us all. AACR allows us to develop collaborations, guidelines, connections for communication and cooperation when presented with opportunities to collect the papers of our communities of color.

An essential character that Society of American Archivists understands, after all these years, is the awareness of the value of pluralism, multiculturalism, and diversity. Webster’s New College Dictionary defines pluralism as “a condition of society in which numerous distinct ethnic, religious, or cultural groups coexist within one nation.” It took a while for the larger organization, SAA, to see the need for us, but in the year 2016 we can honestly say that SAA and AACR are partners in making not only the archival society more reflective of our multicultural society but with AACR’s stated goal to collect, preserve and make accessible the archival memory of people of color, we are working towards the goal of promoting a more pluralistic society. We have pushed for diversity and SAA has responded. In this regards, we are in a position to lead and the larger Society has joined us.

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