

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
January 25 - 27, 2012
Chicago, Illinois**

**Discussion: Incentives for Regional Archives Association
Member Attendance at SAA Annual Meeting**

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BACKGROUND

In 2010, SAA President Peter Gottlieb used his presidential address (http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/Gottlieb_PlenaryII_08132010.pdf) to call for stronger ties among archives associations. This call was followed by conference sessions on the topic at several regional archives associations (at Northwest Archivists, <http://northwestarchivistsinc.wildapricot.org/Default.aspx?pageId=932773>, for example), as well as at SAA's 2011 Annual Meeting (http://saa.archivists.org/4DCGI/events/eventdetail.html?Action=Events_Detail&Time=1016209517&InvID_W=1858).

In online discussions in [November?], the SAA Council considered an idea to promote attendance at the 2012 Annual Meeting in San Diego to members of western archival regional organizations. There were no concrete proposals out of the online discussions, but a sense that the SAA Council should investigate further.

DISCUSSION

According to A*CENSUS data (available via the SAA website: <http://www2.archivists.org/initiatives/acensus-archival-census-education-needs-survey-in-the-united-states>), the crossover membership rate in the five western regional associations (CIMA, NWA, SCA, SRMA, SSA) ranges from 60% to 65% (see table 3.9.13a). This means that a significant number of members of western regional archival associations are not SAA members.

This will be the fourth time that the Annual Meeting has been held in the west since 1990. For western archivists, this may be the first time they have had a chance to attend the Annual Meeting, perhaps even to interact with SAA.

As SAA continues to build stronger relationships with regional organizations, trying to figure out creative ways to increase dual memberships and attendance at annual meetings would be beneficial to both the regional organizations as well as SAA.

One way to promote stronger ties would be to offer some sort of “try before you fly” rate for SAA membership and/or attendance at the Annual Meeting. The rate would be subject to criteria (membership in a regional archives organization, never been a member of SAA, never attended a national conference or not attended in the last X years, etc.) and would be a one-time benefit.

One concern of Council members in their online discussions was the possible impact of tracking such information on SAA staff. This should certainly be considered. In addition, conference receipts are a significant portion of SAA revenue.

On the flip side, the potential to bring archivists into membership and meeting attendance who would not have considered it otherwise could have long-term benefits as well as increased revenue.

There is a short time-frame between the January SAA Council meeting and the beginning of registration. Coordinating the logistics for something like this, especially when considering the need for work with both SAA staff and regional organization officers, could be difficult.

Given all of this – the chance to bring new archivists into SAA membership, the chance for increased meeting revenue, and the chance to build stronger ties with regional archives organizations – consideration of an incentive for western regionals to attend SAA’s Annual Meeting in San Diego is too important to ignore.

Discussion Questions:

- What kind of incentive would actually get non-members to try out SAA and the Annual Meeting? Would the cost of an incentive outweigh its benefits?
- How would the regional organizations be involved and what are the benefits to them?
- Is there enough time to arrange and promote an incentive for the San Diego meeting?
- Would this be useful as a model for future conferences and other regionals?