

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
January 23 - 26, 2013  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Action: Petition to Form Web Archiving Roundtable  
(Prepared by SAA Members Tessa Fallon and Trevor Alvord )**

This is a proposal for formation of a Web Archiving Roundtable for SAA members.<sup>1</sup>

**Statement of Purpose**

Broadly speaking, the purpose of forming a Web Archiving Roundtable is to provide a forum within SAA for practitioners of web archiving and to educate and inform the community about web archiving. Web archiving presents unique technological and intellectual challenges to information professionals, while at the same time relying on knowledge from many other areas, such as: digital preservation, electronic records, computer science, digital curation, and data curation. Web archiving is relatively new to the archiving community, and currently, no national forum exists for archivists, librarians, and others interested in web archiving. SAA has an opportunity to take a lead in the promotion of web archiving to the national information science community.

It is estimated that in 2011, there were over 500 million<sup>2</sup> websites on the Internet; of that over 300 million<sup>3</sup> were created in 2011 alone. These large numbers begin to pale in comparison to Internet-generated content such as email (estimated over 3 billion email accounts registered by 2011<sup>4</sup>) and social media (Facebook alone reached 800 million users by the end of the year.<sup>5</sup>) Media such as images and video, which have been traditionally collected by archival repositories around the nation, have also seen a virtual swell. In 2011 there was an average of 48 hours of video uploaded to YouTube every minute<sup>6</sup> and 4.5 million images uploaded to Flickr each day.<sup>7</sup> With new material

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<sup>1</sup> Staff note: As of December 28, 2012, SAA Headquarters received 50 member signatures verified by SAA staff. Staff verifies the petition as complete, fulfilling all requirements for forming a new roundtable.

<sup>2</sup> Pingdom, "Websites," pingdom.com. <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Pingdom, "Email," pingdom.com. <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Pingdom, "Social media," pingdom.com. <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers/> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> Pingdom, "Videos," pingdom.com. <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers> (accessed November 23, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Pingdom, "Images," pingdom.com. <http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers> (accessed November 23, 2012).

becoming available on such a frequent basis, content that is just one day old may become lost in the wide array of superfluous material being published online. This presents a difficult challenge for archivists who will have to make a determination on enduring value in real-time. Adding to this difficulty is the task of having to work out the concepts and strategies for selection and archiving of web content without a broader community to fall back on for support.

The Internet is never going to be a fixed entity, rather it will continue to change and adapt to new technology, new standards, and new practice. For example, web languages like HTML, XML, Flash, Javascript, and PHP might be standard today; however, as new technology rises, these languages may become obsolete and give way to standards like these ones currently in development: Dart, Ceylon, F#, Opa, haXe, and Chapel. The Internet is in essence a community resource, yet at present, there is no communal effort underway by archivists in the United States to prepare and educate one another for the continual changes taking place in appropriately documenting and preserving this important resource. Having a place for archivists to gather in discussion of the issues surrounding web archiving is a vital endeavor. It would not only help those actively archiving websites stay conversant with the developments of new web technology, but also archivists who have not yet considered web archiving or who have just started to archive websites.

### **Mission Statement**

To heighten advocacy and awareness of the issues archivists encounter related to the selection, appraisal, harvesting, management, and preservation of web resources.

### **Goals and Objectives**

1. Provide SAA a voice for issues related to web archiving. Provide intellectual, physical, and virtual spaces for web archivists to gather in relevant discussion. As the dynamic of the Internet shift and flow over time there will be a need for archivists to adapt to the changing environments. Having a place for archivists to confer over web archiving will better prepare them to address these changes.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Technology
    - Desired Outcome #1
    - Desired Outcome #3
    - Desired Outcome #4
  - Advocacy/Public Awareness
    - Desired Outcome #2
2. Enhance web archiving through the creation of best practices and community-based standards. Presently there is no standard in place for archivists to rely on, in the same way there is for manuscript processing and finding aid creation. Having to forge

one's own path can be difficult, especially for medium to small archives which are typically low on resources both capital and personnel. Having standards and guidelines in place would facilitate understanding of the key concepts of web archiving for those archivists beginning to explore this new aspect of the archival profession.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Technology
  - Desired Outcome #1
  - Desired Outcome #2

3. Give direction and leadership to SAA in regards to web archiving.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Advocacy/Public Awareness
  - Desired Outcome #2

4. Cultivate the need for archives and special collections to create new job lines or repurpose existing ones to include a web archiving component. At present the Internet is an essential record of human life and continues to grow in size daily, which has instigated a need and an opportunity for archivists to be actively documenting this base of human knowledge. No single organization will be able to fully archive the entire Internet; therefore it will become imperative that as many archives as can take part in web archiving.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Diversity
  - Desired Outcome #2
- Advocacy/Public Awareness
  - Desired Outcome #2

5. Educate the membership of SAA by increasing their understanding and ability to implement web archiving practices within their own institutions. This is especially needed for members with low resource capabilities such as lone arrangers and new professionals. Working with the Education Committee, the roundtable would organize web archiving trainings and workshops to be held regularly and potentially be included in the Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) curriculum. In addition, the roundtable would support education through various publication and presentation mediums provided by SAA.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Technology
  - Desired Outcome #1
  - Desired Outcome #3

- Desired Outcome #4

6. Serve as a liaison to other organizations, nationally and internationally, engaged in web archiving, such as the Archive-It Partner Meeting and the International Internet Preservation Consortium. This would allow SAA to work collaboratively with other organizations that also recognize the ephemeral nature of the Internet and are involved in the issues of web archiving.

Impact on SAA Strategic Priorities:

- Technology
  - Desired Outcome #2
  - Desired Outcome #3
  - Desired Outcome #4
- Advocacy/Public Awareness
  - Desired Outcome #3

### Main Areas of Interest

- Education/Outreach: within the SAA community and among roundtable members
  - Best practices
    - Tools
    - Metadata
    - Workflows
    - Preservation
    - Assessment
    - Curation/Appraisal
  - Peer support (listserv)
  - Virtual meetups/discussion forums
- Advocacy
  - SAA meetings
  - Panels/sessions: previous and upcoming SAA meetings have included sessions on web archiving
  - SAA listservs
  - Publications
    - American Archivist, Archival Outlook, and SAA book publications
- Dissemination of information:
  - “Getting started guide” for new archives professionals/professionals new to web archiving
  - Regularly updated listing of useful web resources for members

- Documents from participating members (example: Columbia University's website: (<http://webarch.cul.columbia.edu/>))

### **Leadership Positions and Responsibilities**

**Chair:** Provides leadership for elections, reporting, by-laws, and governance; coordinates session proposals for annual meeting.

**Vice Chair:** Offers support to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the Chair as assigned.

**Web Liaison:** (for both SAA and an external site) Maintains and updates roundtable website(s).

**Social Media Managers:** Coordinates and updates Social Media feeds utilized by the roundtable.

**Education Coordinator:** Serves as roundtable liaison to Education Committee, arranges informal online meet-ups for members, including recruiting guest speakers, etc.

**Best Practices Committee:** Creates/updates standards and promotes strategies to enhance the quality of web archiving.

**Tool Box Team:** Shares links and resources with members, providing up-to-date information regarding developments in web archiving.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the SAA Council approve the petition to form a Web Archiving Roundtable with the following Statement of Intent and Goals:**

**Mission Statement:** To heighten advocacy and awareness of the issues archivists encounter related to the selection, appraisal, harvesting, management, and preservation of web resources.

#### **Goals and Objectives:**

1. Provide SAA a voice for issues related to web archiving. Provide intellectual, physical, and virtual spaces for web archivists to gather in relevant discussion. As the dynamic of the Internet shift and flow over time there will be a need for archivists to adapt to the changing environments. Having a place for archivists to confer over web archiving will better prepare them to address these changes.
2. Enhance web archiving through the creation of best practices and community-based standards. Presently there is no standard in place for archivists to rely on, in the same

way there is for manuscript processing and finding aid creation. Having to forge one's own path can be difficult, especially for medium to small archives which are typically low on resources both capital and personnel. Having standards and guidelines in place would facilitate understanding of the key concepts of web archiving for those archivists beginning to explore this new aspect of the archival profession.

3. Give direction and leadership to SAA in regards to web archiving.
4. Cultivate the need for archives and special collections to create new job lines or repurpose existing ones to include a web archiving component. At present the Internet is an essential record of human life and continues to grow in size daily, which has instigated a need and an opportunity for archivists to be actively documenting this base of human knowledge. No single organization will be able to fully archive the entire Internet; therefore it will become imperative that as many archives as can take part in web archiving.
5. Educate the membership of SAA by increasing their understanding and ability to implement web archiving practices within their own institutions. This is especially needed for members with low resource capabilities such as lone arrangers and new professionals. Working with the Education Committee, the roundtable would organize web archiving trainings and workshops to be held regularly and potentially be included in the Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) curriculum. In addition, the roundtable would support education through various publication and presentation mediums provided by SAA.
6. Serve as a liaison to other organizations, nationally and internationally, engaged in web archiving, such as the Archive-It Partner Meeting and the International Internet Preservation Consortium. This would allow SAA to work collaboratively with other organizations that also recognize the ephemeral nature of the Internet and are involved in the issues of web archiving.

**Support Statement:** The roundtable petition meets all submission requirements for the Council's consideration in approving a new SAA roundtable.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** Technology Desired Outcomes #1, 3, and 4 and Advocacy/Public Awareness Desired Outcome #2.

**Fiscal Impact:** There will be no fiscal impact on the organization.

**Staff note:** *Formation of a new roundtable will require additional meeting room or other space at SAA annual meetings going forward, as well as additional Council and staff time to provide support to the roundtable.*