

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
January 23 – 26, 2014
Chicago, Illinois**

**Standards Committee: Proposal for SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint
Task Force on the Development of Standardized
Statistical Measures for the Public Services of
Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries**

(Prepared by Co-Chairs Lisa Miller and Dan Santamaria)

The Standards Committee recommends approval of a proposal for creation of a SAA-Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Statistical Measures for the Public Services of Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries. The idea originated with RBMS, was carried forward by a liaison from RBMS to SAA (Christian Dupont), and was proposed for SAA approval by the Reference, Access and Outreach Section. The proposal (Appendix A) follows SAA's standards development procedures.

Should the proposal be approved, a draft description for the group, prepared by the RBMS liaison and Standards Committee co-chairs, is provided for consideration and approval (Appendix B).

BACKGROUND

There is no standard for the basic statistical data that special collections and archival repositories can use for quantifying, evaluating, and comparing their public services. A key finding of *Taking Our Pulse: The OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives* (2010)¹ was the lack of established metrics for tracking and assessing user services and other activities. It called for the development and promulgation of metrics that enable standardized measurement of key aspects of special collections use and management.

The RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment² was established in 2012 to examine current practices for gathering and reporting information to demonstrate the value and

¹ <http://oclc.org/content/dam/research/publications/library/2010/2010-11.pdf>

² http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/

impact of special collections and archives. One action item in its June 2013 final report³ was a "motion to charge [a] ... delegate to initiate contact with appropriate SAA leaders...regarding the formation of a joint ACRL/RBMS-SAA task force to draft Guidelines for Statistical Measures of Users and Use of Special Collections and Archives." The report also suggested that the breadth of the charge "include the definition of appropriate metrics for describing and quantifying users of special collections and archival materials and services and their usage of the same, including reading room paging/circulation, paging/circulation of materials for other purposes ..., reference interactions ..., reproduction orders ..., interlibrary loan requests ..., event s..." and if feasible, website visitors.

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee recommends this proposal because of the void in standardized metrics for public services and the potential to develop metrics that could help articulate the impact and value of archives and special collections. Furthermore, the metrics would be relevant to a variety of repositories that provide access to unique research materials.

Standardized use metrics have the potential to go beyond use and get at the *value* of archives and special collections. In addition, individual repositories will gain the confidence of knowing that their local data gathering practices are informed by and meeting national standards. The metrics will be accompanied by guidelines designed to help repositories gather statistics pertaining to their services and analyze the data in meaningful ways to support assessment initiatives. Furthermore, the metrics will facilitate meaningful analyses and comparisons across multiple repositories and the archival community.

Having contributed to or consulted the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) annual statistical reports, we know they are problematic. They do not provide standard guidance and definitions, yet the results are reported in a comparative framework. By partnering with ACRL/RBMS, we will have greater weight with ARL in instituting a new set of use metrics. Indeed, members of RBMS have maintained contact with ARL and its program for Statistics and Assessment and Special Collections Working Group.

To the extent deemed possible and mutually desirable, the Task Force will coordinate the development of the Standard with the International Council on Archives (ICA) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Subcommittee on Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation (TC464/SC8),⁴ which is currently reviewing a proposal to create an international archives standard for the description of archival repositories similar to ISDIAH, the International Standard for Describing Institutions

³ http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/metrics_final_report.pdf

⁴ ISO TC464/SC8 is "currently assessing the forthcoming revision to the ISO standard on International library statistics (ISO 2789) for areas where the standards can be better aligned and for proposed new statistics and methods"; see: http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=4bab6c0503ed5d9f392f862e9d32ce346eef6c69.

with Archival Holdings, promulgated by ICA.⁵ Preliminary contact with the incoming chair of TC464/SC8 by members of the recent ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment has suggested possibilities for collaboration since the two standards are likely to be complementary rather than overlapping.⁶

We should note that the RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment had four final recommendations, of which this is one. A second, on holdings metrics, is on the agenda for this Council meeting (see 0114-III-B-StdsComm-CollectionsMetrics). A third, on primary source literacy/teaching, may be proposed to the Standards Committee in 2014. Approval of more than one of these proposals may stretch SAA's bandwidth, but we think that SAA can find the capacity to manage multiple groups working on significant standards development projects such as this.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

THAT a SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Statistical Measures for the Public Services of Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries be established; and

THAT the description of the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Statistical Measures for the Public Services of Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries be approved.

Support Statement: SAA participation in the development of metrics for public services activities of archives and special collections will fill a deficiency in basic statistical measures by establishing standardized ways to record and analyze data about user visits, collection use, reference activities, and other service transactions.

Relation to Strategic Plan: This addresses SAA's strategic goals of providing leadership in promoting the value of archives (1.1), participating in new standards development (3.1), participating in partnerships (3.2), and creating opportunities for members to participate in SAA (4.2).

Fiscal Impact: The task force will require meeting space at the SAA Annual Meeting. Funding for the work of the subcommittee is neither anticipated nor requested; its description is written to negate the need for financial support.

⁵ See: <http://www.ica.org/?lid=10198>.

⁶ Incoming chair TC464/SC8 Steve Hiller had several email exchanges and a conference call with ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment co-chair Martha Conway and member Christian Dupont in October 2013. For background on the ACRL/RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment including its final report see: http://rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/index.shtml

Proposal for Standards Development

Submitted on Tuesday, November 26, 2013 - 11:26am

Submitted by user: marymanning

Submitted values are:

Proposal type: Development of a new SAA standard

--Contact Information--

Name of submitting group: Reference, Access, and Outreach Section

Date submitted: November 26, 2013

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Title of Standard: [Proposed] User and Use Metrics for Archives and Special Collections

Type of Standard: Convention and/or Rules

Topic(s): Reference and Access

Description of Standard:

There are currently no national or international standards that define the basic statistical data that archival repositories and special collections libraries should collect in order to evaluate and compare the services that they provide to their constituencies. Institutions record and analyze data about user visits, collection usage, reference activities, and other service transactions in a variety of different ways, which tends to negatively impact the accuracy, integrity, and usability of the data. As documented in a recent article by Dupont and Yakel (2013), SAA recognized and attempted to address this deficiency back in the 1960s with the formation of a Committee on Uniform Archival Statistics. Unfortunately, no standards or guidelines were ever issued and so the problem persists. The comprehensive 2010 survey of special collections and archives at academic and research libraries throughout the United States and Canada conducted by OCLC Research highlighted among its findings “how difficult it is to evaluate data

usefully without standard metrics in use across the special collections community. We cannot demonstrate the level of value delivered to primary constituencies, unless we can reliably characterize our users” (p. 35).

The benefits of having standardized user and use metrics for archives and special collections are numerous. Individual repositories will gain the confidence of knowing that their local data gathering practices are informed by and meeting national standards. The metrics will also be accompanied by guidelines designed to help repositories not only gather statistics pertaining to its services, but also analyze the data collected in meaningful ways to support assessment initiatives. A potentially even greater benefit of having standardized metrics is that it will facilitate meaningful analyses and comparisons across multiple repositories and the archival community at large.

The metrics will be formulated so as to be relevant and useful for a variety of institutional types—not only archival repositories but also special collections libraries, historical societies, and independent research libraries in museum settings—essentially any institution that provides supervised or mediated access to collections of rare and unique materials for research, learning, and enrichment.

We propose that the precise content and format of the metrics be determined by the leadership of the task force that is appointed to formulate them in keeping with its charge. We envision, nevertheless, that their content will include standardized classifications for use in collecting and analyzing demographic data about users, standardized definitions for tabulating numbers of user visits, materials circulated/issued to users, reference transactions (onsite and virtual), and other services, such as reproductions. We also envision distinguishing basic metrics that all repositories can be reasonably expected to collect and maintain and share (for example, numbers of total and unique visitors, numbers of units circulated) from advanced metrics that can be used by individual institutions to support data-driven assessment activities (for example, collecting times and hours spent by visitors in reading rooms and correlating those against numbers of items consulted to gauge intensity of use by different user categories) (Dupont and Yakel, 2013).

References:

Dooley, J. M., & Luce, K. (2010). Taking our pulse: The OCLC Research survey of special collections and archives. Dublin, OH: OCLC Research. Retrieved from <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2010/2010-11.pdf>

Dupont, C., & Yakel, E. (2013). “What’s So Special about Special Collections?” Or, Assessing the Value Special Collections Bring to Academic Libraries. *Evidence Based Library And Information Practice*, 8(2), 9-21.

Retrieved from

<http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/EBLIP/article/view/19615/15221>

Related Standards:

The most closely related standards to the one we are proposing include the ARL/ACRL annual statistical surveys of academic libraries and ISDIAH, the International Standard for Describing Institutions with Archival Holdings, which was developed by ICA Committee on Best Practices and Standards in 2008.

While the ARL/ACRL survey includes statistical data on collections and service transactions from archives and special collections units administered by academic libraries it aggregates their reporting and so does not permit the comparison of those across institutions. Furthermore, it does not provide any definitions or guidelines for collecting data that address the unique characteristics of archives and special collections with the result that many different methods and measures are used. ARL and ACRL have both signaled that they would welcome having RBMS and SAA jointly develop community-based user and use definitions and data collection standards to complement their annual statistical surveys, which are designed to provide academic libraries with overall benchmarking measures.

ISDIAH is designed specifically for archival repositories, but its purpose is to provide guidance for describing the repository and its services as such. It does not provide any guidance or specify any definitions or metrics for describing its activities quantitatively—that is, how to count numbers of visitors, numbers of items consulted, etc. Thus, the proposed standard would again complement an existing standard and fill a current void in statistical data gathering about archival repositories and their operations.

Related organizations for consultation and review:

This proposal was prompted by recommendations issuing from the final report of a Metrics and Assessment Task Force that was convened by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) of the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). ACRL/RBMS proposes the formation of a jointly charged and jointly appointed SAA-RBMS task force to develop a joint standard or guidelines for statistical measures of users and use in archives and special collections. Precedents for working with ACRL/RBMS in this manner have included the development and maintenance of the ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access: Guidelines for Access to Original Research Materials and the recent endorsements of the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections and the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Special Collections Materials. Members of RBMS have also maintained contact with the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and its program for Statistics and Assessment and Special Collections Working Group. Through ARL, RBMS has also had contact with the incoming chair of the International Organization for

Standardization (ISO) Subcommittee on Quality – Statistics and performance evaluation (TC464/SC8), which will be reviewing the ISO standard on International Library Statistics (ISO 2789) in order to identify areas where the standards can be better aligned and to propose new statistics and methods, including statistics relevant to the archives and museum communities.

Thus, in addition to subgroups within SAA—which could include the Archives Management Roundtable, Privacy & Confidentiality Roundtable, Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable, Research Libraries Roundtable, and Security Roundtable as well as the Reference, Access, and Outreach Section—it is expected that ACRL/RBMS will involve its leadership and membership in supporting a joint effort with SAA. Likewise, it is expected that the ACRL Standards Committee and ARL Statistics and Assessment Committee will be interested in providing advice and review. Other organizations, such as ICA and ISO, might also wish to provide advice and comment on the development of the proposed standard.

References:

ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Special Collections Materials

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/archives-management-roundtable/acrlrbms-guidelines-for-interlibrary-and-exhibition-loan-of-special-collections-materials>

ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections

<http://www2.archivists.org/standards/acrlrbms-guidelines-regarding-security-and-theft-in-special-collections>

ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access: Guidelines for Access to Original Research Materials

<http://www2.archivists.org/statements/ala-saa-joint-statement-of-access-guidelines-for-access-to-original-research-materials-au>

Projected timetable:

Because the chair and immediate past chairs of the SAA Standards Committee and current SAA Council members have expressed interest in supporting this standards development proposal, if the proposal can be forwarded through the next stages of the review and approval process in a timely manner, then it is reasonable to believe that Council could act on it during its January 2014 meeting, which would coincide well with the beginning of the 2014 committee and task force appointment process for ACRL. Thus, it is feasible that a joint task force could be charged and appointed and ready to begin its work by July 2014. If given a typical two-year mandate, the task force could aim to have a draft standard ready for initial public hearings by the 2015 ALA Annual and SAA annual meetings. The task force could then focus on integrating feedback and soliciting additional comments from the larger archival and library communities and allied organization during 2014-2015 with the goal of presenting by July 2015 a final draft for review and

approval by the respective ACRL and SAA standards committees and executive leadership committees during 2015-2016.

Budgetary implications: We do not envision any particular budgetary implications associated with the development of this standard. Even though it will require the coordination of a jointly appointed task force, we expect that task force members will be able to communicate with each other electronically using equipment furnished by their local institutions or personally owned. Ideally, members will be appointed who have the financial resources at their disposal to be able to attend the annual meetings of both SAA and ALA to facilitate face-to-face meetings, but this should not be made a requirement for membership, especially if other members can host audio or video-conferencing session with their own equipment. Since drafts and documents can be share electronically via email and free online collaboration sites, there should not be any expenses incurred for photocopying or postage. Also, since the review and approval of the standard will be managed by appointed and elected SAA members, there should not be any impact on SAA staff time.

File attachment: [link to the Final Report of the RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment] <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/webform/RBMS%20Task%20Force%20on%20Metrics%20%20Assessment%20%28Final%20Report%29.pdf>

The results of this submission may be viewed at:
<http://www2.archivists.org/node/15584/submission/14826>

**Description of the
SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of
Standardized Statistical Measures for Public Services in Archival
Repositories and Special Collections Libraries**

I. Purpose

The SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force on the Development of Standardized Statistical Measures for Public Services in Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries (hereafter “Task Force”) is responsible for development of a new standard (hereafter “Standard”) defining appropriate statistical measures and performance metrics to govern the collection and analysis of statistical data for describing public services provided by archival repositories and special collections libraries. The Standard will describe and quantify users of special collections and archival materials and services and their usage of the same, including reading room paging/circulation, paging/circulation of materials for other purposes (e.g., class/events, exhibits, reference questions, conservation, processing), reference interactions (in person and via email), reproduction orders (numbers of orders and pages photocopied/digitized), interlibrary loan requests (physical, digital; filled, not filled), and events (e.g., numbers and characteristics of class visits, exhibits [physical and virtual], tours, programs, etc). If feasible, the Standard may also include recommendations for gathering and analyzing statistics about special collections website visitors and their page views and file downloads.

The elements of the Standard will be developed in such a way as to support measures and analysis of the impact of public services in addition to basic statistical counts. In addition, the Standard will include guidance on the implementation of methods of data collection, analysis, and reporting to ensure appropriate safeguards for the privacy, confidentiality, and security of user records.

To the extent deemed possible and mutually desirable, the Task Force will coordinate the development of the Standard with the International Council on Archives and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) Subcommittee on Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation (TC464/SC8).⁷

The Standard will be submitted for approval by the appropriate standards review committees and executive bodies of SAA and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and ACRL’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS). The Task

⁷ ISO TC464/SC8 is “currently assessing the forthcoming revision to the ISO standard on International library statistics (ISO 2789) for areas where the standards can be better aligned and for proposed new statistics and methods”; see: http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=4bab6c0503ed5d9f392f862e9d32ce346eef6c69.

Force will recommend a plan for maintenance and review of the Guidelines at the time the Guidelines are submitted to SAA and ACRL/RBMS for approval.

II. Task Force Selection, Size, and Length of Term

The Task Force is charged for two years, beginning September 2014 and continuing through the 2016 SAA Annual Meeting. The Task Force may be charged for an additional year if SAA or ACRL standards and executive bodies determine that the Standard needs further development before it can be approved.

The Task Force will include between eight and twelve members with an equal number of members appointed by SAA and ACRL according to their normal appointment procedures. A Task Force member may be a member of both organizations but will be appointed to the Task Force to represent only one organization. Due consideration will be given by each organization to appointing members who have requisite knowledge and experience in the management of the public service operations of archival repositories and special collections libraries and prior experience with standards development. Additional consideration should be given to appointing members who are knowledgeable or involved with development of international standards (e.g., the International Council on Archives and the International Organization for Standardization [ISO] Subcommittee on Quality - Statistics and performance evaluation [TC464/SC8]⁸). In addition to the committee members, *ex officio* members and liaisons will be appointed by each organization according to its normal procedures.

One member appointed by each organization will be designated to serve as a Task Force co-chair. The co-chairs will be responsible for convening Task Force meetings, leading Task Force work, ensuring that deadlines are met, following procedures of their respective organizations, and communicating as needed or required with the standards and executive bodies of their respective organizations.

III. Reporting Procedures

The Task Force co-chairs will report at least semi-annually to the chairs of the standards committees of their respective organizations. In conjunction with the chairs of their respective standards committees and in coordination with each other, the co-chairs may also schedule public hearings or conduct public comment periods or both to solicit input on draft versions of the Standard. The public hearings may be conducted in person at the SAA Annual Meeting, the midwinter or annual meetings of the American Library Association, biennial ACRL conferences, or annual RBMS preconferences. Public hearings may also be conducted virtually.

⁸ ISO TC464/SC8 is “currently assessing the forthcoming revision to the ISO standard on International library statistics (ISO 2789) for areas where the standards can be better aligned and for proposed new statistics and methods”; see: http://www.niso.org/news/pr/view?item_key=4bab6c0503ed5d9f392f862e9d32ce346eef6c69.

If the Task Force is granted funding support from its parent or extramural organizations, the co-chairs will provide all necessary narrative reports to the SAA and ACRL offices to ensure that reporting requirements of SAA and ACRL and the funding source are met.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

To fulfill its mission as described above, the Task Force is specifically charged to:

- Develop and define appropriate statistical measures and performance metrics (i.e., the “Standard”) to govern the collection and analysis of statistical data for describing public services in archival repositories and special collections libraries as outlined in section I.
- Ensure that the language and scope of the Standard is appropriate to archival repositories and special collections libraries in the United States, with due consideration given to aligning the Standard with terminology, definitions, and measures employed in other relevant national and international standards.
- Publicize and conduct public hearings, or public comment periods, or both to ensure that members of the archives and library professions have adequate opportunities to become aware of and contribute to the development of the Standard.
- Follow all other guidelines outlined in SAA’s *Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard*⁹ and ACRL’s *Procedures for Preparation of New Standards and Guidelines*¹⁰ to ensure that SAA and ACRL standards and executive bodies approve and adopt the Standard in a timely manner.

V. Meetings

The Task Force will carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, conference calls, and online meetings in accordance with the meeting policies of the respective organizations.¹¹ Face-to-face meetings will also be scheduled during the SAA Annual Meeting and the midwinter and annual meetings of the American Library Association, which is when ACRL/RBMS business meetings are conducted. Task Force members will be encouraged but not required to attend face-to-face meetings in person; if possible, however, the co-chairs will make arrangements for virtual participation in these meetings via conference call or online meeting software. Co-chairs will be required to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings held during the regular meetings of their respective organizations and will be strongly encouraged to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings of the other organization.

⁹ See <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Standards/Procedures-Review-Approval-SAA-Developed-Standard>.

¹⁰ See <http://www.ala.org/acrl/resources/policies/chapter14#14.5>.

¹¹ See http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/appendices/app_a/Group_Support_AM and <http://www.ala.org/acrl/resources/policies/chapter8>.

Minutes will be prepared for each face-to-face meeting and any conference call or online meeting that meets policy definitions for a meeting, and the minutes will be posted within thirty days to the public websites of the respective organizations.