Society of American Archivists
Council Conference Call
January 16, 2015
2:00 pm – 4:00 pm EST

Interim Report: 2015 Program Committee
(Prepared by Co-chairs Lynn Eaton and Carl Van Ness)

The co-chairs for the 2015 SAA Program Committee were appointed by Vice President Kathleen Roe on September 11, 2013. Both co-chairs had served on the Annual Meeting Task Force, which completed its work in 2013, and both had an intimate knowledge of the Task Force's recommendations. The report of the Task Force, as well as the "Principles and Priorities for Continuously Improving the SAA Annual Meeting"[1] adopted by the Council in August 2013, have served as guideposts for the 2015 Program Committee.

The co-chairs' early appointment allowed them to attend the 2014 Program Committee meeting in Chicago. Participation in the meeting proved to be invaluable as the 2015 Program Committee moved forward. **The 2015 co-chairs highly recommend that future vice presidents follow Kathleen's practice and that the bylaws be amended to set the appointment date no later than one month before the previous Program Committee meets in Chicago.**

The selection of the Cleveland Convention Center for the 2015 meeting presented new challenges to the committee and to SAA staff. In September 2013, the co-chairs were asked to submit their suggestions and recommendations for how the educational sessions might be delivered at the Cleveland Convention Center. At that time, the co-chairs offered a tentative description of how the newly envisioned pop-up sessions might take place and what types of rooms might be used at the convention center.

The co-chairs sent their recommendations for committee appointments to Kathleen in March 2014. After consultation with Kathleen and SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont, the membership was finalized and letters were sent in April. The co-chairs opted to go with a smaller committee of 11. Committee membership for annual meetings that were not joint meetings with COSA or NAGARA has fluctuated between 11 and 12. The co-chairs note that having only 11 members places a burden on the committee. Members are required to serve as session liaisons at the Annual Meeting, requiring the member to attend each of their sessions from beginning to end. Having only 11 members makes it difficult to schedule adequate breaks during the Annual Meeting. **The co-chairs recommend that future Program Committees be composed of 12 members.**

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[1] http://www2.archivists.org/statements/principles-and-priorities-for-continuously-improving-the-saa-annual-meeting

A telephone conference for the committee was held on May 19. The committee's charge and the expectations and duties of membership were reviewed. The co-chairs explained the process of creating a meeting program and provided a general overview of the committee's calendar. The committee met as a body at the Joint Annual Meeting in Washington on August 13. A draft calendar was distributed to the members at that time. Prior to the meeting, the committee sent emails to the chairs of all sections and roundtables letting them know that we were available to speak at section and roundtable meetings. Members of the committee addressed all but one of the sections and 14 of the roundtables.

The Call for Proposals was submitted on June 5 for distribution in *Archival Outlook* and *In The Loop*. The Call did not include a conference theme, but did stress the importance of sessions related to advocacy and outreach. Members responded favorably to the Call. The 2015 program will include 12 sessions that touch on advocacy and outreach in some way. The Call also introduced the membership to the idea of pop-up sessions. We intend that approximately half of the pop-up sessions will be assigned on the fly during the meeting and the other half will be assigned from proposals submitted in late spring. The committee plans to issue a call for pop-up session proposals sometime in May 2015. The committee did not alter the submission form. It did, however, make a few changes in the descriptions of session types.

The deadline for submissions was set at midnight on October 8, with a firm warning that the deadline would not be extended. One hundred forty-three education session proposals and 28 poster session proposals were received. SAA staff assembled the proposals into a workbook, which was disseminated to the Program Committee. Committee members had 12 days to review all proposals and return the workbooks with their individual rankings (October 22 - November 3). A second iteration of the workbook, which combined the committee's collective rankings, was distributed just before the committee's meeting in Chicago on November 14-16 and functioned as a working document at the meeting.

Just before the meeting, the co-chairs met with Nancy Beaumont and René Craig to discuss the meeting room setup at Cleveland and how this would affect the meeting program. Based on that information, the co-chairs recommended that the number of education sessions, including the president's invited session and the student session, be limited to 65 and that the pop-ups be limited to 15. Ten of the pop-ups would occur during a specific pop-up slot on Thursday afternoon crafted from a non-programmed time slot. The other five would be placed concurrently with regular education sessions across the seven session blocks. Continuing with the trend that began with the 2013 meeting, the Program Committee favored more short sessions. The program for 2015 includes two session blocks of 75 minutes and five session blocks of 60 minutes, as well as the additional 60-minute pop-up session block.

One member of the committee could not attend the Chicago meeting, but the individual's scores were included in the overall compiled rankings. On the first night, the committee reviewed the meeting agenda and made a decision on which proposals would be discussed based on their respective median scores. The committee also accepted the co-chairs' recommendation for 65 education sessions and 15 pop-ups. The committee began its discussions that night and reconvened in the morning. The committee completed its review by the end of the second day. The third day was given to creating a tentative program. The committee concluded its work by

reviewing the duties of session liaisons and the timeline for liaisons to contact session chairs and proposers. As one of the duties of the liaisons is to attend the sessions assigned to him/her, each committee member submitted their preferences for sessions to attend. The co-chairs took those preferences into account and also made an effort to provide each member a break at the meeting. But, as stated before, it was mathematically impossible to do so for everyone.

The committee also resolved to hold a session at the end of the Annual Meeting on Saturday. The session will consist of a panel of current, past, and future Program Committee members, who will discuss why some session proposals succeed and why some fail.

Finally, as this was the first year that sections and roundtables did not endorse session proposals, the committee discussed what effects, if any, this had on its decision-making. **The committee felt that the lack of endorsements had no discernible effect and did not recommend that they be resumed.** The co-chairs encouraged proposers of declined sessions to reach out to relevant sections or roundtables for possible inclusion in their meeting programs in Cleveland. This was to address the concern voiced by section/roundtable chairs about their desire to include declined sessions in their programs to enhance their meetings and provide speakers with an opportunity to present.

SAA staff cannot be thanked too much for the manner in which the meeting was organized. As the co-chairs had also attended the November 2013 meeting, we knew firsthand that the process is an accumulation of priceless experience and insights.

Subsequent to the meeting in Chicago, a chart containing meeting notes and liaison assignments was created. Thirteen proposals were accepted that required changes. Emails to those sessions were sent first and all of the changes were accepted. Acceptance and decline messages were sent to proposers and chairs beginning on December 8, with a deadline for sending the messages on December 19. As of the writing of this report, the committee had received responses from 44 of the 63 accepted session chairs.

On December 5, the co-chairs submitted an article to be published in *Archival Outlook* on the work of the committee and what to expect at the Annual Meeting.