

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Conference Call  
January 20, 2016  
2:00-4:00 pm EST**

**Annual Report: Committee on Public Awareness**

(Prepared by 2014-2015 Chair Peter Gottlieb and 2015-2016 Chair David Carmicheal)

**Officers:**

Chair: Peter Gottlieb (through June 2015); David Carmicheal (July 2015 ff.)

Vice-Chair/Chair-elect: David Carmicheal (through June 2015); Erin Lawrimore (July 2015 ff.)

**Report from Annual Meeting:**

COPA held a committee meeting during which the committee assessed progress on planned activities and determined next priorities. Prior to, or during, the meeting the COPA sponsored or participated in the following activities:

- Reviewed and commented on the *Archives Change Lives* video, which was well received by conference attendees.
- Commented on and supported plans to focus the conference plenary sessions on story telling, advocacy, and the Archives Change Lives theme.
- Assisted with the StoryCorps interview booth.

The theme of Archives Change Lives was suggested during the COPA meeting of July 2014 and the committee was excited by how thoroughly it was realized in the actual annual conference. The committee thanks Nancy Beaumont and Kathleen Roe, in particular, for organizing and/or conducting the lion's share of these Annual Meeting activities with relatively modest (albeit enthusiastic) support from COPA.

**Completed Projects/Activities:**

- Promoted SAA's first-ever Ask An Archivist Day twitter campaign by advertising the day, encouraging colleagues to participate, and participating ourselves.
- Assisted SAA staff initiative to create a public section of the SAA website by surveying the current website's content for public awareness content and reviewing the sections' and roundtables' websites for similar material. The findings were compiled and submitted to SAA staff.

**Ongoing Projects/Activities:**

- COPA continues to support advocacy-related website developments.
- COPA continues to support Ask An Archivist twitter campaigns.

## **New Projects/Activities:**

At its meeting in August 2015 the committee, after much discussion about many potential projects, decided to focus on one major activity on the assumption that a modest agenda to which everyone enthusiastically subscribed was more likely to be achieved than a more ambitious agenda that was beyond the resources of the committee members and SAA staff. Consequently COPA decided to create and develop a blog focused on public awareness. The new blog, *ArchivesAWARE!* (<http://archivesaware.archivists.org/>), will debut in January 2016.

The ArchivesAWARE! blog is intended “to create an online space where professionals and students engaged in all aspects of archival work could share their experiences of and ideas for raising public awareness of archives and the value that archives and archivists add to business, government, education, and society as a whole.” The blog will include Features of 500-1,000 words and Highlights of 200-500 words that discuss such topics as:

- Tool(s) and/or resource(s) for use in outreach efforts (e.g. social media platform or handout template);
- Practical tips for successful archival outreach;
- Archival outreach theory; and
- Detailed descriptions of outreach projects and/or programs, and their results.

The chair thanks Sami Norling, in particular, for spearheading this effort and shouldering a large part of its burden. He is grateful also to other members of the committee who committed to—and delivered—initial blog posts for ArchivesAWARE!

Through contacts at her institution, COPA member Jill Severn identified a good contact at the Ad Council of America to approach about proposing a campaign on the value and importance of archivists and archival work in light of the challenges posed by economic pressures and the proliferation of born-digital materials. Severn drafted a proposal and submitted to the ACA for review. Although the ACA board acknowledged the importance of the issue, it declined to accept the proposal for development.

## **Initiatives Associated with the 2014-2018 Strategic Plan:**

COPA activities support SAA’s strategic goal #1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists, with particular emphasis (currently) on:

- 1.1. Promote the value of archives and archivists to institutions, communities, and society.
- 1.2. Educate and influence decision makers about the importance of archives and archivists.
- 1.4. Strengthen the ability of our members to articulate the value of archives.

Currently the committee’s emphasis is on the following KPIs (although specific metrics for measuring the second and third have yet to be developed):

- SAA provides an increasing range of resources that are useful in articulating the vital role of archivists and archives.
- SAA members indicate that they are confident in speaking with the media and advocating for archives.
- Public awareness of and appreciation for archives and archivists are documented and increase.