Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
February 16, 18, 2022
Virtual Meeting

Archival Repatriation and Purposeful Deaccessioning
(Prepared by the SAA Native American Archives Section)

"It is time archival repositories and archivists stop wondering about how to address the recommendations of PNAAM [Protocols for Native American Archival Materials] and simply begin doing the work. Information professionals must now listen to repeated requests from those in the Indigenous communities who are pleading for proper care of these collections and for implementation of stewardship changes in repositories containing Indigenous materials. These recommendations must be implemented, not in the future, but now." — Jennifer O'Neal

SAA endorsed the *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials* as an external standard in 2018. One component of the Protocols is archival repatriation. **NAAS is asking Council to pass a resolution that (1) expresses support for archivists in both repatriating and receiving returned archival materials and (2) outlines specific actions SAA will take to support this work.**

Goal: Support archivists in repatriating and receiving archival materials.		
Recommendation #1: Form a permanent cross-section SAA committee related to archival repatriation.	**Recommendation #2: Develop and disseminate guidance on archival repatriation.**	**Recommendation #3: Partner with SAA sections, external organizations, and originating communities to facilitate archival repatriations.**
Ensure diverse and informed participation in the committee. Committee responsibilities could include: ● Coordinating efforts across SAA to develop guidance and training on archival repatriation ● Serving as a point of contact for SAA Council, groups, and members with questions about archival repatriation ● Advocating for inclusion of Indigenous histories, cultures, and worldviews in U.S. archival education	Incorporate into existing resources and training on deaccessioning. Examples: ● Standards like the Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning ● Educational courses like Reappraising and Deaccessioning Archival Materials from Start to Finish Develop new resources specific to repatriation. Example: ● Autry's Where Repatriation Meets the Protocols (funded by the SAA Foundation)	Develop partnerships specifically to support archivists receiving repatriated materials. Potential partners: ● NAAS, AAC, other SAA sections ● ATALM ● Association on American Indian Affairs Partnership outcomes could include: ● Connecting archivists in different settings (i.e., community archives and institutional archives) ● Education/training (including work with MLIS programs to incorporate repatriation into graduate-level curricula)

¹ Relevant Strategic Goals: 1.1, 2.4, 4.1–4.3 **² Relevant DEIA WP Strategies**: 1.6 **³ Relevant Protocols Sections**: VII, X	**¹ Relevant Strategic Goals**: 1.3, 2.2, 3.1 **² Relevant DEIA WP Strategies**: 1.6, 4.5 **³ Relevant Protocols Sections**: VII, IX, X	**¹ Relevant Strategic Goals**: 2.4, 3.3, 4.1–4.3 **² Relevant DEIA WP Strategies**: 1.6, 4.2 **³ Relevant Protocols Sections**: I, VII

Discussion Questions:

- **How will SAA specifically support archival repatriation through a resolution and subsequent actions?**
- **What specific actions will be included in a resolution?**
- **How will SAA support archivists in taking action?**

We recognize that archivists and information professionals working at Indigenous organizations and non-Indigenous organizations need support. We also acknowledge that our discussion item focuses on Indigenous communities, but other source communities also seek remedy and reconciliation through collaboration, repatriation, and purposeful deaccessioning. We hope this conversation will open the door to additional conversation with other SAA sections.

Definitions and Context:

- *Archival repatriation* and related concepts like *purposeful deaccessioning* have to do with returning archival materials to source communities *who wish to receive them*. This includes both the physical return and legal transfer of materials. Archival repatriation acknowledges archival institutions' role in extracting cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions from source communities. This work relies on building relationships of mutual respect.

- The concepts of *deaccessioning* and *reappraisal* are common archival practices that archivists utilize, which archival repatriation falls squarely within.

- **Types of materials included in archival repatriation:** Archival material that fall outside of NAGPRA may include but are not limited to photographs, manuscripts, and/or AV materials that portray sacred ceremonies, burials, human remains, and any other items of cultural heritage or cultural expression deemed important by the communities involved. These materials also often document Indigenous language knowledge which, for some communities, has been lost and/or are currently at-risk of being forgotten.

Related Resources:

- [Protocols for Native American Archival Materials](#)
- [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act](#)
- [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#) (Articles 11, 13, 31)

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[1] Strategic goals reflect those outlined in [SAA's Strategic Plan Dashboard, FY 2023–FY 2025](#).

[2] DEIA work plan (WP) strategies reflect those outlined in [SAA's Work Plan on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility](#).

[3] Sections reflect those outlined in [NAAS's markup of the Protocols](#).

- Jennifer R. O'Neal, "From Time Immemorial: Centering Indigenous Traditional Knowledge and Ways of Knowing in the Archival Paradigm," in *Afterlives of Indigenous Archives*, 2019.
- Trevor Reed, "Indigenous Dignity and the Right to Be Forgotten," *BYU Law Review* 46, no. 4 (2021).