

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
February 5th-6th, 2024
Virtual/Chicago, IL**

**College & University Archives Section, Steering Committee:
Statement Approval
(Prepared by: April K. Anderson-Zorn)**

- At the July 14th, 2023 annual meeting of the College & University Archives Section, members asked the Steering Committee to draft a statement of support for academic archival workers.

BACKGROUND

- It is vitally important for academic archivists to have academic freedom to perform their work without fear of bias or retaliation.
- This call for support for academic archival workers is related to the value of academic freedom and their ability to collect, protect, and provide access to the ‘complete record’ and make that whole truth available for research.
- A growing number of local and state governance bodies, including academic governing boards, are removing tenure and other academic protections for educators and librarians, including archivists. Recent examples include the [University of Virginia](#), the [University of California System](#), [all public colleges and universities in Texas](#), and the [State University System of Florida](#).

DISCUSSION

The College & University Archives Section asks the SAA Council to consider adopting the attached statement of support for Academic Archivists.

SAA Statement of Support for Academic Archivists

The Society of American Archivists is concerned about growing efforts at some higher education institutions to alter or eliminate academic tenure and promotion tracks for all ranks of academic archivists. These professional protections are crucial not only for the work of an academic archivist but also for an institution’s credibility toward providing proper documentary heritage.

News outlets from 2018 to the present (see below) have reported on several academic libraries and state governments that have already reviewed and drastically altered or removed tenure and promotion for their faculty. Other academic libraries nationwide

have enacted or considered similar measures in recent months. These attempts at de-professionalizing archives and librarianship fields jeopardize an institution's credibility and strip archivists of their job security and intellectual freedoms. As stated in the SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics, archivists are committed to "identifying and preserving essential records that document the cultural heritage of society." Archivists endeavor to remain neutral and unbiased in their work, providing transparency in all decisions. However, this work often means working with materials some entities may consider controversial. Academic archivists especially need the protections afforded by tenure and promotion tracks to perform their work without fear of intellectual persecution.

We strongly encourage academic institutions to review the joint statement by the Association of College Research Libraries (ACRL) and the American Association of University Professors on the faculty status of college librarians that explains why academic librarians and archivists should hold faculty rank. Additionally, we urge academic institutions to review the ACRL Statement on Academic Freedom. The specialized knowledge and skills relevant to acquiring, managing, preserving, and accessing archival collections enrich the academic library and the entire institution. Academic archivists share knowledge through faculty collaboration, student instruction, and community outreach. Academic freedoms, including job security and promotion, are critical to recruiting and retaining highly qualified archivists.

Recent articles:

Sydni Dunn, "As Their Roles Change, Some Librarians Lose Faculty Status," The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 18, 2013, accessed December 19, 2023. https://www.chronicle.com/article/as-their-roles-change-some-librarians-lose-faculty-status/?emailConfirmed=true&supportSignUp=true&supportForgotPassword=true&email=aander2%40ilstu.edu&success=true&code=success&bc_nonce=fbejtw9xj0ah9d2czbv5m&cid=gen_sign_in

Lindsay Ellis, "Do College Librarians Have Academic Freedom? Amid Push, California's 'Will Not Be Silent,'" The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 27, 2018; accessed December 19, 2023. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/do-college-librarians-have-academic-freedom-amid-push-californias-will-not-be-silent/>

Mariah Stewart, "Tenure Under Attack," Insight Into Diversity, February 10, 2022, accessed December 19, 2023. <https://www.insightintodiversity.com/tenure-under-attack/>

Seth Masket, "Texas' college tenure decision undermines one of America's proudest accomplishments," NBC News, March 9, 2022, accessed December 19, 2023. <https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/texas-tenure-attack-america-s-colleges-embarrassing-ncna1291314>

Margot Susca, Chaya Tong, and Alex Angle, "Why Faculty Members are Fleeing Florida," The Chronicle of Higher Education, December 6, 2023, accessed December 19, 2023. <https://www.chronicle.com/article/why-faculty-members-are-fleeing-florida>

Additional Links

<https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>

<https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/jointstatementfaculty>

<https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/academicfreedom>

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the SAA Council approves the recommendation by the College & University Archives Section endorse the statement of support for Academic Archivists.

Support Statement:

By supporting academic archival workers in protecting their academic freedoms shows SAA's commitment to socially just archival work and the archivists maintaining open, unbiased, and complete archival records that do not silence the historical voices of the local communities the institution serves.

Impact on Strategic Priorities:

Approving a Statement of Support for Academic Archivists supports Goal 1 (Advocating for Archives and Archivists) and Goal 4 (Meeting Members Needs) of the SAA 2023-2025 Strategic Plan.

Fiscal Impact: None

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What can SAA do to show support for academic archival workers in areas where they are experiencing a de-professionalization of their field?
- If not accepted, what steps can the College & University Archives Section take to further a statement of support of their academic archives members?