

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
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**Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group:  
Membership Expansion and Appointment Structure Request  
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**BACKGROUND [for Action and Discussion Items, should not exceed 3 paragraphs]**

The Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG) was established in late 2020 and began its work in early 2021 to fulfill a three-part charge: 1) maintain and update SAA's "Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit," 2) develop and provide immediate and ongoing resources and response assistance to archivists, allied cultural heritage professionals, and their communities in times of tragedies, disasters, or other crises, and 3) build partnerships with organizations focused on relief efforts and cultural stewardship and preservation. Since beginning its work, the CDTRWG has taken actions to update and maintain the "Resource Kit" and is currently pursuing partnerships for a pilot project in translating selected resources; launched the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) in February 2022, which provides rapid-response assistance and support to archival colleagues documenting crises and tragedies; and, most recently, began a successful virtual speaker series on topics related to crisis collecting that has achieved an international audience.

In order to facilitate this work, the CDTRWG is divided into three subgroups. Each subgroup is coordinated by two (2) co-chairs. These subgroups are Collaboration and Outreach, Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT), and Resource Kit. This structure not only supports the three-part charge of the group but affords eight (8) opportunities for leadership at various levels (including the CDTRWG co-chairs and six (6) co-chairs of the subgroups). These roles and the work of providing resources, rapid-response support, and opportunities for professional engagement and education are distributed among the nine (9) members of the working group.

As a relatively new appointed group within SAA, now seems an appropriate time to assess the ways in which the addition of members and appointment structure could better support the CDTRWG in fulfilling its charge, providing quality services to colleagues, and ensuring continuity and commitment among the group's membership.

## **DISCUSSION**

The CDTRWG is requesting the membership of this appointed group be increased by one (1) member, effective for appointments beginning Summer/Fall 2024, for a total membership of ten (10) individuals. If approved, the CDTRWG would request the appointment/re-appointment of four (4) individuals during the current appointment cycle, rather than three (3) (the current number of positions open for appointment).

The CDTRWG is also requesting formalization of the appointment/re-appointment process as regards the groups' Co-Chair positions for future appointment cycles, in which an appointee would serve as Co-Chair for one (1) term only with the final year of their term served at the member level. Any subsequent reappointments should be at the member level.

The structure of the CDTRWG – with three (3) subcommittees covering areas of responsibility under the group's charge – affords eight (8) opportunities for leadership at various levels. Increasing the number of members but one (1) position would allow for more even distribution of responsibilities. With the launch of CCAT, the areas of expertise and practical knowledge in need of representation on the group has also become more apparent. Increasing the number of members by one (1) position would help to ensure there is a greater diversity of experience, interest, and knowledge of relevant topics and practices when creating/gathering resources for “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit,” responding to inquiries through CCAT, and developing program for the group's new virtual speaker series.

In order to ensure continuity as well as the opportunity for fresh perspectives in leadership, we would recommend a structure in which a member is eligible to serve as Co-Chair of the CDTRWG for one (1) term of appointment only, with any future re-appointments to the group for an additional term as a member. This structure would further enable a smooth transition between appointment cycles, ensure the continuity of goals and programming, and distribute governance responsibilities more evenly.

## **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- THAT the SAA Council approve the addition of one (1) member position to the Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group increasing the group's size to ten (10) members, effective for appointments beginning Summer/Fall 2024.
- THAT the SAA Council formalize the appointment of Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group Co-Chairs for one (1) term of appointment only, with the final year of their term served at the member level.

**Support Statement:** In order to better fulfill its charge, provide more comprehensive support to colleagues documenting crises, and distribute labor more equitably, the CDTRWG seeks approval for the addition of one (1) member position to its roster. Further, to ensure continuity while providing for fresh perspectives, the CDTRWG seeks

approval for a formalization of the appointment cycle of Co-Chairs for one (1) term, with the final year of their term served at the member level.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** These changes to the size and structure of the CDTRWG will position the working group to better support aspects of Goals 1-4 of SAA's Strategic Plan, particularly Goal 3. With an expanded membership and formalization of the leadership structure, the working group will be better equipped to fulfill each portion of its charge and continue identifying the need for guidelines and best practices, delivering resources and education, and fostering communities of practice and engagement around rapid-response and crisis collecting (Goals 2 and 3). These changes to the group's structure will also provide greater opportunities for promoting the value of archives and archivists in crisis response and creating opportunities for members to participate in leadership opportunities within the association (Goals 1 and 4).

**Fiscal Impact:** These proposed changes to the membership size and governance structure of the CDTRWG should not result in any fiscal impact upon the organization.