

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
February 11-12, 2025  
(Virtual) Meeting**

**Committee on Public Policy: Standing Rules Update  
Action**

**(Prepared by: Jess Farrell and Gina Nichols)**

The Committee on Public Policy met on October 14, 2024 via virtual meeting to address a request from Council staff to review our standing rules. This discussion prompted several updates to our standing rules.

**BACKGROUND**

The existing Committee on Public Policy standing rules require the following changes to align with existing COPP practices and needs:

1. Defining the Size, Composition, Selection, and Length of Terms for COPP
2. Adding an Immediate Past Chair role
3. Defining the duties for the Chair, Vice Chair, and Immediate Past Chair

The changes can be viewed here: [Committee on Public Policy standing rules.docx](#)

Red text is new, and revised text is in suggest mode for change visibility.

**DISCUSSION**

COPP has been experimenting with having an Immediate Past Chair for two years. In 2023, upon the completion of his 2021-2022 Chair year, Bryan Whitlege remained on as the former liaison to the National Coalition for History, which effectively could be characterized as an Immediate Past Chair role. This proved incredibly helpful in supporting the 2022-2023 Chair and Vice-Chair, including when the Chair had unavoidable circumstances that prevented them from both running a few meetings and training the Vice Chair to take over. Everyone has unavoidable circumstances at some point, and having Bryan's wisdom and support as Immediate Past Chair helped keep the Committee going and reduced Committee burnout.

We expect the Immediate Past Chair commitment to typically be help out with the transition, be on hand via email to provide advice to the Chair should they ask for it, and attend COPP meetings when capacity allows.

In these standing rules updates, we also defined the roles of the Chair, Vice Chair, and Immediate Past Chair, for clarity.

The Committee would also like to note here its experience with appointments. It is difficult for COPP to comply with its standing rules at times when SAA is unable to follow its own appointments procedures. Appointments for COPP leadership need to seek permission from candidates on a reasonable timeline to consider and plan for the opportunity, and not only appoint them. It is crucial to have appointments completed before the annual meeting in order to facilitate a smooth transition.

At the same time that we are instituting an Immediate Past Chair role to ease transitions and knowledge sharing, we also wanted to reduce the total required time to complete a Chair position on COPP. Accepting the reality that it is difficult to absorb all of the institutional knowledge required to be a good Chair in year 1, we made a small change to source the Vice Chair from third OR second year members. Still, asking members to serve 2 or 3 year appointments followed by a Vice Chair and Chair term potentially puts people up for 6-year terms on Committees. How do we make such a long commitment enjoyable and how do we show appreciation for that commitment? While today's item is submitted for action and not discussion, we will continue to think about this question and we encourage Council to think about it with us.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Committee on Public Policy recommends that the SAA Council adopt the proposed revisions to COPP's Standing Rules.

#### *Motion Statement:*

I move to update the Committee on Public Policy's Standing Rules as follows, Committee on Public Policy standing rules.docx

#### **Support Statement:**

Updates to the Committee on Public Policy's standing rules will clarify officer roles and will officially establish an Immediate Past Chair position to ease leadership transitions. The Committee has discussed these changes at length and requests that Council recognize this work by approving our changes.

If the request cannot be supported, we are open to further discussion with Council on COPP standing rules.

#### **Impact on Strategic Priorities:**

There are no notable impacts on the strategic priorities; however these changes may help COPP fulfill requested contributions to SAA's strategic plan by reducing burnout within the committee and easing leadership transitions.

#### **Fiscal Impact:**

There is no fiscal impact to this request.



## **Committee on Public Policy**

### **Standing Rules**

#### **I. Purpose**

The Committee's purpose is to provide strategic information and advice to the SAA Council to enhance SAA's capacity to address public policy issues and concerns affecting archivists, archives, the archival profession, and its stakeholders. The Committee recommends to the SAA Council the public policy priorities on which SAA should focus its attention and resources, within the context of the Society's mission and strategic plan. Although the Committee's purview is broad, its overarching priorities are issues related to the preservation of and access to records of enduring value that affect archivists, archival institutions, and users of the archival record.

#### **II. Size, Composition, Selection, and Length of Terms**

The Committee consists of eight members, and five ex-officio members which include: Council Liaison, SAA Liaison, COPA Chair, SAA liaison(s) to an external public policy mentor(s) and/or legislative advocacy consortia, and Immediate Past Chair. Six members are appointed by the SAA Vice President via the Appointments Committee for staggered three-year terms.

The Committee shall be led by a Chair and Vice Chair who serve staggered two-year terms. The Vice Chair shall be chosen by the SAA Vice President via the Appointments Committee from among the Committee members serving in their second or third year.

After completion of the two-year term, the Immediate Past Chair will continue to serve for another year as a non-voting, ex-officio Committee member.

##### **A. Chair**

The chair shall preside at all meetings; represent the Committee in its relations with SAA in general and with the Council and other groups within SAA; serve on SAA committees, task forces, etc., as an ex-officio member when required or appoint a representative to do so; appoint committee working groups as needed; and submit an annual report of Committee activities to the SAA executive office after the conclusion of his or her term.

##### **B. Vice Chair**

The vice chair shall serve for one year as vice chair and will assume the position of chair at the conclusion of the term. The vice chair will assist the chair in leading the committee and will represent the committee in the absence of the chair.

##### **C. Immediate Past Chair**

The Immediate Past Chair shall serve for 1 year as ex-officio member assisting with the Chair transition, documenting institutional memory, and mentoring members.

#### **III. Duties and Responsibilities**

The Committee has the following duties and responsibilities:

### **A. Acting proactively, the Committee:**

Periodically reviews and suggests (for Council approval) revisions to SAA's Advocacy Agenda.

Prepares drafts, for Executive Committee or Council approval, of position papers, statements, issue briefs, and other documents related to public policy issues, seeking input from members and experts (including component groups) as appropriate and feasible.

Tracks legislative, regulatory, and other public policy issues that are of concern to archivists so that the Council is prepared to address the issues in a knowledgeable manner.

Brings to the Council's attention areas in which collaboration with other organizations may advance the Society's public policy interests and, under Council direction or with its approval, cooperates with such organizations in furthering SAA's interests.

### **B. Acting in response to requests or events, the Committee:**

Responds in a timely fashion to requests from the President (acting on behalf of the Council) or the Executive Director for background information and recommendations on matters related to public policy issues.

Develops and coordinates strategies for the Council and SAA to use in responding rapidly and appropriately to public policy issues or situations that require SAA comment and/or action.

Prepares position statements and issue briefs on high-priority topics for approval by the Council.

Collaborates with SAA component groups to ensure that the Committee and the Council are aware of and responsive to the advocacy and public policy issues that are of concern to members.

## **IV. Reporting**

The Committee works closely with the President, its Council Liaison, and the Executive Director to ensure that it is responsive to the Council's needs and is working in coordination with the staff office. In certain cases, when time is of the essence, Committee communications with the President and Executive Director may be discussed and acted upon solely by the Executive Committee.

## **V. Revision History**

- **First established: September 2013**
- **Last updated/Approved by the SAA Council: January 2024**
- **Name change to Committee on Public Policy (COPP) approved by the SAA Council: May 2016**