

**Society of American Archivists
Council Conference Call
March 6, 2020**

**Final Report: Task Force to Review the Fellows Selection Process
(Prepared by Danna Bell, Task Force Chair)**

The 2019 Fellows Selection Committee sent a message to the Council expressing their concerns regarding the selection process. We suggested that the Council appoint a task force to provide solutions in time for the next award cycle. The Council approved the development of a task force and Vice President/President-Elect Rachel Vagts appointed the following people to serve on the group:

Danna Bell, Chair
Terry Baxter
Robin Chandler
Kathleen Roe
Jamie Roth
Rosalye Settles
Tanya Zanish-Belcher
Steven Booth, Council Liaison

The task force met several times using the Zoom conference system and communicated via email. Some of our discussions dealt with ways to quantify the selection process, but other topics included ensuring that the nominators understood that the nomination package should include more than simply having one item in column a, another in column b, and so on. We defined some aspects of the criteria for selection, including appropriate academic, professional and technical training, determining the fields of the Society's interest, and explaining what comprises "professional archival experience" and "innovative and outstanding work or contributions, including written work." We formalized the selection process to ensure that all candidates get a fair hearing and nominations are not swayed by prior knowledge or connections to committee members. At the end of the process we wanted a decision-making structure that was adequate, fair, comprehensive, transparent, and flexible. We also sought to encourage more complete applications that provide all information needed by the Selection Committee to make a fair decision on candidates.

We spent a fair amount of time defining some of the example items provided in the criteria for selection as well as discussing the criteria as written. We determined that two documents are needed: one for those nominating candidates to become Fellows and one for those evaluating the candidates. We also decided that a sample application and sample letter of recommendation

would be useful to nominators. SAA Fellow and former Council Member Bill Landis graciously supplied those documents for the task force.

We did not make significant changes to the basic criteria. However, we did supply more detailed information for nominators which should help those working on the nomination package understand what the committee will look for, including examples of the kinds of activities, education, and experience that would meet the criteria listed. In addition, we included general recommendations on what should be included in a nomination package and what information should be included in a recommendation letter.

We made a comment within the document indicating that the distinction of Fellow is reserved for practicing archivists and a footnote indicating what makes a person a practicing archivist. We indicated that we believe there are other awards that may honor individuals who do not fit the category of practicing archivist to encourage nominations for those awards.

We included guidelines for reviewers to standardize and formalize the process. The task force also provided a detailed document regarding recusal from the evaluation process. We would like for these guidelines to be publically available to ensure transparency in the selection process.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following revised guidelines for nominators and evaluators for SAA Fellow nominations be approved.

Support Statement: These revised guidelines provide a clearer decision-making structure that is adequate, fair, comprehensive, transparent, and flexible and that will encourage more complete applications that provide all the information needed by the Selection Committee to make a fair decision about candidates.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: Addresses Goal 4. Meeting Members' Needs by increasing the transparency of the nomination and selection processes for this important honor.

Fiscal Impact: None.

Fellow of the Society of American Archivists

Established in 1957, the distinction of Fellow—the highest honor bestowed on individuals by SAA—is awarded for outstanding contributions to the organization and to the archives profession. Fellows must demonstrate and represent the highest qualities of the Society as articulated in the [Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics](#).

Our Core Values include:
Access and Use
Accountability
Advocacy

Diversity and Inclusion
History and Memory
Preservation
Professionalism
Responsible Custody
Selection
Service
Social Responsibility
Social Justice

Nominees must demonstrate their “dedication, devotion, and faithfulness to archives and the archival profession.” Quantifying these qualities while also including initiative, resourcefulness, impact, and commitment may not be easy. However, through the process of nomination, we ask colleagues to contemplate and give voice to actions that portray an archivist’s “power to originate,” their “ability to overcome difficulties,” and how they excel in achieving the profession’s core values.

Candidates must qualify, illustrate, and exhibit impact in each of the following qualities/criteria:

Appropriate academic education and professional/technical training in any of the fields of SAA’s interest.

Professional experience in any of the fields of SAA’s objectives for a minimum of seven years, which shall include evidence of professional responsibility and leadership.

Contributions to the profession demonstrating initiative, resourcefulness, and commitment.

Outreach activities, projects, and scholarship of superior quality and usefulness demonstrating broad impact and contributing to the realization of SAA’s core values and strategic objectives.

Contributions to the archives profession through active participation in and efforts on behalf of SAA as well as contributions to the broader archival profession including regional organizations.

Be an individual SAA member in good standing for at least seven consecutive years immediately preceding their election.

Nomination Requirements and Deadline:

All nominations must be completed online by February 28 of each year. Individual members, primary contacts of institutional members, student members, and associate members are eligible to nominate SAA Fellows.

In accordance with the SAA constitution, the total number of Fellows may not exceed five percent of the SAA membership as of the previous annual meeting.

Nominators with questions should contact the Chair of the Selection Committee.

Guidelines for Nominations:

Overall recommendations:

Nominations must include a core narrative that provides a persuasive argument of how the nominated individual meets each of the criteria.

The nomination must provide convincing information in each of the qualities/criteria areas, although not all must have similar extent of evidence.

A recitation or list of activities, facts, or publications is not sufficient. Nominators must provide evidence of quality and impact.

At least three, but no more than five, letters of support from individuals who are familiar with the nominee's work or contributions to the profession. Ideally each letter should address a different aspect of the nominee's contributions to SAA and/or the profession. Letters may be written by individuals who are not members of SAA, but they must follow these guidelines.

The nominee's resume or curriculum vitae.

Confirmation from the SAA office that the nominee has been an individual member of SAA in good standing for seven consecutive years prior to nomination.

Appropriate academic education and professional/technical training is strongly preferred in any of the fields of SAA's interest.

Academic education: Please describe academic degrees in fields commonly used by institutions hiring professional archivists, including but not limited to history, public history, political science, library science, or archival administration. Coursework focused on archival competencies within that degree should be noted if it is not a more common degree for which such education would be anticipated to exist. If a nominee has a different degree, but one that is relevant to the content/context of their archival work, the nominator should explain the relevance of that degree (e.g., a degree in the sciences for someone working with scientific archives, a degree in the arts for someone working with performing arts archives, etc.). Individuals with other background or training are eligible for nomination, with the proviso that the nominator must very clearly explain qualifications that demonstrate the archival competency of the nominee.

Professional/technical training: Alternative sources of archival education that are offered by institutions/organizations providing training/educational opportunities with curricula drawing from accepted archival standards/best practices and taught by someone with archival competencies. Examples might include various archival institutes (e.g., Modern Archives Institute, Georgia Archives Institute, Western Archives Institute) and/or online or live workshops offered by SAA or regional archival organizations. (If these are the sole education/training for

the individual, note the extent of training involved, e.g., number of events, extent/length of training.)

Professional experience in any of the fields of SAA’s objectives for a minimum of seven years, which shall include evidence of professional responsibility and leadership.

Demonstrable work with archival materials in any of the “core functions” of records management, appraisal/acquisition, arrangement and description, access, preservation, reference, or outreach. Experience need not be entirely “hands-on” and may include management or supervision of archival functions.

The Fellows award is specifically reserved for practicing archivists.¹ SAA has other awards that are more appropriate for those who were/are vendors of archival services/materials, major donors of archival records, researchers/historians/genealogists who have promoted or used archival materials (i.e., J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award) or administrators to whom archival programs report, but may not themselves have archival education/competencies, such as the Librarian of Congress, Archivist of the United States, heads of university libraries, state departments of archives and history or departments of libraries and archives, or SAA staff. Additionally, the SAA Council can choose, or it can be suggested to the SAA Council, to honor an individual archivist with a distinguished service award.

Contributions to the profession demonstrating initiative, resourcefulness, and commitment.

Insightful, intellectual, practical contributions that produce long-term impact on archivists and the profession including:

- Mentoring archivists to support their career development by participating in formal mentorship programs and/or exhibiting a commitment to informally mentoring archivists.
 - Examples include mentoring a student or new archival professional in archival functions and practices; providing advice on involvement with professional organizations such as SAA and regional organizations; providing advice and support to mid-career professionals.
- Administrator of an archival institution that is innovative, has a high standard of professional advocacy, and encourages staff to become involved in SAA and the profession.
 - Examples include individuals who no longer work directly with archival functions, but manage and supervise others who do. The administrator who is forward thinking, finds creative resources to further the archival field, and manages archival staff in such a way as to be a mentor to entry, mid-career and end of career staff. An administrator who directly affects their staff and encourages the participation (and leadership) in SAA (and/or other professional

¹ Practicing archivist includes any role that involves direct involvement with archives ranging from managing an archives, working as an archivist, to providing archival education.

endeavors).

- Engaging in outreach to communities to preserve archives or understand the importance of archives.
 - Examples include leading or making significant contributions to the rescue or preservation of archival collections during natural disasters; leading or making significant contributions to connecting with underserved or marginalized communities creating archives to help them preserve, manage, and make these collections accessible.
- Creating tools at a range of levels (digital or analog).
 - Examples include leading or making significant contributions to the development and improvement of databases and tools such as collection management tools, online finding aids, oral history, etc.
- Creating services (digital or analog).
 - Examples include leading or making significant contributions to the building archival services in virtual environments for individuals that cannot use archival collections; leading or making significant contributions to the building of archival services such as web archiving tools; etc.
- Creating content (digital or analog).
 - Examples include creating archival content or creating content specific to the archival profession such as online exhibits, podcasts; serial blogs; etc.
- Leading advocacy initiatives to address state or federal policy or legislative issues related to archives.
- Engaging in activities and projects which contribute to intellectual discourse on archival concerns.

Program oversight, outreach activities, educational services and projects, writing, and scholarship of superior quality and usefulness that:

- **Demonstrate broad impact;**
- **Assist communities in strengthening identify and self-liberation; and**
- **Contribute to the realization of SAA's core values and strategic objectives.**
- Outreach activities can include creating and coordinating:
 - Workshops, conferences, training programs, courses, festivals, exhibits, publications, and similar activities, with a distinctive impact, aimed at such groups as students, faculty members, scholars, administrators, researchers, donors, records creators, or the general community; and/or

- Researching, preparing and giving presentations including keynotes; professional organization sessions including papers, lightning round participant papers, serving as a session commentator and/or moderator, a pop-up session, a poster session; or presenting about archives in non-archival venues including community or local educational and community history venues, podcasts, TED talks, SXSW conferences, etc.
- Engaging an under documented community or topic to ensure it is documented; developing policies, practices, or standards for identification/preservation/management of/access to a particular type or content area of archival records.
- Developing services to a particular community of records creators or records users.
- Educational Services can include:
 - Leading/directing/managing archival education programs;
 - Serving as a Lecturer in graduate archival education programs;
 - Creating and teaching in-person workshops;
 - Creating and teaching webinars; and/or
 - Producing and posting online tutorials.
- Writing and Scholarship can include:
 - Books;
 - Case Studies;
 - Essays;
 - Editorials and Editorial Service;
 - Policy papers and statements;
 - Promotional materials²;
 - Research Articles;
 - Reviews;
 - Reports demonstrating service to the profession; and/or
 - Serial Blogging with demonstrated impact and professionalism.

Contributions to the archives profession through active participation in SAA and innovative or outstanding work on behalf of SAA.

Participating in SAA governance activities including:

- Elected positions (officers, Council);
- Appointed positions (boards, committees, task forces, working groups);
- Positions such as *American Archivist* Editor or Publications Editor; and/or
- Service on a section steering committee.

² Promotional materials include the use of social media tools, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc., to advance the archival profession in innovative and creative ways.

And making outstanding contributing to activities on behalf of SAA, including:

- Advocacy;
- Fundraising and development;
- Diversity and inclusion;
- Membership services;
- Policy development;
- Standards development; and/or
- Strategic Impact.

Guidelines for Reviewers

Nominations should provide all the information necessary for evaluating the nominee. The evaluation should focus on the quality, quantity, and applicability of the nomination to the criteria. The evaluators should not “fill in” evidence that may be missing. This helps ensure that all nominations are evaluated from a common perspective. Evaluators may or may not personally know or be closely familiar with a nominee and their professional career, so in any given year, those who are on the evaluation committee could influence a decision if factors not included in the nomination are part of the assessment.

Focus of the award is for service to the Society of American Archivists. The nomination needs to demonstrate that the individual has made sufficient contributions to the Society to be named an SAA Fellow. This is an award that honors outstanding contributions through active participation in and efforts on behalf of SAA as well as to the broader archival profession. This is not an award for outstanding contributions to the archival profession nationally or in a region or state without demonstrable contributions to SAA as well. While a nominee’s activities in other venues strengthens the evidence in some of the criteria areas, they do not replace evidence of service in SAA. There are individuals who may be “well-known” but have not participated in the functions and activities of SAA. Such individuals may be appropriate for other awards such as the J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award or distinguished recognition from the SAA Council.

Nominations should demonstrate the nominee meets all criteria. The nomination should demonstrate both how the nominee meets criteria as well as explaining the strengths and impact of their contributions. The nomination should not simply list those items, but explain in a clear and compelling manner how they are superior or exceptional. Nominees will likely have more contributions in some areas compared to others; the final decision to approve a nomination should be based on the whole of contributions demonstrating a significant overall contribution, while meeting the requirement of contributions in each criteria.

Letters provided should demonstrate the quality of the nominee’s contributions. Letters may come from a range of individuals that includes professional colleagues, individuals in other professions or communities and users who have worked with or benefited from the nominee’s efforts. These letters do not need to be from Fellows, Past-Presidents, or those who might be

perceived as having status in SAA. The purpose is to demonstrate the quality of the nominee's contributions, not restate how the individual meets the criteria.

Comparability of assessment. In evaluating each nomination, evaluators should strive to ensure that their assessments are consistent and comparable between nominations. Again, an evaluator's knowledge of an individual's career, or their particular area of expertise and professional focus should not lead to a more (or less) favorable assessment.

Recusal. Evaluators should recuse themselves from evaluating a nomination when they have a direct working relationship or other professional or personal relationship that may be perceived as too close for objectivity. This might include an individual's supervisors, supervisees, partners in current or recent professional positions, or partners/spouses or other close relatives. Recusal by any member of the evaluation committee is not a negative factor for the evaluation, but reflects the intent to ensure fair evaluation for all.



SAA Fellow Nomination Form

Name of Nominee: [Name of nominee]

Institution: [Nominee's employment institution, if relevant]

Address: [Address of nominee's employment institution or home address]

Phone: [Nominee's phone contact]

E-mail: [Nominee's email contact]

Name of Nominator: [Name of nominator]

Institution: [Nominator's employment institution, if relevant]

Address: [Address of nominator's employment institution or home address]

Phone: [Nominator's phone contact]

Email: [Nominator's email contact]

Has nominee been informed of this nomination? N

Justification for Selection

Please describe how the candidate meets every one of the following criteria in a degree sufficient to be selected as an SAA Fellow. The strength of the nomination will be judged in part on how each of the criterion has been met.

Criterion 1: Appropriate academic education, and professional and technical training in any of the fields of the SAA's interest:

[Nominee] holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History and Humanities from the [Institution] and received [pronoun] Masters of Library and Information Studies, with a concentration in Archives Administration, from the [Institution] in [year].

Criterion 2: Professional experience in any of the fields of the Society's objectives for a minimum of seven years, which shall include evidence of professional responsibility:

[Nominee] worked briefly as [position] for the [name and location of employer], surveying and processing site-specific records, before accepting [pronoun] first professional position as [position] at [name and location of employer], in [year]. In [position reference], [Nominee] developed an interest in local history and records that has been a continuous thread throughout [pronoun] career, as evidenced by several of [pronoun] publications and presentations.

[Nominee] moved to [city] in [year] as [position] at the [name of employer]. [Pronoun] tenure there of [number] years, taking on increasing responsibility for managing aspects of special collections beyond the university archives, culminated with [pronoun] being named [position] in [year]. In that role, over the past eight years, [pronoun] has overseen all facets of an academic special collections repository, from collection development and donor relations, to arranging and describing collections, to providing reference and access services for students, faculty, and independent researchers. That [pronoun] has also been tapped to manage the [name] department and to oversee and manage the library's disaster response plan is a testament to the breadth of [Nominee]'s abilities, [pronoun] keen management skills, and the respect in which [pronoun] is held in the [employing institution]'s library system. [Nominee] was granted tenure in [year] in recognition of [pronoun] professional publications and service both within and beyond the [employing institution] community.

Criterion 3: Contributions to the profession demonstrating initiative, resourcefulness, and commitment:

The support letters for this nomination provide compelling evidence from several leaders in the profession and the Society regarding [Nominee]'s initiative, analytical abilities, skills at listening and synthesizing, and [pronoun] commitment to moving forward to timely and meaningful completion any project [pronoun] undertakes. Having served for two years on the [name of SAA group] with [Nominee] myself, I can only echo what others have said about [pronoun] preparedness, and the understated ways in which [pronoun] leads

colleagues through differing viewpoints and opinions to practical, often innovative solutions that support forward momentum. SAA has benefitted time and time again over the years from [Nominee]'s resourcefulness, energy, intelligence, pragmatism, and tact. I have had the great good fortune to work with [pronoun] on several occasions and learned, from these great strengths of [Nominee]'s, approaches I've used to attempt to be a better, more effective leader.

Early in [pronoun] professional career, working in a smaller, under-resourced academic environment, [Nominee] chose, as one support letter writer puts it, to make the "archival program in [employing institution] a laboratory for experimenting and applying innovative theoretical approaches to archival practice." From MPLP to born-digital records, from tackling disability access issues to leveraging social media use for repository outreach, from teaching with primary sources to bootstrap leadership education, [Nominee] has been a compelling example to many archivists and mentees, taking what [pronoun]'s learned through professional engagement and figuring out how to apply it at scale back at home. A real strength of [Nominee]'s though, and one that I think raises [pronoun] to SAA Fellow stature, is [pronoun] dogged insistence on giving back what [pronoun]'s learned—the strategies, successes and failures in [pronoun] application attempts—through [pronoun] numerous memorable, valuable writings and presentations. [Nominee], in many ways, is the proverbial poster child for the benefits that an investment in professional organizational engagement can bring to an archival program, no matter how small its staff and resources.

Criterion 4: Writings, presentations, and/or educational services such as workshops or seminars of superior quality and usefulness contributing to the realization of the Society's objectives:

As noted by all the support letter writers for this nomination, the breadth, depth, and significance of [Nominee]'s writings and presentations is laudable. That [pronoun] [year] narrative of why [topic] was nothing short of revolutionary for a small, under-funded repository was [pronoun] first publication is remarkable. The power in this *American Archivist* article is in [Nominee]'s ability to map abstract theoretical debates within the profession to a compelling local context, providing convincing assessment data that has played an important role in what has been an ongoing professional conversation around [topic]. What's more, in the first of several examples of a desideratum of decades of *American Archivist* editors and board members, [Nominee] had the steadfastness to see what started out as a [year] presentation in a well-attended SAA session in [SAA host city] through to an outstanding contribution to the professional literature.

[Nominee]'s collaboratively written [year] *American Archivist* article "[article title]" is another important example of the continuity of [pronoun] intellectual engagement with a topic, and willingness to do the often-tedious work of turning an SAA annual meeting session into the permanent record of a publication. This is one case, as attested to by several support letter writers, where future generations of archivists will continue to benefit from that effort. Encouraging [topic] has been a consistent thread through [Nominee]'s career, as reflected in service, presentations, and publications. [Pronoun] work in this

particular article focuses simply, but profoundly on understanding the skills that archivists and other information professionals can develop in the course of their careers that help prepare them for [topic] in a variety of settings. [Pronoun] analysis is grounded in several important benchmark points and evolving issues within the profession, and [pronoun] makes a cogent argument regarding the importance to archivists of focusing on [topic] at all career levels, especially in what [pronoun] terms “[quote from article].” In many ways, as noted by several support letter writers, this term best captures the quiet humility with which [Nominee] has made an indelible impact on our Society and profession.

[Nominee]’s other writings and presentations collectively do an important service to our profession and to individual archivists. They explore important areas—such as [first new topic], [second new topic], [third new topic]—in which our profession often needs more conversation and work. [Nominee] consistently uses [pronoun] intellectual efforts to frame topics in ways that thread national trends to local issues and implementations. [Nominee], whether in person or in print, is accessible, practical, honest, and focused on trying, on not letting big issues stop you in your tracks professionally.

Criterion 5: Contributions to the archives profession through active participation in the Society of American archivists and innovative or outstanding work on behalf of the Society:

[Nominee] has unquestionably done yeoman’s work for the Society of American Archivists over the years. [Pronoun] has served in section leadership, on committees, as SAAs representative to important [topic] initiatives, and on [three examples of high-level SAA leadership service], and [pronoun]’s currently been tapped as a member of a [topic] task force. There are many points that could be made about the significance of the work [Nominee] has done throughout SAA, and each of the support letters touches on points of importance to the writer. I will highlight places where my work and experience within SAA has intersected with [Nominee]’s, and why I think [pronoun] contributions are rise to the level of being named an SAA Fellow.

As chair of SAA’s [name of committee] in [year], [Nominee] led the committee and the organization through an assessment of the feasibility of [topic] within SAA. One support letter writer who was involved in that effort provides compelling detail on [Nominee]’s masterful, meticulous, and respectful work in leading it. From the perspective of a run-of-the-mill member of the Society, however, I was in awe of the succinct thoroughness of the group’s final report. Taking on a fraught topic that had festered for several decades within the profession, gathering data, and focusing on reaching evidence-based conclusions rather than on the abstract goodness of [topic], the work through which [Nominee] led this group was a true lesson in leadership from which all SAA groups could learn. The long-term testament to this work is that the issue of [topic] has not been raised in a significant way in the past decade.

[Nominee]’s work as a member of the [high-level SAA group] was, to my mind, the most exemplary of contributions. Others have spoken about the personal and organizational

qualities [pronoun] brought to [name of group] meetings. [Pronoun] is consummately prepared when [pronoun] walks into the room – in my three years on [name of group] I never saw anyone other than the [name of officer] (and SAA staff of course) who was as engaged with the [topic] process. [Vignette of personal experience], I found that [pronoun] example energized me for serving in that capacity. There should always be a person to serve as a touchstone for how to be a [name of group] member, how to take [type] activities seriously and do service to SAA's [type] groups, and how to come to the [name of group] table prepared to listen, collaborate, and not pontificate. For me, [Nominee] was that person, even though I served with several other laudable members of [name of group] during my term. As is made clear in the support letters for this nomination, anyone who has had the good fortune to work with [Nominee] within SAA comes away having learned important lessons in leadership and making the organization work for its members.

One example stands out for me. An ongoing issue in discussion during our overlapping two years on [name of group] was how SAA should relate to [category of external groups]. [Nominee] had solid leadership experience in the [reference to external groups]. [Pronoun] provided cogent insights into some of the challenges of having a meaningful engagement that would benefit [category of external group] and leverage SAA's organizational capacity in ways that could be productive and not taxing. [Nominee] was instrumental in organizing, guiding, and listening at [type of meeting] held to discuss these issues at the [year] and [year] annual meetings. [Pronoun] diligently reported back to the [name of group] about progress, and laid important groundwork that ultimately led to the establishment of the [name of group]. Figuring out how to accommodate [group acronym], [description of group], was a challenging organizational hurdle in [year], but one that I think paved the way for a more nimble, responsive SAA. [Nominee]'s patient, level-headed, collaborative work in steering SAA towards [group acronym] played a pivotal role in making that happen.

[Brief description of a specific effort in which the Nominee was engaged while serving on a high-level SAA group]. [Nominee] was a key participant in diffusing tension, insisting on hearing people out, articulating issues, seeking consensus, and drawing [pronoun] [name of group] colleagues back to key goals and outcomes around which agreement could be reached.

[Nominee]'s writings come back full circle for me in considering why I think [pronoun] should be honored as a Fellow of SAA. Focusing on leadership within the Society, we need to cultivate more members willing and able to [pithy phrase previously quoted from Nominee's article]. [Nominee] is the exemplar of that quality within our profession, and the importance and success of that skill should be acknowledged, applauded, and celebrated by SAA.

Additional considerations in support of the nomination (for example, honors, awards, and recognition by SAA or other bodies):

Names of individuals who will submit letters of support (minimum of three; no more than five):

- [Support letter writer #1]
- [Support letter writer #2]
- [Support letter writer #3]
- [Support letter writer #4]

Resume/Vita (attached)

- [filename].pdf

Email from Nancy Beaumont confirming that [Nominee] has been an individual member of SAA in good standing for the requisite 7 years.

February 21, 2018

[Nominator]:

I can confirm that [Nominee] has been an active member (continuously) since [year].

Best -- Nancy

[Date]

To the Committee on the Selection of SAA Fellows;

I am happy to contribute to the package of letters nominating [Nominee] as a distinguished Fellow of the Society of American Archivists. [Nominee] has been an inspiring professional colleague for nearly two decades, serving impressively and effectively in that liminal space where the archival profession intersects with a wide variety of allied professions. [Pronoun] understanding and appreciation for both the key role that archivists do and should play in the current information environment, and the important impacts that input from allied professionals can and will have on the archival endeavor has served our profession and our professional association very well. [Pronoun] unique role and clear voice within SAA and the archival profession, and the creative, articulate, and dedicated ways in which [pronoun] has leveraged them more than merits the designation of distinguished Fellow.

While working in the [name of employer] in [year]-[year], I had heard quite a bit about [Nominee], especially the work [pronoun] was doing using [specific technology] to produce [technology initiative] finding aids and working with [another technology initiative] markup at the [name of employer]. I actually met [Nominee] for the first time at the SAA annual meeting in [name of host city] in [year], at a meeting of a [name of group] Task Force on which I was serving, chaired by [name of chair]. [Pronoun] wasn't a member of the task force, but characteristically for [Nominee] [pronoun] saw something interesting on the program and decided to sit in on it. [Pronoun] made more extensive contributions to the discussion that afternoon than many appointed members of the group, and from that day to the present my admiration and appreciation for [pronoun] talent, energy, and perspective have continued to increase.

Professionally, my interactions with [Nominee] have been most extensive in terms of the development of [professional practice initiative] within the [name of organization]. As one of the earliest [names of two encoding initiatives] implementers in the [name of institution], [pronoun] technical understanding of the systems used to index and deliver structured data to end users played a critical role in the articulation of the first and most widely influential set of [professional practice initiative]. The data encoding consistency made possible by [professional practice initiative] allowed the [name of organization] to leverage structured archival data to produce portals into digitized data geared to specific topical ([example]) and professional ([example]) without re-encoding source data. [Nominee] was one of the few people involved in these efforts whose ability to serve as translator between technologists and archivists made the innovations possible.

Not content to rest on [pronoun] laurels within the [state] environment, when [Nominee] began work for [name of employer], [pronoun] almost immediately sought to apply what [pronoun]'d learned about [professional practice initiative] to a national and international context. [Pronoun] spearheaded an effort, in collaboration with members of several SAA component groups, to articulate [professional practice initiative] that could be adopted more broadly than within [state]. As [pronoun] has done so often in [pronoun] career, this is a great example of [pronoun] ability to use [pronoun] knowledge and position as a catalyst to positive action on a much broader scope than had previously seemed possible. One could argue, I think pretty successfully, that the *[title of publication]* that was [Nominee]'s

brainchild, and the *[title of publication]* developed by [another author] are the two primary reasons why [technology initiative] has been so widely adopted by the U.S. archival community, a development from which SAA has benefitted immensely.

[Nominee] is an inveterate organizer, something from which the archival profession and SAA have both been beneficiaries. Although [pronoun] was off at [event] during the actual pre-SAA annual meeting conference, [Nominee] was the inspiration and brains behind the influential “[title]” symposium, a day-long event held at the [repository], sponsored by SAA, [organization], and [organization], and attended by over 200 archivists. [Pronoun] organized the speakers and hosted and participated in their pre-symposium conference calls. The influential and oft-cited *[title of publication]* publication that resulted from this symposium does not have [Nominee]’s name on its cover, but [pronoun] inspiration and spirit pervades it. [Nominee]’s skills and creativity in conceptualizing, shaping, and actually pulling off stimulating opportunities for archivists and their allies to gather have had a major impact on the profession. I had the opportunity to work with [pronoun] last year in planning the [organization]-hosted conference *[name of conference]*, which drew several hundred archivists, librarians, and technologists from around the world to [city]. It was a challenging two-and-a-half day event that broadened professional horizons and placed archives and the archival profession in a central position. It was an event that would never have successfully happened without the energy and vision that [Nominee] brings to all of the organizing work that [pronoun] does.

I could continue to offer vignettes from my experience of [Nominee]’s contributions that I think richly warrant [pronoun] designation as a distinguished SAA Fellow, but they are too numerous and I know that the committee will see several other letters packed with them. The fact is that we rely heavily on [Nominee] to do the excellent work [pronoun] has done and will continue to do, and we benefit immeasurably from it. [Pronoun] leads us into the world of [topic], as an accomplished and dedicated participant in [social media platform] and one of the most articulate framers of the benefits of [social media platform] participation by archivists. [Pronoun] has not only championed the benefits of [topic] to archives programs, [pronoun] has used [pronoun] position to gather professionals at numerous conferences to talk about the nuts and bolts of doing it. A long-time proponent of [topic], [pronoun] has published and spoken with great frequency, including to SAA audiences, about their importance for developing truly useful archival information systems. If this profession has a “better angel,” [Nominee] is IT! I’m not sure if [pronoun]’s ever physically processed an archival collection, but [pronoun] is an archivist to the core and one of our most articulate and effervescent champions. I wholeheartedly endorse this nomination of [Nominee] as a distinguished fellow of SAA.

Sincerely,

[signature file of support letter writer]