

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

**Report: Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment
(Prepared by Paul Conway and Jennifer Gunter King, Co-chairs)**

The focus of CODA's work this year is to demonstrate significant accomplishments for the profession by the time of the Annual Meeting in Chicago in August 2020. This memo is a brief status report on each of CODA's three task forces, along with a notice of what we may need from the Council in the months ahead.

CODA is picking up momentum since the 2020 SAA Annual Meeting in Austin. Erin Stoddard is leading a task force to identify an appropriate data repository platform. Jennifer Gunter King is leading the effort to identify a group of datasets for ingest into a repository and to establish collection development frameworks and policies. Paul Conway is leading efforts to establish education and training activities in support of data use and data gathering, initially for SAA members.

Repository Task Force

CODA has established a working relationship with the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This relationship has produced a tentative agreement that Odum will create and support an "SAA Dataverse" built on the open source data repository toolkit "Dataverse" programmed at Harvard University. The Odum Institute will establish the SAA Dataverse at no cost to SAA and will assist CODA in ingesting a small group of datasets for pilot testing and training, customize the interface to brand the site for SAA, and establish a variety of policies for data ingest, configuration, and use. Eventually, as the size and richness of the SAA Dataverse increases, it may be necessary and advisable for SAA to provide monetary support to the Odum Institute. But for now, the service is free to SAA in keeping with the Odum Institute's mission.

Dataverse Home. <https://dataverse.org/>

Odum Dataverse. <https://dataverse.unc.edu/dataverse/odum>

Action Items for SAA:

1. CODA recommends that SAA establish a formal relationship between SAA and the Odum Institute regarding Odum's commitment to the SAA Dataverse and the short-term division of labor regarding ongoing support. CODA will draft a memo of understanding and forward to Executive Director Nancy Beaumont for discussion with and approval by the SAA Council.

2. CORDA requests that SAA establish a placeholder for in-kind technical support for configuring the SAA Dataverse interface look and feel. CORDA feels strongly that the SAA Dataverse should be branded explicitly as an SAA initiative and have an interface that resembles other SAA websites. CORDA will need help from the SAA office to accomplish this branding.
3. There is no direct charge to SAA for Odum's setup of the SAA Dataverse. For the present, we envision CORDA doing all of the (volunteer) work required to configure the SAA Dataverse and ingest working datasets. Odum will provide advice and guidance as necessary, at no charge, based on the processes and procedures that are already in place. If the size and complexity of the SAA Dataverse grows very substantially, it may be necessary to support storage space costs at the Odum Institute. CORDA will monitor this situation and advise the Council as needed.

Assessment and Evaluation Task Force

The Assessment and Evaluation Task Force is working closely with the Repository Task Force to identify a small number of datasets that can be ingested into a SAA Dataverse. The top priority is the data, codebook, and analyses of the A*CENSUS from 2004. The goal is to identify three or four additional datasets that represent a range of possibilities of interest to SAA members and the wider archival profession.

The task force is also preparing to survey SAA section leadership to identify specific datasets already in place or plans for data gathering in the next few years, along with broader categories of research data, tools, and literature. CORDA will utilize Qualtrics survey software; we are working on logistics.

The survey builds on outreach activities prior to the 2020 SAA Annual Meeting in Austin. The task force has engaged Nance McGovern, co-chair of the SAA Research Forum, as an *ex officio* member of CORDA. Alignment of CORDA with the Research Forum has emerged as a critical step to ensure a continuum of research practice within the profession.

Action Items for SAA:

1. Confirm Nance McGovern as an *ex officio* member of CORDA.(DONE.)
2. Support CORDA's use of Qualtrics for the survey, and the possible support that the committee members may be providing through their home institutions.
3. Support CORDA's efforts to acquire critical data sets such as "A*CENSUS (2004)."

Education and Training Task Force

The task force has identified three priorities for the year:

1. Plan and promote pre-conference learning opportunities (in two parts) designed to teach SAA members a) how to add or retrieve data from the SAA Dataverse and b) the fundamentals of quantitative data gathering and analysis. Our working concept is a) a 3-hour "unworkshop"

that is free and open to all, to focus on the Dataverse, and b) a formal pre-conference workshop with a paid instructor and limited enrollment to teach basic research methods and datasets in the new SAA Dataverse.

2. Assemble teaching and learning resources on data gathering, reuse, and analysis. The resources will support the pre-conference workshops. An annotated listing of resources will be disseminated widely to SAA members (and others) through SAA's website.
3. Revise and submit a draft paper on "research as assessment and evaluation" and submit to *American Archivist* for peer review and publication. The paper articulates the historical context of SAA's assessment and evaluation activities and defines "research" in the context of systematic understanding of the archival profession, archival organizations, and professional archivists.

Action Items for SAA

1. Approve forthcoming pre-conference education proposal and advise CODA on logistics. (DONE.)
2. Establish a placeholder in SAA's publications program for the dissemination of teaching and learning resources.