

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 22 – 24, 2014  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Staff Report: Annual Meeting  
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont)**

**“PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES FOR CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVING THE  
SAA ANNUAL MEETING”**

For an update on progress made toward the Council-adopted “Principles and Priorities for Continuously Improving the SAA Annual Meeting,” see the Appendix. As noted there, in negotiating the 2018 agreement with the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel, we were able to gain free wireless throughout the 2014 conference meeting space. **Updates appear in red type.**

**2014 JOINT ANNUAL MEETING**

*ARCHIVES\*RECORDS: Ensuring Access* promises to be a rewarding experience for all, with outstanding conference and pre-conference programming (including the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual SAA Research Forum), dynamic speakers and new learning formats, opportunities to participate in service projects, and a host of networking opportunities. As in recent years, the overall conference schedule is very tight.

**Program Development**

See the January 2014 report (0114-V-E-5-AnnMtg) for a summary of the excellent work of the 2014 Program Committee. Since January, the SAA staff has been in regular communication with speakers to ensure that we have the most up-to-date information for posting on the conference website and that the speakers have the information and materials they need to plan for their presentations. (See “Resources”<sup>1</sup> for information for speakers, first-timers and students, and those who want to “make the case” to attend.)

In addition to the 70 education sessions accepted by the Program Committee, the meeting will feature 28 Professional Poster presentations (six more than in 2013 and an all-time high), 42 Graduate Student Poster presentations (two more than in 2013 and an all-time high), “Advocating for Archives” (a pre-conference event on Monday, priced at just \$39

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www2.archivists.org/2014/resources#.U2faa\\_ldWPV](http://www2.archivists.org/2014/resources#.U2faa_ldWPV).

for members and subsidized by SAA in light of Goal 1), and THATCampSAA (a post-conference event on Sunday, with the fee to be determined).

A variety of noon-time forums are scheduled for Thursday, August 14, on such topics as Diversifying the Archival Record (sponsored by the SAA Diversity Committee), Ethics Case Studies (sponsored by the SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct), Archival Education and Employment Issues (sponsored by SNAP and the Archival Educators Roundtable). A brown bag lunch entitled “SAA Now and in the Future: A Town Hall Conversation with SAA Leaders” will feature incoming President Kathleen Roe.

### **Use of Social Media Before, During, and After the Conference**

See “Use of Social Media at 2012 Annual Meeting”<sup>2</sup> for background on initiatives to incorporate social media more effectively into all aspects of the Annual Meeting. We plan to build on lessons learned in 2012 and 2013 to enhance use of social media before, during, and after the 2014 conference.

- The Host Committee blog went live on March 10.<sup>3</sup> The notion of an active Host Committee blog, now in its sixth year, is (appropriately) institutionalized.
- We will have free wireless access throughout the meeting space for those attendees who are staying in the hotel. (My guess is that all attendees will get access.) This will make it easier to support...
- ... Use of Twitter and Facebook before, during, and after the conference. The hashtag #saa2014 has been in active use for several months, and the feed for this hashtag is aggregated on the conference home page.
- Matt Black has enhanced the conference web page(s) to integrate social media more seamlessly. Each page on the conference site features share buttons, and analytics demonstrate that users are consistently sharing pages via these buttons.
- The online schedule (via Sched.org) uses best-practice share features, allowing individual session descriptions to be shared and promoted. The platform also encourages users to connect their social media accounts, which enhances attendees’ ability to connect more directly via social media.

### **Service Projects**

Inspired by the work of the Archivists of Religious Collections Section in San Diego in 2012, the work of a number of committed volunteers in New Orleans in 2013, and the recommendations of the Social Responsibility subcommittee of the Annual Meeting Task Force, several Host Committee members have been working to line up service projects to be held immediately prior to the conference. More information about how to sign up for service opportunities is forthcoming; watch the website.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0612-V-L-AnnMtgSocialMedia.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <http://archivesdc2014.wordpress.com/>

## Conference Promotion

Promotion of the Joint Annual Meeting began in the early fall via the conference website and in the January/February issue of *Archival Outlook*, with articles by the Program Committee co-chairs and the Host Committee. Host Committee articles appear in each issue leading up to the conference. The Host Committee has done an outstanding job of providing information and tips on its blog (<http://www2.archivists.org/2014/washington/blog#.U2Qe2vldWPU>), linked from the conference web page, and has begun to develop a list of repository open houses and tours on Tuesday and Wednesday of the conference week.

We once again opted not to print or mail the full Preliminary Program, but to post it as a PDF on the conference website (this year using the same BlueToad technology that we're using for *Archival Outlook* online) and as an online schedule (via Sched.org), which allows for quick searching and filtering and also allows users to create a personalized schedule (which more than 100 users have already done). In late April we mailed to all current members and former members in proximate states a colorful 8-page flyer that summarizes the conference highlights and schedule. We have used this promotional strategy to good effect for the last several conferences.

We continue to use *In the Loop* to refresh our promotional messages about the program, affiliated events, and the host city and to remind members and other prospective registrants of important deadlines (like ***July 7, the Early-Bird registration deadline!***).

## Registration

Registration “went live” on the conference website on Tuesday, April 15. As of close of business on Thursday, May 1 (i.e., 15 weeks out) we have registered 119 “full paid” attendees, of whom 19 are students. This compares with 70 full-paid attendees at 15 weeks out from the 2013 conference, of whom 9 were students.

Per the suggestion of the Annual Meeting Task Force’s Social Responsibility subcommittee, the registration form includes an opportunity to “help us reduce our footprint” by opting out of receiving the print Onsite Program. And in response to suggestions from the Women Archivists Roundtable, we have asked registrants to indicate if they are interested in learning more about child care options in DC, which we currently are investigating.

## Exhibit and Sponsorship Support

Given that the majority of SAA’s exhibitors are “loyal” partners, we decided again this year to forego printing and mailing of the exhibitor prospectus and to rely on personal contact, email communication, and website postings for promotion of our exhibit and sponsorship opportunities. Throughout the fall we encouraged exhibitors to sign up by January 31 to receive a discount on 2014 exhibit space. We are now in year 5 of working with Conference & Logistics Consultants’ “virtual expo hall” software, a sign-up page on

the conference website on which prospective exhibitors can view a live, real-time floor plan showing currently available booths and can select and confirm their booth space(s) immediately. This process saves time for the exhibitors and for staff.

Exhibits revenue to date totals \$78,000 and sponsorship revenue totals \$36,100, thanks to our four confirmed sponsors (Preservica at the “Silver Sponsor” level, Atlas Systems at the “Bronze Sponsor” level, Preservation Technologies, and Hollinger Metal Edge). In addition, the Council of State Archivists was able to bring in sponsors ancestry.com and Family Search to support that organization’s efforts.

As always, I welcome your comments and questions.

## **Principles and Priorities for Continuously Improving the SAA Annual Meeting** (Adopted by the SAA Council, August 12, 2013, with Updates as of May 2014)

*This document presents a summary of the Council's principles and priorities for ensuring the continued development of the Annual Meeting, based on the work of the 2011-2013 Annual Meeting Task Force. Going forward, the Council expects that there will be ongoing reporting on the extent to which these Principles and Priorities are put into play for the Annual Meeting. [See "Progress on Priorities as of January 2014" beginning on page 2, as well as Agenda Item 0813-1-VI-E-5-AnnMtg at <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0813-1-VI-E-5-AnnMtg.pdf>.]*

### **Guiding Principles**

- We will make every meeting as useful, affordable, accessible, and enjoyable as possible for all attendees.
- We will explore new locations, structure, and content for the Annual Meeting on an ongoing basis.
- We will embrace a culture of experimentation and will be willing to take calculated risks with respect to the Annual Meeting. No aspect of the meeting will be off limits based on "tradition."
- We will encourage diversity among the people attending the meeting, contributing to its content, and benefiting from its results.
- We will actively pursue ways of making meeting content available online.
- We will integrate a commitment to social responsibility and sustainability into all aspects of meeting planning and execution.
- We will continuously seek feedback from both attendees and non-attendees on all aspects of the meeting.

### **Progress on Priorities as of May 2014 (updates in red)**

#### **Site Selection and Contract Requirements:**

- We will experiment with meeting in cities of varying sizes using a combination of a convention center and room blocks in several hotels at varying price points.  
*[Contracts signed with Cleveland Convention Center plus three hotels for 2015, with Hilton Atlanta for 2016, with Oregon Convention Center plus two hotels for 2017, and with Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, DC, for 2018. Going forward, SAA will consider alternatives to quadrennial meetings in Washington, DC.]*
- We will offer inexpensive alternative housing (such as dormitories) whenever feasible.  
*[Staff actively pursued options for the 2014 conference, but found that all local colleges, universities, and other institutions with dorm space discontinue availability of dorms]*

*beginning in early August. We will continue to pursue this option for future conferences.]*

- We will stipulate in all Requests for Proposals (RFP) that free wireless access in meeting spaces is a key component of our needs.  
*[This stipulation is covered in all current contracts (2014-2018) and will be included in all future RFPs.]*
- We will stipulate in all RFPs the importance of fair labor practices, sustainable (“green”) practices, and donation of excess food and beverage to worthy causes.  
*[This stipulation is covered in all current contracts (2014-2018) and will be included in all future RFPs.]*
- Staff will actively monitor information about labor contracts and potential labor actions affecting the hotel sector.  
*[This is being done on an ongoing basis.]*

### **Priorities for Delivery of Meeting Content:**

- We will deploy a mobile conference app for access to program information via smart phones and tablets.  
*[The app launched in 2013 has been refined significantly for 2014 based on user feedback and staff experience.]*
- We will ensure that each year’s conference website includes effective functionality and navigation.  
*[The conference website was retooled for 2013 and refined for 2014; remaining work will be done as quickly as possible in the context of redesigning SAA’s overall website.]*
- We will seek to provide free access to recordings made of important sessions from past conferences.  
*[The 2006-2008 recordings were posted on the SAA website immediately prior to the 2013 Annual Meeting, and the 2009-2011 recordings were posted immediately after that meeting. We will seek access to the 2012 and 2013 recordings prior to June 2014.]*
- We will investigate and incrementally implement online access to meeting content by various means as technology and resources permit.  
*[Staff has been discussing approaches and costs with several companies that offer these services. New for 2014: We have negotiated with long-time vendor Convention Recordings to provide downloadable mp3 recordings of all education sessions and plenaries for 12 months for just \$29 for SAA members. This replaces the previous model of \$99/\$149 for CDs.]*
- We will implement sustainable practices in our production of conference materials.  
*[As of 2013, registrants may opt out from receiving the onsite program in paper. Approximately 10% of 2013 attendees selected this option in advance, although a significant proportion asked for a paper copy onsite. We expect that as the app is adopted more widely, more attendees will forego the print program. We are using recycled materials for name badges and badge holders.]*

## **Priorities for New Approaches to Meeting Content and Structure:**

- We will experiment with new approaches to plenary sessions.  
*[The 2013 opening plenary featured a panel of two speakers moderated by the SAA president. The vice president/president-elect presented her inaugural address at the Business Meeting on Saturday. The 2014 opening plenary will feature a panel discussion on access to records, along with awards; Plenary 2 will feature a speaker on National History Day, along with awards; the presidential address will be presented via videotape on the website so that all members may view it; and the vice president/president-elect will present her inaugural address at the Business Meeting on Saturday.]*
- We will identify and implement new approaches to structured and unstructured networking.  
*[As in 2012 and 2013, a room will be set aside with ten or more round tables that small groups may use for informal meetings on an ad hoc basis.]*
- We will experiment with new formats and content for education sessions.  
*[The 2014 Call for Proposals invited individuals to propose new session formats of any kind. Sessions will be 60 or 75 minutes long rather than the “traditional” 90-minute time blocks in the hope that this will open up time for other possible conference activities.]*
- The Program Committee charge will be revised to encourage Program Committees to innovate in additional ways.  
*[The Council adopted a revised charge at its August 2013 meeting. (See 0813-1-III-A-2-ProgComm.)]*
- We will actively publicize to members all efforts to consider, implement, and evaluate the effectiveness of new approaches.  
*[This document – with updates – will be provided on an ongoing basis as a component of the Annual Meeting staff report. In addition, Program Committee and Host Committee reports will address the “Principles and Priorities” as appropriate.]*