

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

**Preliminary Recommendations:
Task Force on Member Affinity Groups
(Prepared by Shawn San Roman [Chair], Rachael Dreyer,
Rebecca Goldman, Francine Snyder, and Jordon Steele)**

BACKGROUND¹

At its May 2013 meeting the Council adopted the following charge for a Task Force on Member Affinity Groups:

Task Force on Member Affinity Groups

I. Purpose

The Task Force on Member Affinity Groups is charged to consider the most effective structures to encourage flexible, inclusive, and participatory opportunities for the membership. This should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of current affinity groups (i.e., sections and roundtables) and consideration of whether a different structure would better serve SAA's members. The group is also charged with identifying what kinds of support and resources are needed to allow current and potential affinity groups to work most effectively.

II. Task Force Selection, Size, and Length of Term

Following an open call for participation, the SAA Vice President / President-Elect shall appoint five members of varying lengths of membership in SAA, including some members with past leadership experience with active sections or roundtables. One of those members shall serve as the chair. All appointments are effective from July 1, 2013, through September 1, 2014.

III. Reporting Procedures

The Task Force will submit a progress report in January 2014, preliminary recommendations in May 2014, and final recommendations in August 2014.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

The Task Force will deliver to the Council a final report with recommendations as to whether SAA's policies regarding the structure and support of member groups such as sections and roundtables should be modified in order to make more effective use of SAA's resources and best meet member needs. The group should evaluate whether the current requirements for section and roundtable activity are effective,

¹ Staff Note: Background section/task force charge added to original submission for Council members' reference.

and if they are not, recommend new requirements. The Task Force should also evaluate what kinds of resources and administrative structures are best suited for encouraging member participation in SAA-sponsored affinity groups.

In addition to other research and activities the Task Force deems necessary to meet its charge, the Task Force will endeavor to obtain the input of the members on what they most value in their current affinity groups, where their groups have been most challenged, and what expectations they have for networking in SAA. The Task Force will also examine current and historical data on section and roundtable activities.

The Task Force will consider such general issues as:

- Role of affinity groups in facilitating member communication and participation in the organization;
- Opportunities and threats associated with structural change;
- Estimated cost to SAA, including staff time, of supporting an affinity group;
- Estimated administrative time required of Council members for liaison responsibilities;
- Results from any surveys that sections/roundtables have conducted of their memberships; and
- Interviews with leaders of sections and roundtables.

V. Meetings

The Task Force will accomplish its work primarily via email, conference call, Skype, Google+ hangout, and perhaps an in-person meeting at the 2013 Annual Meeting.

Support Statement: The time seems ripe to conduct a serious study of this large and growing issue because: 1) there seems to be member interest in forming new roundtables, 2) at least one roundtable is contemplating petitioning to change its status to a section, 3) the need for considering this issue has consistently come up in Council discussions, and 4) the need to be more responsive to member needs and more creative in the ways in which SAA supports them fits squarely into Strategic Goals 4.3 and 4.4.

Fiscal Impact: The task force may require research assistance from SAA staff and SAA may need to fund multiple conference calls or web meetings. It is likely that no in-person meetings outside of the 2013 Joint Annual Meeting will be required.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1970, twelve committees, including the Task Force on Member Affinity Groups (Task Force), have been asked to study the membership structure of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and propose recommendations on how the SAA, as a professional association can be a more effective organization for its members. These committees addressed pressing organizational needs presented at the time including; refining group structures and missions, standardizing elections and offices, creating group bylaws, improving communications, improving finances, improving organizational responsiveness and flexibility, and improving leadership training and opportunities. Several of the committees reviewed the SAA constitution, bylaws, and guidelines for committees along with examining the stated mission of constituent groups, now referred to as affinity groups. The Task Force began the process in a similar fashion. That is, reviewing the existing organizational structure, learning about the history and mission of various affinity groups, and conducting a review of relevant Presidential Addresses, committee reports, articles, and surveys. After this review, the Task Force found one gap in the available resources--a survey of SAA membership which asks directly about the affinity group structure. In surveying the membership, the Task Force is presented with the opportunity to base its recommendations directly on feedback and input from those that will be the most impacted--affinity group members and leaders. The Task Force

concluded, in consultation with the SAA President, that a survey of SAA members in this regard is warranted and a potentially informative tool which would buttress the literature.

METHODOLOGY

The theoretical foundation of this study into the structure of the SAA affinity groups is structural-functionalism, which is drawn from the institutionalist line of the sociology and comparative politics fields. The purpose of this Task Force is to examine the structure of SAA's affinity groups in order to determine if that structure is effectively serving its members. The structural-functional approach assumes that there are individuals with similar values, interests, and goals and that they have a need to create "structures" that will assist them effectively achieving those goals. The intersections of the "functions" of the community combined with the "structures" they create ultimately determine whether or not these communities are successful. In this case, the "community" is archivists who have created the Society of American Archivists (SAA) for the purpose of supporting the community through education, training, and networking in order to enhance the professional standing of archivists. The structures that the community has built over the years generally meet the needs of the archival community. Instructive here is Peter Hall's "relational character" of institutions, which Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo summarize as, "[m]ore important than the formal characteristics of either state or societal institutions per se is how a given institutional configuration shapes political interactions."² The question is whether or not the "institutional configurations" (structures) the SAA has created could be made to operate more effectively within the organization, and whether the SAA members and leaders can have more effective interactions. In effect, structure matters to how SAA members engage with each other, the Society, and meet the changes needs of their profession.

A major component of the structural-functionalist model is behaviorism which emerged in the 1950s and 1960s. Behaviorism in this context suggests that people can both influence and be influenced by the structures in which they operate. While there are many ways to conduct research this area, survey research is one that has become dominate and persuasive. Since we want to better understand what changes are necessary and desired, while also trying to understand the potential impact upon members, the Task Force chose an attitudinal survey design. An attitudinal survey design asks respondents to react to various statements which can be viewed along a range of emotion from positive to negative. This design works well in this situation because it allowed the task force to solicit reactions from the SAA membership and then gauge how members might feel about one change over another. Since the advantage of the attitudinal survey is that opposing viewpoints can be tested alongside each other in order to determine how individuals feel about a specific suggestion or outcome, the survey must offer as many opposing organizational options as possible. Our survey offered suggestions for organizational change that ranged from no change to significant change. Most of the options offered have been expressed in previous articles, speeches, and surveys, but they have neither been "tested" side-by-side, nor has membership been directly asked about their reactions. The attitudinal survey allowed the Task Force to directly ask members about their feelings on a variety of potential changes. While there is fractious opinions towards what changes are perceived as best, our preliminary survey results suggest SAA members are open to the idea of examining the affinity group structures and willing to entertain suggestions about changes. The preliminary findings also suggest that significant changes will require broad transparency and communication about relative merits of change.

² Kathleen Thelen and Sven Steinmo. 1998. "Institutionalism in Comparative Politics." In *Structuring Politics: Historical Institutionalism in Comparative Analysis*. p. 6.

SURVEY DESIGN

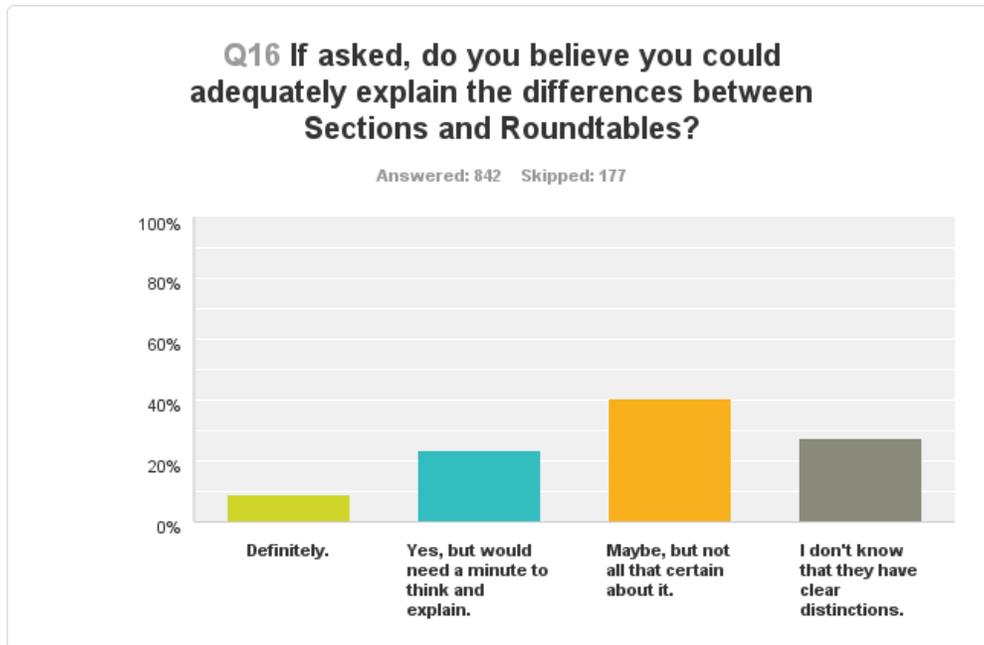
The survey consisted of 26 items which were a combination of multiple choice, Likert-scale, rating, and open-ended questions. Additionally, respondents were divided into four categories; SAA Members, SAA Affinity Group Leaders (defined as members of a Steering Committee regardless of title), SAA Council Members, and Non-SAA Members. Each of these groups were presented slightly different question sets based on the leadership elements, or not, associated with their membership category. Effectively, SAA Council Members were asked specific questions which related to their role as a sanctioning body. Section and Roundtable Leaders were asked about how they operated as leaders and what resources they utilized and/or what resources they would find beneficial. While those in leadership positions answered some additional questions, the vast majority of members were able avoid questions they might not have information about or knowledge of as they sought to provide opinions about the future of the archivist's association.

This report does not detail the questions or responses of the Membership survey, as that will be included in the final report. Rather, this report offers an initial review of the survey responses, and the task force is providing several points for the SAA Council to consider implementing in the short-term. At the same time, the Task Force is continuing to evaluate survey data, including open-ended responses, and planning to conduct the final phase of the study. In the last phase of the study, the task force will be interviewing current Section and Roundtable leaders in order to both seek their suggestions for changes and gauge their reactions to potential proposals. The final report will consist of a structural-functional review of the SAA and make recommendations for structural changes, which will need to be discussed amongst the senior leadership, and ultimately posited to the membership.

PRELIMINARY SURVEY FINDINGS

- 1) 1,019 individuals participated in the Task Force on Membership Affinity Groups Membership Survey³.
- 2) 82.27% (756) of respondents answered that the process to examine affinity group structures “Should be” or “Is worth” considering. While there were a few comments in the open-end sections which could be considered negative or showing nervousness toward the process, the vast majority of respondents were open, engaged, and interested in what developments might emerge.
- 3) There is a general lack of understanding of the distinction between Sections and Roundtables. When asked if respondents believed they could adequately explain the differences between Sections and Roundtables, a majority 67.94% (572) could not tell the difference between the two affinity groups with certainty. Further, 23.28% (196) believed they could tell the difference, but would need a minute to think about it and explain. Only, 8.79% (74) believe they can adequately explain the differences between Sections and Roundtables. This sentiment was echoed in open-ended responses. The lack of confidence to define Sections and Roundtables speaks to the structural problems that emerged in questions asking about the benefit of potential changes. That is to say, members did not indicate a strong preference for outcomes or changes. All things being equal, the members generally agreed with any of the changes posited to them. (See Preliminary Finding number 5 for more information).

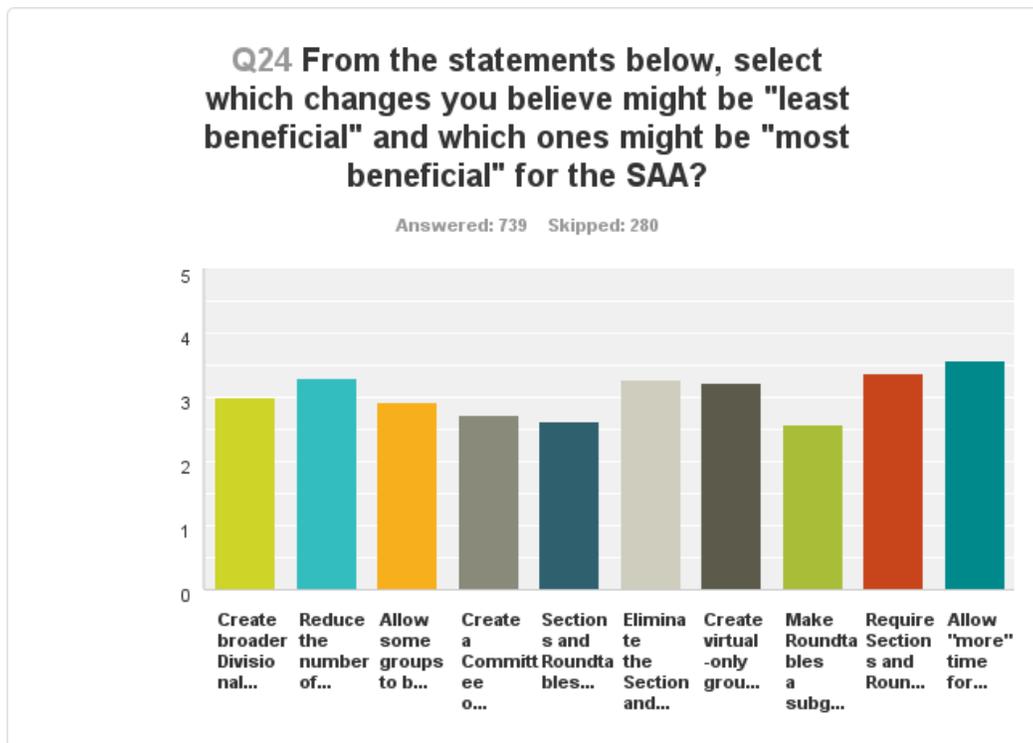
³ While this number is actual number of respondents for the survey, this number is not indicative for all questions. Numbers and percentages cited in relation to specific questions are based on the number of respondents to the question.



- 4) The Task Force’s initial analysis suggested that a number of groups overlap with some or all of the mission of another affinity group. Furthermore, there is a consensus that groups could be “tied” together either by collaboration or merger. The survey, therefore, included a number of questions regarding merging Sections/Roundtables and encouraging more collaboration. This was done for two reasons; 1) Address the issue of space at the annual meeting and other resource constraints, and 2) Encouraging leaders and members to work with other groups in order to share experiences and expertise. In open-ended responses there emerged a desire for cross-pollination between groups and members of similar interests to meet outside of formal group settings. Many of the comments asked for more opportunities for “birds-of-a-feather” meetings, unstructured time for meetings, virtual (only) meetings, and eliminating the problem of competing Section and Roundtable meetings. However, there is no clear consensus on what should be done to eliminate these problems, other than different scheduling at the annual meeting.
- 5) When respondents were asked to rate the benefits of potential changes, on a scale from 1 (least beneficial) to 5 (most beneficial), a clear consensus failed to emerge. Both Sections and Roundtables were treated individually in order to test if there is an underlying consensus about the value of each. It is not surprising that members generally like their Sections and Roundtables, and defend them. Consequentially, members failed to produce a consensus recommendation for either change or no change. For example when asked about four different changes to Sections; “Reduce the number of Sections (2.75),” “Increase the number of Sections (2.63),” “Make Sections responsible for Roundtables (2.65),” and “Require new Sections to seek the approval of the general membership (2.97),” all four options received an average rating of just over 2.5, which when compared individually and collectively all options ended up being viewed as “Somewhat beneficial.”

The ratings of changes to Sections held for Roundtables as well, with slightly higher values for all components. Thus the ratings appear as such; “Reduce the number of Roundtables (2.75),” “Increase the number of Roundtables (2.73),” “Make Sections responsible for Roundtables (2.72),” and “Require new Roundtables to seek the approval of the general membership (2.86).” Again, when compared individually and collectively all options presented here for Roundtables resulted in a “Somewhat beneficial” rating.

This problem persists further because when respondents were asked about an additional ten options for change all options scored in the “Neutral” range (2.5-3.5). The graph below provides the best way to understand the lack of a clear consensus, as all of the options are within a point of each other. For this Task Force, we would like to see more choices emerge as either consensus favorites or consensus undesirables. With this understanding, the Task Force is left to consider all the potential options as it addresses its recommendations for structural change.



- 6) There is a consistent call for more transparency and better forms of communication between all levels of membership. Expanding upon or updating the offerings of listservs, webinars, online forums, websites, social media, etc. were all mentioned as desirable changes. While many of these avenues for communication exist, their use is regarded as inconsistent. Overall, there needs to be a better way to disseminate information about the various tools and platforms that are available to members and leaders. This is a problematic issue that is persistent across the history of the SAA and beyond the scope of this task force. What should be noted is open-ended responses stressed the importance in the ability of individuals, be it a Section or Roundtable leader and/or Council Liaisons, being both the most effective tool for communication when good, and alternatively, the least effective tool when used poorly. While communication tools might need evaluation, it might be a more effective use of resources to make leaders better and more engaging communicators.

- 7) The single largest block of respondents 36.25% (396) have been SAA members for 5 years or less. The next block of respondents, 26.52% (270) have been SAA members for 6-10 years. Which indicates that a significant number of members who will see the most impact from any proposed structural changes were interested and active participants. The lowest response rate was from membership of 11-15 years, 13.56% (138). This is an interesting gap because the number of members reporting being a member of SAA for 16+ years was 19.65% (200). The reasons for the U-shaped rate

of responses is interesting from a structural perspective, as it may directly relate to who are the members that become active, but more importantly why they remain active. Nevertheless, the single largest group of leaders came from the 11-15 year membership category with 11.36% (15) being Section leaders and 15.91% (21) being in Roundtable leadership for a total 27.27% (36) of respondents serving in an affinity group leadership capacity. Also important to note that 10.02% (34) of the 5 years or less respondents are in Roundtable leadership and 17.72% (45) of the 6-10 year respondents are in Roundtable leadership. Only 7% of members in the 16+ years reported being in Roundtable leadership. It is important to note these figure because Roundtable leadership is generally regarded as the gateway to future leadership roles and positions. Moreover, those reporting being in Section leadership were less but proportional to the Roundtable figures. What these numbers show is that the SAA is drawing its leaders on a relatively equal basis from across the years of membership divide, and not one “years of service” category is dominating affinity group leadership.

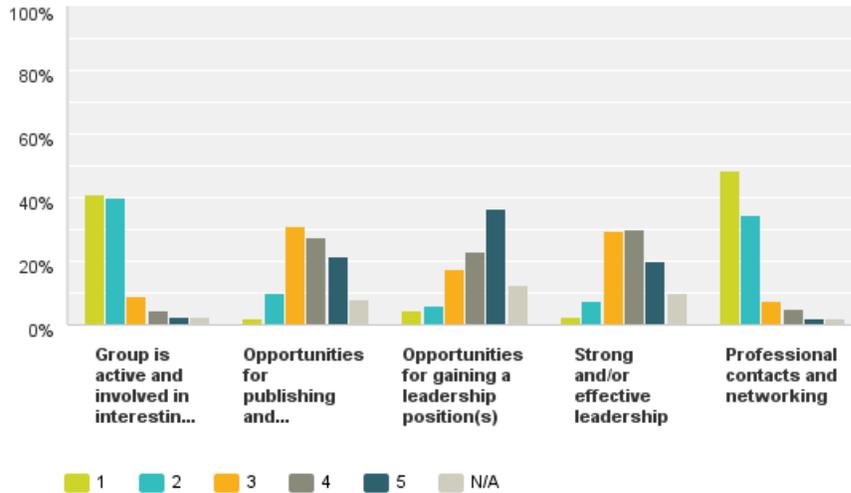
- 8) 40.52% of members who are currently or have served on the SAA Council feel that Council and the President ought to have the responsibility to “create and oversee” Sections and Roundtables, taking into account the various bylaws of the Society. Interestingly, not a single Council member indicated that the “process of creating and overseeing” Sections and Roundtables “takes too long.” These findings are interesting because anecdotally, members involved in creating new Sections and Roundtables have reported frustration with process. However, very few of the open-ended responses were critical of the SAA President(s) or Council(s) when it came to creating Sections and Roundtables. This suggest that the current system of assigning groups is functional, if not the continued administration of those groups.

Of the two questions asking directly about either removing or allowing Sections and Roundtables to act independently from the President and Council the responses were viewed as “Neutral” to “Least beneficial” at rates of 71.37% (511) and 84.83% (604). This indicates that members are not generally seeking to remove the SAA President and Council from the decision-making process regarding the creation of Sections and Roundtables. This suggests that the current structure whereby the President and Council are the final arbitrators of Sections and Roundtables is functional and adequate to meet the needs of the majority.

- 9) Individual leadership within a Section or Roundtable is seen as the primary factor in whether or not a Section or Roundtable is viewed positively. Yet, a “good” leader is not a strong reason for why a person chooses to join a group. Echoed across the survey is that, affinity groups are only as effective and dynamic as their leadership and members. Nevertheless, the primary reasons for joining and staying with a group were “Professional contact and networking” 46.65% (390) and “Activity in interesting projects” 38.04% (318). While we do not have an interaction terms for matching “quality of leadership” and the “quality of networking, etc.,” this should be considered important, because the better the leadership, the more likely the group will find itself to be more effective in carrying out its mission and achieving the professional goals of its individual members.

Q17 From the list below, please provide a rank from 1 (most important) to 5 (least important) reasons for remaining a member of your Section(s) and Roundtable(s)?

Answered: 182 Skipped: 18

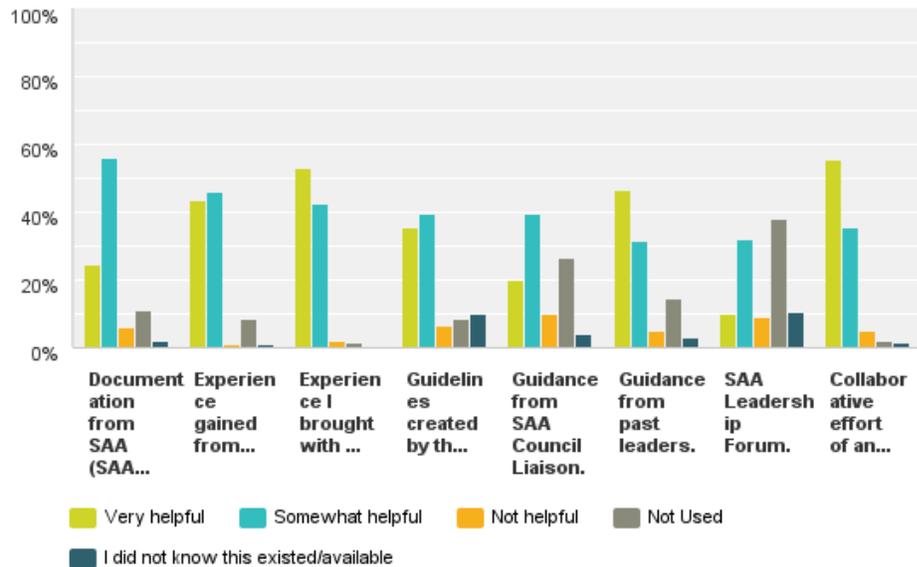


10) 63.04% (116) of current affinity group leaders reported having “a good understanding” of their responsibilities when they took their position. 24.46% (45) felt they had about a 50% “understanding” of their responsibilities. These levels of understanding might be attributed to changes adopted from the 2006 Task Force which standardized leadership roles and duties.

11) 53.04% (96) of respondents in current affinity group leadership positions reported that their leadership training was obtained outside of the SAA rather than through “leadership training” within SAA. Moreover, only 10.17% (18) of respondents found the Leadership Forum “Helpful,” while 57.62% (102) of respondents either found the Leadership Forum “Not helpful,” “Did not use,” or “Did not know it existed.” Nevertheless, the general comments regarding leadership were along the lines of a need for a “leadership forum” or “leadership orientation” in order to provide leadership training, cooperation, and guidance about SAA policies and procedures.

Q8 While in your leadership position, what tools and support did/do you use or consult? Below please indicate how helpful you found those resources.

Answered: 183 Skipped: 836



12) The vast majority of respondents feel that the time allotted for affinity group business meetings is too long. 83.15% (661) of respondents reported Sections meetings being too long, while 86.17% (679) of respondents reported Roundtable meetings as too long. A little over 42% of respondents in both areas reported the ideal meeting length as 30 minutes, while about 40% preferred 60 minutes. In a rare moment of consensus, membership found the business meeting of both Sections and Roundtables too long and offered a decisive preference for meetings of 60 minutes or less. Additionally, it should be noted that when asked about “Allowing ‘more’ time for informal gatherings and meetings with the Annual meeting structure,” 54.84% (391) found this to be “Somewhat beneficial” or “Most beneficial.”

13) 4.03 % (41) respondents are “Not currently” members of SAA or “Have never been” members. Of these non-members, 19 offered opinions on the benefits of their Roundtable membership. The primary benefit was the ability to remain current on trends within the archival profession and connect to colleagues. However, if SAA membership were required to remain a part of Roundtables’ membership, over 95.45% (21) would not join. For the most part, these respondents did not have archives as their primary responsibility. The number and responses from these respondents suggest that archivists are not openly foregoing SAA membership just to join Roundtables. Keeping Roundtables open to non-members does not appear to be a major problem. However, it does not appear that the open-Roundtable arrangement is a gateway to membership.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Force makes the following recommendations which preserves the spirit of affinity groups while stressing the need for focused and effective collaboration, communication, and provides some touch-points for fiscal consideration as the SAA Council plans for the future. There is one major caveat to these recommendations; they do not include recommendations for major structural changes. To the extent that structural changes are recommended, they will be included in the Final Report of the Task Force. That having been said, these recommendations are “universal” and can be implemented almost regardless of structure.

Recommendation 1: Increase transparency around affinity groups by collecting data on affinity groups and distribute findings to affinity group leaders on a yearly basis. This data may include stated mission, goals, and projects of the affinity group, number of Sections, number of Roundtables, number of other active groups (committees and task forces), number of members in a given affinity group, key contact information (Chairs, website, social media, listservs, etc.), number of meetings (formal or informal) and method (in-person, teleconference, Google meet-ups, etc.), number of annual meeting attendees, and any other metrics, including “financial and/or administrative burden,” that might contribute to affinity groups’ leaders understanding of each other, best practices, and comparative participation.

Rationale: Group leaders and members are largely unaware if they are meeting the expectations of the SAA. Some even noted that only 1 or 2 members still seemed to be active. (Note: Some roundtables had only one steering committee member listed in the SAA directory, and emails sent to the address were returned or not active). The SAA has established requirements for affinity groups, which are clearly stated in bylaws and governance handbook. Most, if not all, of the governance documents are available via the SAA Website, but a majority of open-ended responses (both members and leaders) mentioned not knowing where, if, or how an affinity group fit into the structure of the SAA. In effect, both members and leaders could not determine if they, in fact, were meeting the operational standards for their affinity groups. While some of these issues are resolved with better communication and proactive group leaders, there is still an overarching problem that affinity groups do not know about each other. It can be questioned whether or not the SAA even has the current capacity to know about affinity groups and enforce its own rules.

As part of the background data discovery for this project, the Task Force asked the SAA to provide the following statistics for review:

- Number of SAA members: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Number of members per section: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Number of members per roundtable: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Average (approximate) cost to maintain a roundtable: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Average number of hours necessary to maintain a roundtable: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Number of hours devoted to roundtables at the annual meeting: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Average (approximate) cost to maintain a Section: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Average number of hours necessary to maintain a Section: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Number of hours devoted to Sections at the annual meeting: 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, 2009
- Any metrics associated with websites and listservs of the various sections and roundtables: ie number of hits (views), number of posts
- Number of sections and roundtables with: listservs, websites, social media accounts (if known).

The thought process was to see if Sections and Roundtables were meeting the number of members requirements stated in the bylaws and 2006 recommendations. While this could be done by examining the annual reports of groups, the belief is that SAA should have these statistics readily available so they can “warn” a group if their numbers fall below expectations and/or they do not meet the reporting requirements. Additionally, these should be available for trend analysis of groups either growing or shrinking. The Task Force also asked about time and cost data to see if there were any ways to trim costs through collaboration and/or combining groups. That these number were not available speak to the problem of transparency and planning. Outside of its own research, the very Task Force examining the need for changes in affinity groups could not obtain from the SAA some statistics that might speak to a group’s growth or decline over the past five years. How are changes going to help alleviate problems when we simply cannot say which Sections and Roundtables are growing and which ones are shrinking? While this represents a further burden on the SAA administrative staff, there is the potential that Council could be tapped for this task since they ultimately decide the fate of affinity groups.

Recommendation 2: In order to enhance consistency of communication, SAA Council Liaisons should narrow their communication efforts in order to focus on group leaders. Specifically, providing guidance from Council on how the purpose and mission of an affinity group interacts with the SAA. The Liaisons should focus serving as conduits of communication between Council and group leaders, resource providers of SAA governance documents, policies and procedures, while serving as “brokers” between groups with similar interests. The SAA Council should consider reducing or eliminating the group-by-group updates by replacing them with updates communicated directly to group leaders (email, in-person, conference call), utilizing the Leadership Forum to provide updates, and/or saving the generalized update for listservs, newsletters, and website releases. To the extent that Council Liaisons interact with a group’s membership, they should focus that communication on expectations of the group’s purpose and its essential mission in achieving specified goals, and the resources (fiscal and otherwise) that the SAA is willing to provide.

Rationale: Affinity group leaders frequently noted that SAA Council Liaisons and communications could make or break a term. They also noted that there are wide variations in how well liaisons worked with affinity groups. When good, it was one of the most influential and appreciated leadership tools. When poor, it was extremely frustrating and left leaders feeling alienated. There is a desire for the liaison to take a more supportive role for the group, yet with changes in Council and the workload of liaisons it was noted that sometimes Liaisons did not seem to have the time to offer support, help resolve issues, or even a clear idea of the group’s mission and purpose. Additionally, the reports from the Liaisons to the larger affinity groups are also viewed along the same good and poor continuum. Some Liaisons are well regarded while others were reported as being hurried, redundant, ineffective, and/or unfamiliar with the group. In general terms, the Council Liaisons’ report was viewed as time that could have been spent on other items. One statement summarizes where Council Liaisons should be focusing, “Our section seems to be very confused about why the section exists and what it should be doing. This sounds silly, but it would be helpful for SAA council to address what it expects from affinity groups, and how to reinvigorate affinity groups that have lost their momentum.”

Recommendation 3: Shorten affinity group’s annual business meetings 60 minutes (1 hour) or less.

Rationale: Overall, members expressed a desire for shorter annual meetings between 30 and 60 minutes, when the purpose of that meeting is affinity group business only. In both Sections (42.52%, 338) and Roundtables (43.40%, 342), the majority of people selected 30 minutes as the preferred meeting length. The next highest response rate was 60 minutes with Sections being 39.50% (314) and Roundtables being

40.61% (320). At the same time, open-ended respondents have mixed feelings about losing time, noting both value of presentations offered in these sections, sometimes even being “better” than those presented within the conference sessions. Conversely, it is also noted that a fair amount of time is spent on unproductive or inconsequential business, including updates from Council. From a historical perspective, the time allocated to these meetings was to conduct nominating and voting procedures. Now the nominating and voting procedures have moved online and prior to the annual meeting this time is no longer needed. As a consequence, both Sections and Roundtables have sought to fill the void with more and more time-filler, which is of varying quality. The membership consensus is this time could be reallocated towards collaboration opportunities, informal meetings, and/or more sessions.

One item to keep in mind for programing purposes is that over 66.45% (511) of respondents “Agreed/Somewhat agreed” to the question that, “Sections should utilize meeting time for presentations and panels that were not included on the SAA program.” An additional 24.32% (187) are “Neutral” on this question. Roundtable responses are similar with 66.34 (477) “Agreeing/Somewhat agree,” while 24.20 (174) were “Neutral.” There is likely to be some significant push-back from Sections and Roundtables that are accustomed to utilizing their meeting times as alternative conference sessions. A delicate balance or even trade-off needs further evaluation.

Recommendation 4: Evaluate and modify the SAA Leadership Forum to meet the needs affinity group leaders and encourage leadership participation, specifically in regards to developing tools (online and/or in-person) and methods which facilitate discourse and collaboration while mentoring leaders in communication. The SAA Leadership Forum should identify best practices of individuals and groups in order to apply those practices as broadly as possible. Additionally, the SAA Leadership Forum should incorporate an “intensive” leadership boot-camp or orientation style training for leaders in inspiring, mentoring, motivating, outreach, retaining, and programing for their affinity group members, while learning the policies and procedures of the SAA.

Rationale: Currently, participation in the Leadership Forum is “encouraged,” not required. Of the 177 leadership respondents, that is individuals in current affinity group leadership positions, when asked about the helpfulness of the SAA Leadership Forum only 10.17% (18) viewed the forum as “Very Helpful” while 32.20% (57) found the forum “Somewhat Helpful,” but more concerningly, almost half, 48.58% (86), reported either “Not using” or “Not knowing about” the SAA Leadership Forum. While leaders are not using formal training, informal training is highly regarded. 46.41% (84) of leaders reported “Guidance from past leaders” and 55.56% (100) of leaders reported “Collaborative effort of the leadership group” as being “Very helpful” in their leadership roles. The Leadership Forum should be designed to assist leaders in being better mentors to their respective steering committees and replacements. This includes keeping better records of the group’s history, actions, and guiding documents. In open-ended questions, a majority of leaders expressed a need/desire for SAA-supported leadership training. In 2006, it was suggested that attendance by the chair and chair-elect of Sections be required, but that recommendation was not adopted. While requiring attendance at the annual meeting’s Leadership Forum might be too restrictive, mandatory participation in other Leadership Forum activities might be warranted for chairs and vice-chairs. This would create formal training for affinity group leaders.

Recommendation 5: Examine overall affinity group structure and refocus affinity groups’ needs, and missions in order provide more meaningful membership interactions while reconsidering how

affinity groups can help the SAA achieve its mission and goals. The Final Report of this Task Force will focus almost exclusively on recommendations and options the task force believes are viable options based on the membership survey and interview with leaders.

Rationale: Survey responders indicated that the distinctions between sections and roundtables were meaningless and confusing. They also noted that the mission of their Section and Roundtable were highly influenced by leaders which upon changes contributed to mudding the focus of the group and could confuse members. At the same time, both Sections and Roundtables are highly regarded for their networking opportunities, professional development, support, and training. Any potential changes will need to take into consideration that the dual Section and Roundtable structure is ingrained in the structure of the SAA, and as such there will be potential for push back from making no changes, minor changes, or major changes. In the end, what the survey shows is that there is an appetite for a critical examination of the existing structure of the SAA. What is also critically evident is that communication will be the key to successful implementation. We must be weary of this very strong sentiment offered by one respondent, “Looking at the group structures is a worthwhile idea, but I think it will end up being an exercise in futility because so many people are personally invested [sic] in the structure as it stands. As such, I would expect anything beyond minor changes to result in gridlock. I am also suspicious [sic] that SAA will use a restructure to force the rank-and-file farther into line with the "brass," as we have definitely [sic] become a top-heavy organization.”

CONTINUING RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

The task force is moving forward with the next phase of our study by conducting interviews with Section and Roundtable leaders. This will be a random sample selected from respondents who provided their names and phone numbers in the survey. The final report will reflect these interviews in a comprehensive recommendation.