

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 28 – 30, 2015  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Consent Agenda: Ratify Interim Executive Committee Actions**  
(Prepared by Executive Committee Member Tanya Zanish-Belcher)

**BACKGROUND**

Current parliamentary policy agrees on validating board decisions made remotely, and ratifying the Executive Committee's online and conference-call decisions via the Consent Agenda does not conflict with any existing SAA policy.

**DISCUSSION**

Given the Executive Committee's robust use of an email discussion list to function as a group and to make decisions remotely, approving interim Executive Committee actions via the Consent Agenda contributes to streamlining the group's work and improves access to the interim decisions of SAA's elected decision makers.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the following interim actions taken by the Executive Committee between January 16 and May 8, 2015, be ratified:**

- Signed on to a letter to President Barack Obama regarding White House actions in commemoration of Sunshine Week. (March 5, 2015)
- At the request of SAA Representative to WIPO/SCCR William Maher, approved endorsement of a statement by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), entitled "Global Library and Archives Community welcomes new report from United Nations Special Rapporteur on Copyright Policy and the Right to Science and Culture."<sup>1</sup> (March 10, 2015)
- Discussed and approved signing on to an OpenTheGovernment.org letter to Secretary of State John Kerry and Archivist of the United States David Ferriero expressing concerns about the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.ifla.org/files/assets/clm/statements/global-library-and-archives-community-welcomes-new-report-from-un.pdf>

manner in which former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's emails were handled. (March 17, 2015)

- Discussed and approved SAA's "[Statement on Use of Non-government Email Accounts for the Conduct of Public Business.](#)" (See attached.) (March 23, 2015)
- Discussed a situation involving release of University of Oregon records, on which President Kathleen Roe authored a March 26 blog post on *Off the Record*: <http://offtherecord.archivists.org/2015/03/26/developments-at-the-university-of-oregon/>
- Discussed issuing additional SAA statements on the University of Oregon records release issue. (March – May 2015)
- Discussed a request from the Web Archiving Roundtable steering committee and the Records Management Roundtable that the groups be permitted to send a letter to Facebook regarding "group page harvesting." The Executive Committee agreed that any such letter should come from SAA as a whole, and President Kathleen Roe agreed to seek assistance in fact checking. (April 2015)
- Approved President Kathleen Roe's recommendation that she send a letter to Rhode Island Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea in appreciation for her recent support of the State Archives. (May 4, 2015)

## **Statement on Use of Non-government Email Accounts for the Conduct of Public Business**

**Society of American Archivists  
March 23, 2015**

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) notes with concern the practice of many elected and appointed government officials of using unofficial, non-government email accounts for the conduct of public business.

Recent press coverage of Hillary Rodham Clinton's use of a personal email account while serving as U.S. Secretary of State has again raised concerns among members of SAA. Archivists are the professionals who are entrusted to identify the essential evidence of our society and ensure its availability for use by students, teachers, policy makers, organizational leaders, historians, genealogists, and a wide range of individuals with information needs. Our work supports accountability, legal and fiscal needs, and the accessibility of the American record.

The practice of using personal email accounts has not been uncommon among elected and appointed officials, and it was and is permitted within federal law:

- Since 2009 the National Archives and Records Administration's regulations have stated that, "Agencies that allow employees to send and receive official electronic mail messages using a system not operated by the agency must ensure that Federal records sent or received on such systems are preserved in the appropriate agency recordkeeping system." (36 CFR 1236.22)
- In November 2014, following testimony by the Archivist of the United States before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee that, "The National Archives discourages the use of private mail accounts to conduct Federal business, but understands that there are situations where such use does occur," Congress amended the Federal Records Act and the Presidential Records Act to prohibit the use of private email accounts by government officials unless they copy or forward any such emails into their government account within 20 days. (See 44 USC 2911.)

SAA believes that the practice of using unofficial, non-government email accounts for the conduct of public business fails to meet the level of transparency that many believe the public should enjoy regarding the activities of government officials. We are encouraged by the 2014 amendments to the Federal Records Act and the Presidential Records Act and support further efforts to strengthen this legislation to achieve the highest level of transparency possible, in keeping with the standards of an open and democratic government.

*Approved by the SAA Council on March 23, 2015.*

*Published on the SAA website on March 23, 2015: <http://www2.archivists.org/news/2015/statement-on-use-of-non-government-email-accounts-for-the-conduct-of-public-business>*