

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

**Proposed Revision of SAA Member Dues  
(Prepared by SAA Treasurer Mark Duffy, Executive Director Nancy Beaumont,  
and Director of Finance and Administration Peter Carlson)**

**BACKGROUND**

In light of the Finance Committee's charge to "...annually review SAA dues and dues revenue to assure SAA's long-term financial stability," the Committee considered the appropriateness, scope, timing, and financial details of a dues revision at each of its in-person meetings in 2012, 2013, and 2014 and via several conference calls during which we discussed the financial resources needed to ensure SAA's future stability.

At its November 2014 meeting the SAA Council discussed a briefing paper outlining considerations regarding a change in the SAA dues structure as well as introduction of a proposal to increase member dues via a three-year stepped adjustment, effective July 1, 2016 (i.e., fiscal year 2017). The Council adopted unanimously the following motion:

**THAT the SAA Council support, pending its final approval, the introduction of a revised dues structure (per [Appendix B](#) of the original report), effective July 1, 2016, that would result in the first of a three-year dues increase for most categories of membership and an overall increase in dues revenue to support future operations and strategic activities.<sup>1</sup>**

This proposal acknowledges a governance process adopted by the Council in May 2011 that requires all dues changes to be submitted for an all-member referendum via online vote:

**11. MEMBER REFERENDA**

Member dues changes and resolution of motions filed with the Executive Director in accordance with Article IX or Article X of the Constitution shall be determined by member referendum. The Council Executive Committee shall review and approve a [briefing paper](#) prior to the constitutional notification date. Copies of proposed amendments and briefing papers, prepared by the proposer(s) and/or by the Executive Director in accordance with Council guidelines, shall be distributed in accordance with

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<sup>1</sup> See Motion 3 at [http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/1114\\_Minutes\\_Adopted.pdf](http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/1114_Minutes_Adopted.pdf)

Articles IX and X of the Constitution and shall be presented at the business meeting or at a special meeting called by the Council. Notice of the referendum, copies of proposed member dues changes, constitutional amendments and/or bylaws amendments, and briefing papers shall be distributed by the Executive Director according to a method approved by the Council to eligible voting members no more than thirty (30) days after the meeting at which the motion is presented. All members shall be given the opportunity to participate in discussion and debate on items presented for referenda. Ballots shall be distributed to eligible voting members according to a method approved by the Council no fewer than sixty (60) days and no more than ninety (90) days after the meeting. Approval of motions shall be determined by a majority vote for dues changes and by a two-thirds (2/3rds) vote for proposed amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws of those members voting in the referendum, provided that at least ten (10) percent of the eligible voting members shall have voted. A member may obtain the vote count from the Executive Director.<sup>2</sup>

The resolution was adopted at the August 2011 Annual Business Meeting.

## **DISCUSSION**

Since November 2014, the Council, the Finance Committee, and particularly Duffy, Beaumont, and Carlson, have considered various scenarios for member dues categories as well as dues amounts. Our conclusions are presented here.

### **Member Dues Categories**

Although the current dues structure (i.e., number of categories) seems unnecessarily complicated, any attempt to rationalize the categories would result in a legitimate concern among members in affected categories that they are bearing an unfair share of any proposed increase. In addition, explaining changes in dues categories would be extremely difficult in an all-member referendum. Simply put, members are not confused by the complexity of SAA's current dues structure and including it in the referendum would potentially compromise our highest purpose—a dues increase. We agreed 1) not to put forward a recommendation to the Council for a change in dues categories and 2) to revise the language describing some dues categories to clarify the intent since the categories were created (e.g., change the description of ID1 from “salary less than \$20,000 per year” to “part-time earnings less than \$20,000 per year”).

### **Dues Increase Proposal**

As discussed at the November 2014 Council meeting, we believe that implementation of a dues increase, effective July 1, 2016, is critical to support both the ongoing financial stability of the organization and its strategic growth, to reflect cost-of-business increases since the last dues change (July 2011–June 2014), to accommodate changes in non-dues revenue streams (including publications and annual meetings), to ensure a fair

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section1/bylaws>

distribution of the dues burden among the various categories of membership, and to bring SAA into alignment with association best practices and recommendations.

Among key considerations in recommending a dues increase are the following:

- Although SAA's membership remains healthy at approximately 6,200, growth has leveled off. The proposed budget for FY 2016 predicts no growth in income from member dues.
- As a result, in part, of the resources derived from the 2011–2014 dues increase, SAA has positioned itself to begin developing first-class information technology, e-publishing, and professional education programs for our members. To sustain itself and continually enhance these programs, SAA must continue to invest in its infrastructure and technology, including the member database, its efforts to make the SAA website more accessible and content rich, and its expansion of our best-of-breed curriculum and certificate programs.
- To remain the preeminent professional organization representing the interests of archives and archivists, SAA must ensure the sustainability of its investments in advocacy and public awareness efforts through outreach and coalition building. With modest funding our efforts have been modest. Bolder initiatives and the possibilities that come from experimental risk will require more robust and continuous funding.
- To assist members in their careers, SAA must continue to enhance and upgrade its education offerings and methods of delivery. Capacity is stretched thin in the current model; infrastructure solutions to expand capacity are within our grasp.
- In response to member feedback, we are experimenting with new locations and meeting models for the Annual Meeting. We are likely to find that not all locations or models will yield the generous net-gain margins that we have experienced recently, for example, with the Joint Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. Regardless of location, Annual Meeting costs will continue to challenge our ability to control expenses in line with the expected future increase in costs associated with travel, lodging, and rent.
- With the proposed dues increase, the Finance Committee attempts to show sensitivity to all members in all dues categories by a) implementing the dues increase over a three-year period and b) distributing the dues increase in a manner that minimizes the impact on students, retirees, and those with lower salaries.
- As in other businesses, operational costs, personnel expenses (including health insurance and benefits), printing, postage, supplies, and office lease continue to increase.
- The early 2000s marked years of progressive growth in publication revenue that came to a halt with the 2008 recession. Since then, publication sales have declined steadily despite our move—at member request—to electronic publications.
- SAA cannot rely on the vagaries of grant support for program research, development, and enhancement, especially as many organizations and individuals compete for agency grants (e.g., NHPRC, IMLS, NEH, and NEA) even as agency budgets are stretched thin.
- The proposed increase is within the normal range when compared with current (2014) dues structures of related professional groups.

- The American Society of Association Executives, which represents more than 11,000 international, national, regional, state, and local professional associations, recommends that associations strive for a ratio of 35% dues revenue / 65% non-dues revenue in order to mitigate swings in non-dues revenue due to economic and other factors.
- SAA’s leaders firmly believe that it is better to propose modest increases in membership dues than to wait for a negative balance sheet or financial crisis that may require a special assessment.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the SAA Council propose to the Annual Business Meeting in August 2015 and to the general membership via online referendum in Fall 2015 that, effective July 1, 2016, a graduated dues increase totaling 10% of current dues be phased in over a three-year period according to the following schedule:**

Membership Category	2015 Dues Current	Proposed Dues (FY2017)	Proposed Dues (FY2018)	Proposed Dues (FY2019)
Retired	\$70	\$73	\$75	\$77
Bridge	\$50	\$52	\$53	\$55
Student	\$50	\$52	\$53	\$55
ID1 (<\$20k/yr)	\$80	\$83	\$85	\$88
ID2 (\$20-\$29k/yr)	\$105	\$109	\$112	\$115
ID3 (\$30-\$39k/yr)	\$130	\$135	\$139	\$143
ID4 (\$40-\$49k/yr)	\$160	\$166	\$171	\$176
ID5 (\$50-\$59k/yr)	\$200	\$208	\$214	\$220
ID6 (\$60-\$74k/yr)	\$225	\$234	\$241	\$248
ID7 (≥\$75k/yr)	\$250	\$260	\$267	\$275
Regular	\$300	\$312	\$321	\$330
Sustaining	\$550	\$572	\$589	\$605
Associate Domestic	\$100	\$104	\$107	\$110
Associate International	\$125	\$130	\$134	\$138

**Support Statement:** SAA has set itself on a growth-oriented path with an ambitious five-year Strategic Plan, healthy but leveling membership numbers, a high-demand education program in keeping with the Society’s core mission, an enlivened but still young Foundation, and commendable staff leadership. The Council must either sustain this growth strategy from predictable revenue sources or acknowledge that its plans are heavily contingent on the increasing success of such products and services as publications, workshops, and the Annual Meeting.

Implementation of a dues increase, effective July 1, 2017, is critical to support the ongoing financial stability of the organization, to reflect cost-of-business increases since

the last dues change, to accommodate changes in non-dues revenue streams (including publications, workshops, and annual meetings), to ensure a fair distribution of the dues burden among the various categories of membership, and to bring SAA into alignment with association best practices and recommendations. Implementation of a modest dues increase over time enables members and SAA to budget accordingly and allows SAA to develop programs and balance operational costs with anticipated income. A planned increase also minimizes the risk of financial crisis and reactionary budgeting.

In addition, it is highly advisable that SAA ensure that future dues revenue, in combination with the Society's non-dues revenue, will not only support association operations but also provide approximately 3% to 6% yearly contribution to reserves to support advances in technology, communication, and future member services.

**Fiscal Impact:** There is no material direct cost associated with implementing a dues increase. Member attrition as a result of a dues increase cannot be predicted at this time. The projected change in revenue based on the proposed model is an increase over FY 2015 projected actuals of \$42,280 by the end of FY 2017, \$68,535 by the end of FY 2018, and \$97,445 by the end of FY 2019.