Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 28 – 30, 2015
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 agreement for the Cleveland Convention Center and three hotels, we were able to include free wireless throughout the 2015 conference spaces. Updates appear in red type.

ARCHIVES 2015 in Cleveland

ARCHIVES 2015 promises to be a rewarding experience for all, with outstanding conference and pre-conference programming (including the 9th Annual SAA Research Forum), dynamic speakers and new learning formats, opportunities to participate in repository tours and service projects, and a host of networking opportunities. As in recent years, the overall conference schedule is very tight.

Program Development

See the January report of the 2015 Program Committee (0115-CC-III-J-2015ProgComm) for a summary of the excellent work of that 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"[1] for information for speakers, first-timers and students, and those who want to "make the case" to attend.)

In addition to the 63 education sessions accepted by the Program Committee, the meeting will feature 24 Professional Poster presentations, 37 Graduate Student Poster presentations, and up to 10 slots for a new format – "Pop-Up Sessions" – that may be submitted in advance or spontaneously at the conference.

---

[1] http://www2.archivists.org/2014/resources#.U2faa_ldWPV.

A variety of noon-time forums are scheduled for Thursday, August 20, including "The Secret Life of Records" (sponsored by the SAA Diversity Committee), Ethics Case Studies (sponsored by the SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct), Archival and Special Collections Facilities: Guidelines for Archivists, Librarians, Architects, and Engineers (sponsored by TS-AFG), Guidelines for Reappraisal and Deaccessioning (sponsored by TS-GRD), and SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Forces Public Forum. A brown bag "Town Hall Conversation with SAA Leaders" will feature SAA President Kathleen Roe, Vice President/President-Elect Dennis Meissner, and me.

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

See "Use of Social Media at 2012 Annual Meeting"[2] for background on initiatives to incorporate social media more effectively into all aspects of the Annual Meeting. We plan to continue to build on lessons learned since then to enhance use of social media before, during, and after the 2015 conference.

- The Host Committee blog went live on March 18. The notion of an active Host Committee blog, now in its seventh year, is (appropriately) institutionalized.
- We will have free wireless access throughout the convention center meeting space and in the conference hotels. This will make it easier to support…
- … Use of Twitter and Facebook before, during, and after the conference. The hashtag #saa2015 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 Washington, DC, in 2014, and the recommendations of the Social Responsibility subcommittee of the Annual Meeting Task Force, Host Committee members have been working to line up service projects to be held immediately prior to and during the conference. More information about how to sign up for service opportunities is forthcoming; watch the website.

---

[2] http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0612-V-L-AnnMtgSocialMedia.pdf

Conference Promotion

Promotion of the 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 linked from the conference web page, and has developed a robust 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 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 than100 users have already done). In mid-May 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 15, the Early-Bird registration deadline!***).

Registration

Registration "went live" on the conference website on Wednesday, April 15. As of close of business on Monday, May 11 (i.e., 14 weeks out) we have registered 193 "full paid" attendees, of whom 27 are students. This compares with 208 full-paid attendees (including 19 students) at 14 weeks out from the 2014 joint conference.

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 Cleveland, 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 2015 exhibit space. We are now in year 6 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 $87,700, sponsorship revenue totals $37,200, and advertising revenue for the Preliminary and Onsite Programs and the website totals $13,700 – all ahead of last year at this time. Special thanks go to our four confirmed sponsors (Atlas Systems as sponsor of the All-Attendee Reception, Preservica at the "Silver Sponsor" level, Hollinger Metal Edge, and Preservation Technologies) for their ongoing support of SAA and the Annual Meeting.

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 2015)

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 2015 (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. The same holds true for Cleveland. 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 2015 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 refined for 2015; 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.
  [All recordings for the 2006 – 2013 Annual Meetings are now available for free download.]

- 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. For 2014 we negotiated with long-time vendor Convention Recordings to provide downloadable mp3 audio recordings of all education sessions and plenaries for 12 months for just $29 for SAA members. This replaced the previous model of $99/$149 for CDs. Most recent quotes from two vendors for providing either real-time access to sessions or video recordings of all sessions for ARCHIVES 2015 ranged from $75,000 to $218,000.]

- 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.
  *[**2013:** The 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.*
  ***2014:** The opening plenary featured a panel discussion on access to records, along with awards; Plenary 2 featured a speaker on National History Day, along with awards; the presidential address was presented via videotape on the website so that all members may view it; and the vice president/president-elect presented her inaugural address at the Business Meeting on Saturday.*
  ***2015:** Planning for the 2015 plenaries has not yet been completed.]*

- We will identify and implement new approaches to structured and unstructured networking.
  [As in the past three years, 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.
  [2014: The 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.
  2015: The Program Committee is implementing a new session format – "Pop-Up Sessions" – for the Cleveland conference.]

- 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.]