

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 7-9, 2018
Chicago, Illinois**

**Report: Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force
(Prepared by Lisa Calahan, Chair)**

The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, created by the SAA Council in January 2018, was tasked with addressing the following charge:

“The Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force is responsible for 1) creating and/or compiling material for ready accessibility by archivists who are facing a sudden tragedy and 2) exploring the feasibility of creating a standing body within SAA that would update documentation as needed and serve as a volunteer tragedy response team.”

Since February, the Task Force has held monthly conference calls to address this charge. Members in attendance at meetings and participating in the Task Force are:

David Benjamin
Steven Booth (Council Liaison)
Lisa Calahan (Chair)
Jackie Esposito
Thomas Padilla
Allen Ramsey
Patricia Rettig
Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn
Susan Tucker
Felicia Owens (SAA Staff)

Thus far the work of the Task Force is focused on researching current best practices, compiling professional policies and best practices, building relationships with allied organizations, and serving as contacts for communities/individuals managing tragedy-based collections.

One of the first activities completed was the compilation of a bibliography of articles and monographs related to archiving memorial and commemorative collections. We anticipate that we will continue to add to this list as we begin to draft policies and templates.

Creating and compiling documents related to best practices and policies for the creation and management of tragedy-based collections is the Task Force’s current focus.. Task Force

members decided to start a small-scale compilation of documents, pulling from individual members' repositories and well-known colleagues' experiences. At the time of this report, we have received samples of documentation from the Columbine Memorial collection, a memorandum of agreement between the town of Newtown (Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting) and the Connecticut State Library, and a job description for working with memorial collections from Syracuse University. In addition, as we continue to have conversations with colleagues and discuss policy needs internally, the group is tracking types of policies and documents we hope to continue to compile examples of and create templates for.

Following one of the tasked responsibilities to collaborate with allied organizations, Task Force Chair Lisa Calahan began to reach out to national-level organizations that would potentially have members who would be responsible for acquiring, managing, or providing access to material. So far, the chair has received positive feedback from Special Libraries Association, American Alliance of Museums, and National Council on Public History (although what "collaboration" looks like is yet to be determined). One positive outcome is that Calahan will be attending the annual conference of the National Council on Public History in April to participate in a meeting to discuss potential collaboration and resource sharing opportunities with NCPH members.

Lastly, an unexpected activity of the Task Force that is not represented in the official charge, but that we expect to continue, is to provide immediate advice for community members and archivists who are actively collecting memories of tragedy. In March, the task force was contacted by a Parkland, Florida, city commissioner to advise him on best practices for managing memorial material. Calahan also was contacted by WBUR (Boston NPR) and interviewed about the Task Force for a piece on the 5-year commemoration of the Boston Marathon bombing.