

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 20–22, 2019
Chicago, Illinois**

**Committee on Public Policy:
Public Policy Agenda, 2019-2020
(Prepared by Committee on Public Policy)**

BACKGROUND

SAA's Public Policy Agenda was last revised in November 2017. Since then, the Committee on Public Policy (COPP) and other groups have developed issue briefs and position statements that the Council has adopted to support the priorities outlined in the Agenda.

Past reviews of the Agenda have occurred roughly every two years. COPP believes it is time to issue a revised Agenda to guide SAA's efforts to influence public policies that have an impact on the archival mission.

The proposed revision below indicates additions via underline and deletions via strikethrough. In most cases, removed text has simply been moved to another portion of the document.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following SAA Public Policy Agenda 2019-2020 be adopted.

(Revisions to the 2017-2018 Agenda are indicated by underline [for additions] and strikethrough [for deletions].)

SAA Public Policy Agenda 2019-2020

INTRODUCTION

SAA's Public Policy Agenda outlines the organization's public policy priorities.

Individual members or groups may request that SAA address these issues by following these [procedures](#); SAA will consider them on a case-by-case basis. Requests for SAA to take action on a specific public policy issue will be more vigorously pursued if that issue

aligns with this Agenda. However, many worthy advocacy issues lie outside the scope of this Public Policy Agenda.

SAA recognizes that social issues and archival concerns may overlap (e.g., in matters of personal privacy, access to public information, or misuse of records for political purposes). Therefore, SAA may reserves the right to speak out on human rights or social justice issues that affect archivists or researchers.

As an organization that values social responsibility, the public good, and the completeness of the public record, SAA encourages its members to engage in advocacy as individuals, in accordance with their own values and priorities.

Many SAA groups discuss issues of importance to archivists and the archival community and work to empower SAA members to learn about and engage in advocacy. SAA members are encouraged to read about these groups and volunteer to become involved in them:

[SAA Committee on Public Policy](#)
[SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct](#)
[SAA Intellectual Property Working Group](#)
[SAA Issues and Advocacy Section](#)

SAA also collaborates with the Council of State Archivists, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and the Regional Archival Associations Consortium on the [CoSA/NAGARA/SAA/RAAC Joint Working Group on Issues and Awareness](#).

PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA

Archival sources protect the rights of individuals and organizations, enable ensure the accountability of governments and institutions, and provide access to historical information and cultural heritage. ~~The Society of American Archivists (SAA) will work with the archives profession to advocate for public policies and resources that ensure that such records are identified, preserved, and made accessible. SAA defines public policy as any government policy—federal, state, or local—that directly affects archivists or the archival record, including legislation, executive orders, judicial decisions, funding priorities, and other regulatory matters.~~ In alignment with our [Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics](#), SAA is committed to supporting policies that will make accessible evidence of the diverse and complex elements of the human experience; ensure the protection of privacy and individual rights; ensure the transparency and accountability of government at all levels; guarantee the administrative continuity necessary for good governance; ~~make accessible evidence of the diverse and complex elements of the human experience;~~ and preserve historical documentation for future generations. SAA defines public policy as any government policy—federal, state, or municipal—that directly affects archivists or the archival record, including legislation, executive orders, judicial decisions, funding priorities, and other regulatory measures.

SAA firmly believes that the critical nature of information in a democracy places the burden to prove the need for confidentiality, or the legitimacy of excluding information from the public domain, on those asserting such claims. Unless there are legal or other compelling reasons to the contrary, SAA will consistently value the general good obtained through open access to information over the limited good achieved by information closure or proprietary use. SAA also is committed to actively resisting policies that undermine existing records authority and privacy laws or that endanger the integrity of the historical record held in both public and private institutions.

~~SAA recognizes that social issues and archival concerns may overlap (e.g., in matters of personal privacy, access to public information, or misuse of records for political purposes). Therefore, SAA reserves the right to speak out on human rights or social justice issues that affect archivists or researchers. [Moved]~~

SAA will prioritize the following public policy areas:

- Raising awareness of public policy issues that affect archivists and their ability to do their work in accordance with SAA's Core Values and Code of Ethics ~~Public policy issues that affect archivists and their ability to do their work;~~
- Advancing the diversity of the archival record;
- Protecting privacy and individual rights of archival subjects and users;
- Promoting the public's right to access information held or created by public and publicly funded bodies;
- Strengthening ~~of~~ federal, state, and municipal ~~local~~ records authority over information created by public and publicly funded bodies;
- Supporting impartial and non-partisan federal, state, and municipal records authorities;
- Ensuring adequate funding for government archives at the federal, state, and municipal level;
- Ensuring adequate funding for federal and state programs that support archives and archival projects, including, but not limited to, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS);
- Supporting a robust public domain, which forms the backbone of creative and research activities by ensuring access to unambiguously free cultural content; and
- Advocating for copyright rules that preserve the incentives for creators to make and publish new works without unduly constraining the work archivists do in pursuit of their ~~our~~ mission.

~~Requests for SAA's commitment to a specific policy issue will be more vigorously pursued if that issue fits within these priorities. However, many worthy advocacy issues lie outside the scope of this policy agenda. Individual members or groups may request that SAA address these issues using the same procedures as for public policy issues; SAA will consider them on a case-by-case basis. [Moved]~~

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[SAA Committee on Public Policy](#)
[How to Suggest SAA Take Action on an Issue](#)
[SAA's Criteria for Advocacy Statements](#)

~~For more information and perspectives, see the Committee on Public Policy's microsite.~~

~~Several other SAA groups track issues of importance to archivists and the archival community. See, for example, the microsites of SAA's Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct, Intellectual Property Working Group, and Issues and Advocacy Section. SAA also collaborates with the Council of State Archivists, the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, and the Regional Archival Associations Consortium on the CoSA/NAGARA/RAAC/SAA Joint Working Group on Issues and Awareness. **[Moved]**~~

Approved by the SAA Council: May 2019.

To view previous versions, see:

[2017-2018 Public Policy Agenda](#)

[2015-2017 Public Policy Agenda](#)

[2012-2014 Advocacy Agenda](#)

[2009-2010 Advocacy Agenda](#)

Support Statement: The revised Public Policy Agenda provides members and other prospective audiences with an understanding of SAA's priorities related to public policies that affect archivists, archives, the archives profession, and the communities we serve.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: Addresses Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists, Strategy 1.1. Provide leadership in promoting the value of archives and archivists to institutions, communities, and society; 1.2. Educate and influence decision makers about the importance of archives and archivists; 1.3. Provide leadership in ensuring the completeness, diversity, and accessibility of the historical record; and 1.4. Strengthen the ability of those who manage and use archival material to articulate the value of archives.

Fiscal Impact: Approval of the Public Policy Agenda does not commit SAA to expend funds on any particular advocacy effort. See Agenda Items IV-B-2-COPP-LegisAgenda and IV-B-3-COPP-WorkPlan for information about specific activities that may require funding.