

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 12-13, 2020  
Virtual Meeting**

*Agendas and background materials for SAA Council meetings are publicly available via the SAA website at: <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/reports>. Each Council meeting agenda comprises Consent Items, Action Items, Discussion Items, and Reports, and the number/letter in the minutes (e.g., II.A.) corresponds to an item listed on the agenda. The minutes summarize actions taken and the outcomes of discussions. Reports generally are not summarized in the minutes, but provide a wealth of information about the work of component groups and the staff. To view the reports—and all other background materials—see the SAA website.*

President Meredith Evans called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm ET on Tuesday, May 12. Present were Vice President Rachel Vagts; Treasurer Amy Fitch; Executive Committee Member Audra Yun; Council members Steven Booth, Eric Chin, Melissa Gonzales, Brenda Gunn, Petrina Jackson, Ricardo Punzalan, Mario Ramirez, and Meg Tuomala; and SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont, Publications Director Teresa Brinati, Finance/Administration Director Peter Carlson, Education Director Rana Hutchinson Salzmann, Information Systems Administrator Matt Black, and Governance Manager Felicia Owens.

## **I. COUNCIL BUSINESS**

### **A. Adoption of the [Agenda](#)**

Evans introduced the agenda. Fitch moved adoption of the agenda, Jackson seconded, and the agenda was adopted unanimously (**MOTION 1**).

### **B. Status of Council To Do List**

Council members briefly reviewed and provided updates on the status of actions listed in this internal working document.

## **II. CONSENT AGENDA**

The following items were adopted by consent (**MOTION 2**).

**Move Consent Items:** Vagts

**Second Consent Items:** Gunn

**Vote:** PASSED

### **A. [Ratify Council Interim Actions](#)**

**THAT the following interim actions taken by the Council between December 9, 2019, and**

**April 28, 2020, be ratified:**

- Reviewed the annual report from the SAA representative to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. (Appendix) (December 9, 2019)
- Approved the [December 3-5, 2019, Council meeting](#) minutes. (January 3, 2020)
- Appointed [Stacie Williams to serve as the SAA Publications Editor](#) for a three-year term, beginning April 1, 2020. (February 4, 2020)
- Prepared a “[Council Statement on SAA 2020 Election](#),” in response to a petition received to add a candidate to the ballot. (February 4, 2020)
- Prepared a “[SAA Council Statement on Impact of COVID-19 Health Crisis on Archives Workers](#).” (March 18, 2020).
- Approved the [March 6 Council conference call](#) minutes. (March 20, 2020)
- Agreed to [sign on to a statement](#), at the recommendation of the Intellectual Property Working Group, calling on the World Intellectual Property Organization and its Member States to respond to the need for international copyright laws that will empower cultural institutions to prevent further loss of worldwide cultural heritage due to global warming. (March 23, 2020)
- Approved the minutes of the April 22, 2020, Council virtual meeting, at which the Council approved 1) renegotiating the contract with the Hilton Chicago to place the 2024 Annual Meeting at that location and 2) moving forward with the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting as a virtual conference. (Appendix A) (April 28, 2020)

**B. [Ratify Executive Committee Interim Actions](#)**

**THAT the following interim actions taken by the Executive Committee between January 7, 2020, and February 24, 2020, be ratified:**

- Issued a statement on “[Targeting Cultural Heritage Sites for Destruction](#),” voicing grave concerns about President Donald Trump’s suggestion that Iranian cultural heritage sites could be targeted as part of a military strike. (January 7, 2020)
- Declined request to take action on “Statement Condemning the \$2.5 Million Settlement between the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Sons of Confederate Veterans.” (January 8, 2020)
- Approved SAA comments in response to [Proposed Hike in USCIS Records Access Fees](#). (January 13, 2020)
- Prepared a statement on “[NARA Exhibit on 2017 Women’s March in Washington, DC](#).” (January 19, 2020)
- Agreed to extend Danna Bell’s service on the Committee on the Selection of SAA Fellows in light of Meredith Evans’s two-year term as SAA President. (January 22, 2020)

- Issued, with the Council of State Archivists, a [joint memorandum](#) to the Office of Management and Budget to oppose the sale of the National Archives and Records Administration’s (NARA’s) building in Seattle, Washington. (January 29, 2020)
- Approved a [Call for Applicants for American Archivist Editor](#). (January 30, 2020)
- Signed on to a [letter](#), with the Public Citizen Litigation Group and several historical associations, to the Administrative office of the United States Courts proposing amendment of Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 6(e). (February 24, 2020)

### III. STRATEGIC PLANNING

#### A. Current Strategic Plan

The current Strategic Plan 2018-2020, as adopted in November 2017, was provided for reference.

#### [Strategic Plan 2020-2022](#)

#### [Strategic Plan Actions and Timelines](#)

### IV. ACTION ITEMS

#### A. [Recommended Revisions to SAA Statement on Diversity and Inclusion](#)

Booth, Gunn, and Yun presented their final proposed revisions to the current SAA Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, as well as additional revisions to the Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy. Upon review, the Council agreed to all of the proposed revisions.

#### **MOTION 3**

**THAT the following revisions to the SAA Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion be approved** (underline=addition, strikethrough=deletion):

#### **SAA Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

The Society of American Archivists centers its values on diversity and equity, and is committed to building a culture of inclusion.

As a ~~professional~~ an association that serves archives and archivists across the profession, SAA benefits from the participation of people from all backgrounds; ~~the~~ The Society of American Archivists strives to ensure that its staff, membership, the ~~holdings that archivists acquire and manage~~ historical record that archivists preserve and steward, and the ~~users whom~~ communities archivists serve reflect ~~the evolving diversity of society~~ these values. To guide and clarify our

work in this area, the ~~SAA Council developed this~~ SAA Society adheres to the following *Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion*.

~~SAA~~ We understands *diversity* to encompass:

- ~~Socio-cultural factors. These factors relate~~ related to individual and community identity, ~~and include~~ including the attributes mentioned in SAA's Equal Opportunity/Nondiscrimination Policy; and
- ~~Professional and geographic factors. Concern about these factors reflects,~~ reflecting the Society's desire for broad participation from archivists working in various locations, repository types and sizes, employment classifications and ranks, and professional specializations.

We recognize *equity* as:

- Equitable access to educational, funding, leadership, and award opportunities for individuals who are of color, who identify as LGBTQIA+, and/or who have disabilities; and
- Fair pay, benefits, and labor practices for all archives workers, including students, temporary, contract, paraprofessionals, and professionals.

We identify *inclusion* as:

~~SAA identifies inclusion as our~~ A commitment to ongoing and cumulative efforts (e.g., policies, principles, practices, ~~and activities,~~ and infrastructures) that ~~engage~~ take responsibility for creating an increasingly diverse community in a welcoming, equitable, and responsive manner; and

- Continuous proactive steps to ensure that marginalized members of our organization are seen and cared for.

~~SAA's initiatives are focused primarily on achieving socio-cultural diversity and fostering inclusion within SAA, the profession, and archival collections and users.~~

~~By embracing diversity and encouraging inclusion, the Society speaks more effectively on behalf of the entire profession, serves a fuller range of stakeholders, increases organizational credibility, and becomes a stronger advocate for the archives profession.~~

### ***Provenance:***

The Society of American Archivists has long promoted policies of nondiscrimination, has identified diversity as a value for the association and the profession, and has strived to foster a just and inclusive professional culture that reflects and embraces the diversity of the larger society. In 1992 SAA adopted an [Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy](#). SAA ~~recognizes~~ affirms that simply pledging nondiscrimination is insufficient, and that we must make positive efforts to ~~develop~~ center diversity among our membership, our members' holdings, and our members' user communities in order to enrich the historical record and achieve professional

excellence. In 2006 the SAA Council adopted a statement of its “Strategic Priorities” that included includes the following issue statement as the basis for its strategic priority related to argument for the centrality of diversity for the Society: “The relevance of archives to society and the completeness of the documentary record hinge on the profession’s success in ensuring that its members, the holdings that they collect and manage, and the users that they serve reflect the diversity of society as a whole.”

~~To guide and clarify our work in this area, the Council developed the “SAA Statement on Diversity” in 2010.~~ Diversity is one of the eleven Core Values of Archivists (adopted in 2011), and several SAA committees, task forces, component groups, and initiatives have focused on issues relating to diversity and inclusion. In 2010, the Council developed the “SAA Statement on Diversity.” In drafting ~~the its~~ its 2014-2018 Strategic Plan, the SAA Council revised SAA’s mission to include promotion of promote the “diversity of archives and archivists” as a core principle to guide all of the Strategic Plan’s plan’s goals and activities. The Council also included “Ensuring the diversity of its membership and leaders, the profession, and the archival record” as a core organizational value, which was retained in the 2018-2020 Strategic Plan. The 2020-2022 Strategic Plan specifically cites the “Welcoming Environment,” or “WE,” initiative as a “reminder to all of us that SAA intends to provide an open, inclusive, and collaborative environment in which all members have the opportunity to participate fully.”

For a review of SAA’s many early actions, see Elizabeth Adkins’s 2007 Presidential Address, [“Our Journey Toward Diversity—And a Call to \[More\] Action,”](#) and see SAA’s [Diversity and Inclusion resources page](#) with relevant past and current initiatives and efforts.

### ***Implementation and Governance:***

SAA promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion in all of its professional activities with an eye to ensuring effective representation of staff, our members, addressing the concerns of the full range of stakeholders represented within our members’ holdings, and reaching out to archivists’ many communities of users.

The SAA Code of Conduct provides guidance on expectations for member conduct that are based on the core principles of this Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as the Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy.

*Adopted by the SAA Council on August 9, 2010; reviewed and reaffirmed in January 2013; reviewed and revised in August 2016; May 2020. The Council agreed to review every three years this document, SAA’s Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy (July 2019), and SAA’s Code of Conduct (July 2019).*

*Additional resources consulted: <https://dobetterlabor.com/>*

**Support Statement:** These proposed revisions better reflect the Society’s current values and aspirations for welcoming and supporting a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment for all members. Member feedback was considered when revising the document.

**Fiscal Impact:** None.

## **MOTION 4**

**THAT the following revisions to the SAA Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy be approved** (underline=addition, strikethrough=deletion):

### **Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Society of American Archivists is a professional organization established to serve the educational and informational needs of its members. SAA promotes cooperation, research, standards, public awareness, and relations with allied professions and thereby advances the identification, preservation, and use of records of enduring value. Because discrimination and unequal treatment are inimical to the Society's goals, SAA hereby declares that discrimination on the grounds of age, color, political and religious beliefs, ability, family relationship, gender identity/expression, individual life style, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status is prohibited within the Society. SAA will vigorously pursue a policy of non-discrimination and equal opportunity through its programs, activities, services, operations, employment, and business contracts.

*Adopted by the SAA Council in January 1992; updated February 2009; reviewed and reaffirmed in February 2010 and January 2011, 2012, and 2013; updated in May 2016, July 2019, May 2020. The Council agreed to review every three years this document, SAA's Statement on Diversity (January 2014), and SAA's Code of Conduct (July 2014). Last Reviewed: ~~July 2019~~ May 2020.*

**Support Statement:** This minor revision reflects member feedback to further improve and strengthen this document.

**Fiscal Impact:** None.

**Move:** Punzalan

**Second:** Ramirez

**Vote:** PASSED (unanimous)

### **B. Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment: SAA Dataverse**

The Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment (CORDA) proposed establishing a data repository using open-source software provided by the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As fully envisioned, a repository for SAA would assemble, document, and make available via search tools and download capabilities datasets that have been created by SAA and its organizational units, by regional archival and allied professional associations, by individual archival programs, and by archivists. The Council discussed and approved the proposal, directing Beaumont to coordinate with CORDA to draft a memorandum of understanding with the Odum Institute.

## **MOTION 5**

**THAT the SAA Council approve collaborating with the Odum Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, to establish and support a pilot instance of Dataverse for a duration of five to six years, followed by an explicit decision by the Council to extend the service; and**

**THAT the SAA Executive Director be authorized to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the Odum Institute to outline the rights and responsibilities of SAA and the Odum Institute for deposited data, liabilities for data reuse, and technical support; and**

**THAT the Council affirm the responsibilities of CODA to populate the SAA Dataverse with datasets and establish policies governing contributions and data use.**

**Support Statement:** In establishing CODA in late 2018, the SAA Council explicitly charged the new committee with “providing a repository or portal for data and other research outputs.” Further, the CODA charge expects that the Committee will provide SAA members with tools for gathering and analyzing data, training on data analysis, and summaries and synthesis of “facts and figures” about archives and archivists.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** A data repository will further advance SAA’s third strategic goal of “Advancing the Field,” particularly 3.2.: “Foster and disseminate research in and about the field.”

**Fiscal Impact:** The Odum Institute has indicated that they will assess no fees to SAA for establishing and supporting the SAA Dataverse. CODA expects that launching, branding/customizing the interface, and integrating the SAA Dataverse into SAA’s web presence will require approximately 60 hours of effort over one year by SAA staff. Subsequent years are not expected to require significant commitment of staff time.

**Move:** Gonzales

**Second:** Jackson

**Vote:** PASSED (unanimous)

### **C. Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force: Final Report / Recommendations**

The Council reviewed the comprehensive final report of the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, formed in January 2018, and agreed with the group’s recommendation to create a standing working group to continue some aspects of the work done by the task force. A Council subgroup will refine a description of the working group, which will be announced in the coming weeks.

SAA working groups differ from committees in that they are populated with acknowledged experts in a given topic area and their members may be reappointed indefinitely so that their expertise remains available to the Council. They differ from task forces in that their charge is ongoing and not (necessarily) time-limited. Working groups are advisory to the Council and may be created and disbanded by the Council as appropriate.

#### **D. Digital Archives Specialist Subcommittee: Recommendation to Revise Description**

The Digital Archives Specialist Subcommittee of the SAA Committee on Education proposed that the size of the subcommittee be increased from eight to ten members to ensure adequate coverage of the many tasks assigned to the subcommittee in developing and maintaining the DAS certificate program. The Council agreed to this increase and also agreed to remove the requirement that all subcommittee members must hold the DAS certificate, noting instead that the majority of the subcommittee should be certificate holders.

#### **MOTION 6**

**THAT the following revisions to the Digital Archives Specialist Subcommittee description be approved:**

### **Digital Archives Specialist Subcommittee**

#### **II. Committee Selection, Size, and Length of Terms**

The Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Subcommittee consists of ~~eight~~ ten members (including a chair) appointed by the SAA Vice President for staggered four-year terms. Each year, a vice chair will be appointed from among the upcoming second-year members and will serve as vice chair in the second year, as chair in the third year, and as past chair in the fourth year of her/his term. The subcommittee chair serves as an ex officio member of the Committee on Education. The SAA Education Director serves as an ex officio member of the subcommittee.

The membership of the subcommittee shall comprise a mix of practicing archivists with e-records/digital experience and or knowledge, teaching experience, technical skills, expertise covering the archival spectrum, and administrative or supervisory experience. Ideally, the subcommittee as a whole will reflect individual and institutional diversity. The majority of subcommittee members must have a DAS certificate. ~~to serve on the subcommittee.~~ Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis.

Outgoing committee members will be granted a two-year grace period to allow adequate time for the necessary requirements to maintain and renew their DAS Certificate. Subcommittee members may not sit for the DAS Comprehensive Exam during their term on the subcommittee and must wait at least two year after their term ends to sit for the exam. Courses for which a committee member serves as a course shepherd (i.e. liaison) do not apply toward DAS Certificate renewal.

Members can expect to spend four to five hours per month on subcommittee work.

**Support Statement:** Increasing the number of individual members on the subcommittee reflects current operational reality as well as the goals and priorities of the DAS program.

**Relevance to Strategic Priorities:** Addresses Strategic Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth; Goal 3: Advancing the Field; and Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs.

**Fiscal Impact:** No direct expense in the short or long term. Estimated two hours of staff time to address this change.



**Move:** Jackson  
**Second:** Gunn  
**Vote:** PASSED

#### **E. Select 2020-2021 Executive Committee Member and Nominating Committee Members**

By anonymous ballot, the nine Council members who are not officers elected Melissa Gonzales to serve as the 2020-2021 Executive Committee member and Petrina Jackson and Ricardo Punzalan to serve on the 2021 Nominating Committee.

#### **F. Other Action Items from Council Members**

No other action items were brought forward.

#### **G. Executive Session**

##### **1. Council Exemplary Service Awards / Resolutions**

The Council met in executive session to draft and approve four Council Exemplary Service Awards and six Council Resolutions honoring SAA members and groups for their outstanding contributions to the profession and to SAA. Awards will be announced in conjunction with the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting.

*Because these awards remain confidential until the Joint Annual Meeting, see the appendix to the August 2020 Council meeting minutes for the full text of the awards.*

**Move:** Yun  
**Second:** Chin  
**Vote:** PASSED (unanimous)

##### **2. Beaumont Performance Appraisal**

Due to time constraints, the Council agreed to schedule a separate meeting to complete the Executive Director's annual performance appraisal.

#### **V. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

##### **A. Committee on Public Policy: Revise Legislative Agenda**

The Committee on Public Policy posed questions about 1) shifting the Legislative Agenda to focus on how SAA can be involved in ensuring that archives and archivists are included in COVID funding aid packages being addressed by Congress and 2) determining what resources might be needed to address such a shift. The Council discussed these overarching concerns and plan to hold follow-up conversations with COPP and leaders of related groups to determine next steps.

## **B. Native American Archives Section: Proposal for Tribal Archivist Membership**

The Native American Archives Section proposed that SAA support, for the next three years, 1) two travel scholarships for tribal archivists to attend the Annual Meeting and 2) promotion of NAAS/tribal archivists' membership via involvement in the Association for Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums (ATALM) annual convening. The Council directed staff to include this request in the draft budget for FY21, which the Council will review in June to determine if this program is feasible in the coming year.

## **C. Council Exemplary Service Awards / Resolutions**

This item was discussed in executive session (IV.G.1.).

## **D. 2020 Joint Annual Meeting**

The Council had a robust discussion of ideas for presenting the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting as a virtual conference, with suggestions about how to address the various components of a "typical" SAA conference, including what might be reimaged in terms of format or timing and what might be put aside in 2020. The Program Committee currently is reviewing accepted sessions and will be making decisions about the education program in late May.

## **E. Other Discussion Items from Council Members**

The Council briefly discussed responses to inquiries the President recently received regarding equity in the membership dues structure and salary transparency on the SAA job board. To help improve transparency about the organization, the Council is considering hosting more frequent listening sessions as well as a forum on the SAA budget.

Tuomala provided an update on discussions with the Technical Subcommittee on *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* regarding a recently proposed rights statement change request. Tuomala had a productive discussion with the group in April; they will be reviewing and resubmitting the proposal soon. In the meantime, Tuomala will work with the Standards Committee co-chairs to develop specific guidelines for member and community feedback to ensure that adequate feedback is received during all development and review cycles.

## **VI. REPORTS**

*Reports are discussed by the Council only as needed and generally are not summarized in the minutes (with the exception of the Executive Committee report, which details interim actions of the Executive Committee). They do, however, provide a wealth of information about the work of appointed and component groups and the staff. To view the reports—and all other background materials—see <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/reports>.*

The Council reviewed the following reports prior to the meeting but, due to time constraints, they were not able to discuss the reports during the virtual meeting. Members are encouraged to review them, as they include a wealth of information about SAA's projects and activities.

**B. Vice President / President-Elect**

**C. Treasurer**

**D.1. Staff: Executive Director**

**D.2. Staff: Membership**

**D.3. Staff: Education**

**D.4. Staff: Publications**

**D.5. Staff: Annual Meeting**

**D.6. Staff: Technology**

**E. Report: Committee on Education**

**F. Human Rights Archives Section: Report on Webinars**

**G. SAA Foundation Board**

**A. **President** (Verbal)**

Evans shared the following summary of her tasks as SAA President in recent months:

- Led the March 6, 2020, Council conference call.
- A\*CENSUS II Funding: With Executive Director Nancy Beaumont, submitted final application for IMLS National Leadership grant.
- Corresponded with members and the Council on various issues, including the SAA election (particularly the petition to add a candidate to the election), salary transparency, and member dues.
- Supported SAA elected officials and provided resources and insight.
- In consultation with Beaumont, asked members to respond to media inquiries based on their expertise and experience with the media.
- Reviewed and supported questions for national candidates for upcoming U.S. Presidential election.
- Assisted in formation of *American Archivist* Editor Search Committee.
- Implemented Executive Director's annual appraisal process with Executive Committee.
- Working through COVID-19 :
  - Supported Executive Director and staff transition to virtual;

- Supported SAA Foundation and the implementation of the Archival Workers Emergency Fund, and sought funding from Mellon and others for its continuation; and
  - Discussions regarding Annual Meeting with SAA staff and Council.
- Reviewed SAA financial statements.
  - Wrote the President's column published in *Archival Outlook*.
  - Participated in weekly calls with the Executive Director regarding policies and processes, periodic calls with the Vice President and Executive Committee.
  - Worked with Vice President, Executive Director, and Governance Manager to develop agenda items for the May Council meeting.
  - Represented SAA at the virtual Library of Congress Digital Strategy Roundtable on April 23.

## **H. Other Reports from Council Members/What Are You Hearing from Members?**

The following written reports were sent to the Council via email prior to the meeting:

- 1. Publications Editor** (Appendix B)
- 2. SAA Representative to the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation** (Appendix C)

## **I. COUNCIL BUSINESS (continued)**

### **A. Review of May 2020 To Do List / Talking Points**

Council members reviewed the draft list of action items stemming from the meeting.

### **B. Adjournment**

Gonzales moved adjournment, Gunn seconded, and the Council meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:03 p.m. on Wednesday, May 13.

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Conference Call Minutes  
April 22, 2020  
6:00 – 7:00 pm ET**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

President Meredith Evans called the Zoom meeting to order at 6:00 pm ET on Wednesday, April 22. Present were Vice President Rachel Vagts; Treasurer Amy Fitch; Executive Committee Member Audra Eagle Yun; Council members Steven Booth, Eric Chin, Melissa Gonzales, Brenda Gunn, Petrina Jackson, Ricardo Punzalan, Mario Ramirez, and Meg Tuomala; and SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont, Finance/Administration Director Peter Carlson, and Governance Program Manager Felicia Owens.

Evans noted that this special meeting of the Council was called due to the urgent nature of a proposal from the Hilton Chicago, site of the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting.

Beaumont provided background on discussions with the hotel and Hilton Worldwide Sales in light of the challenges associated with planning and implementing a face-to-face conference during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those discussions led to a proposal from the Hilton Chicago to cancel the current contract under the *force majeure* clause, with no financial penalties to SAA, in return for signing an agreement to hold the 2024 Annual Meeting at the hotel. She noted that this relatively early resolution of a cancellation decision will provide ample time for the staff, the Program Committee, SAA leaders, and others with an interest in Annual Meeting programming to move ahead with planning a “virtual” alternative.

**MOTION**

**THAT staff be approved to negotiate a contract with the Hilton Chicago as the site of the 2024 SAA Annual Meeting, in lieu of meeting in Chicago in August 2020.**

**Support Statement:** In light of the uncertainties created by the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting in Chicago, the Hilton Chicago has agreed to cancel the 2020 contract under the *force majeure* clause, with no penalties to SAA, in return for committing to a contract to hold the 2024 Annual Meeting at the hotel. This is a very positive outcome under difficult circumstances.

Motion: Vagts

Second: Jackson

Vote: PASSED (unanimous)

The meeting was adjourned at 6:45 pm by general consent.

**Society of American Archivists  
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**Report of the Publications Editor, January 2020—Present  
(Prepared by Stacie Williams)**

Beginning two weeks prior to my official start date of April 1, 2020, I worked with outgoing editor Chris Prom, Nancy Beaumont, Teresa Brinati, Abigail Christian, and the Publications Board to begin the onboarding process and transition to the Publications Editor role.

As of April 1, I began scheduling appointments with authors and/or editors who have books slated for completion in 2020, prioritizing those who are closest to layout and publication or final edits. Calls to authors or editors are ongoing, but anticipate touching base with a contact for all ongoing projects by the end of May. As we are working to establish a new strategic direction for the Publications program, I wanted to familiarize myself with each project by speaking with authors directly to hear their perspectives and learn more about what members are interested in as readers and writers.

Outgoing Publications Board Editor and Chair Chris Prom graciously continued correspondence with authors through April 1, to allow time for onboarding and consistent communication regarding in-progress manuscripts. Correspondence from those projects spans January 2020 through early April 2020, with the following updates:

- Audra Eagle Yun returned the second draft of the *Archival Accessioning* manuscript with changes from peer reviewers. I am currently reviewing draft against reviewer comments.
- Peer reviews returned to Bethany Anderson and Amy Cooper Cary for the *Decolonial Archival Futures* book, editors are sharing with the project's writers in anticipation of the next round of edits.
- Drew Smith submitted his book proposal on *Using Archives for Genealogical Research* in March, and it is currently under review.
- *Toward a Philosophy of Archival Virtue* manuscript by Scott Cline is currently in second draft revisions, expected back by July 15, 2020.
- The Business Archives manuscript project has been submitted and needs peer reviewers finalized, Chris Prom sent out official emails.

- Copy edited version of *TAPS Engagement* module has been received by co-editors Dina Kellam and Jennie Thomas, and they are finalizing those edits and will move to the layout stage of the editorial process.

Additionally, I attended the *American Archivist* Editorial Board meeting in early May to discuss the upcoming AA Editor search. That group has asked to work in collaboration with the Publications Board on any standardized policies we may be considering for writers in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic. The new position has 10 applicants and the search committee expects to schedule phone interviews by the end of May 2020, to make a selection by the end of summer and transition the new editor throughout the fall. The AA Editorial Board is additionally interested in a joint committee meeting with the Publications Board on the publications governance document to make sure that there is uniform understanding about policies, especially those related to codes of conduct within publishing.

Following Executive Director Beaumont's announcement that the SAA annual meeting slated to be held in Chicago in 2020 will be held as a virtual event, the Publications Board will need to meet to brainstorm how we will conduct the usual programming, such as the writer's breakfast, online or in some other capacity.

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**Report of the Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic  
Documentation (January 1–December 31, 2019)  
(Prepared by Trudy Huskamp Peterson)**

The Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation to the Department of State (HAC) has two principal responsibilities: 1) to oversee the preparation and timely publication of the *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS)* series by the department’s Office of the Historian (OH); and 2) to monitor the declassification and release of State Department records.

The Foreign Relations Authorization Act of 1991 (Public Law 102-138 [105 Stat. 647, codified in relevant part at 22 U.S.C. § 4351 *et seq.*]) mandates these responsibilities. Known as the Foreign Relations statute, it requires publishing a “thorough, accurate, and reliable” documentary record of US foreign relations no later than 30 years after the events that they document. This timeline reflects Congress’s commitment to transparency and an informed public, two pillars of democratic governance. The statute also obligates the HAC to review the “State Department’s declassification procedures” and “all guidelines used in declassification, including those guidelines provided to the National Archives and Records Administration [NARA].”

The challenges that threaten the future viability of both the *FRUS* series and NARA that the HAC identified in 2018 continued throughout 2019. The pace of the reviews of *FRUS* volumes submitted to the interagency review process was again disappointing. Notwithstanding some slight improvement, the Department of Defense (DoD) remained the principal obstacle.

OH’s inability to halt the decline in the number of *FRUS* volumes it published was particularly frustrating because in 2019 it migrated from the Bureau of Public Affairs to the Foreign Service Institute (FSI), a more natural fit. Further, it filled the position of Historian (office director), which had been vacant throughout 2018. Although during this interregnum OH was ably codirected by Deputy Historian Renee Goings and *FRUS* General Editor Adam Howard, Dr. Howard’s appointment as Historian in 2019 and the selection of Kathleen Rasmussen as General Editor allowed Dr. Howard to focus exclusively on his responsibilities as office director as Dr. Rasmussen concentrated on overseeing *FRUS*. Both are exceptionally experienced and well qualified. Yet phenomena beyond their control thwarted *FRUS*’s production.

**Publications of the *Foreign Relations* Series**

Researching the multiplicity of records that document an administration’s foreign relations, culling from them the limited number that can be managed in one volume while still providing a



“thorough, accurate, and reliable” documentary history, steering the draft volume through the interagency declassification review process, and editing it for publication poses a demanding and time-consuming challenge. Nevertheless, despite publishing only 6 *FRUS* volumes in 2018, the average number of volumes OH has published since 2015 is 8. That is the number the office calculates it must publish in order ultimately to achieve the 30-year timeline mandated by the Foreign Relations statute.

In 2019, however, it published only 2 volumes, fewer than any year in a decade. Their titles are:

1. *FRUS*, 1977–1980, Volume XIX, South Asia (August 8)
2. *FRUS*, 1969–1976, Volume E–9, Part 2, Documents on the Middle East Region, 1973–76 (October 23)

The HAC can report some good 2019 news regarding *FRUS*. In 2018 OH completed its 10-year project to digitize all 512 previously-published *FRUS* volumes dating back to the series’ origin in 1861. In 2019 it began to digitize the microfiche supplements released between 1993 and 1998 that contained additional documents from the Dwight D. Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy *FRUS* subseries. It completed the digitization 484 documents totaling 2,046 pages and covering Arms Control, National Security Policy, and Foreign Economic Policy during the Kennedy administration. One of the supplements it plans to digitize next is on the Cuban Missile Crisis.

These microfiche supplements, coupled with the 2 volumes OH did publish in 2019, brings the *FRUS* digital archive to a total of 307,105 documents from 538 volumes published in the 158 years between 1861 and 2019. The archive is accessible without charge online, searchable by full-text or by date, and downloadable in multiple ebook formats.

### **The Challenge of the 30-Year Requirement**

OH’s relentless efforts to gain approval through the interagency process to declassify documents for publication in *FRUS* continue to encounter obstacles. As the number of volumes declines as a result, the progress OH has made toward reaching the mandated 30-year timeline has stalled. Indeed, the gap is likely to begin to widen again.

The explosion of documents that OH’s historians are statutorily required to locate among the multiple departments, agencies, and executive offices that contribute to the foreign relations process makes some decrease in the annual rate of publication unavoidable. Currently the office has submitted for declassification dozens of volumes from the Carter and Reagan *FRUS* subseries, stretching the interagency process to the breaking point. The reasons are readily understandable. An increasing number of the documents selected for publication concern sensitive intelligence information. In most cases, diverse agencies and departments hold an “equity” (interest) in these documents; they are entitled to approve or deny their release in part or full. Thus, the time required to complete the interagency process is frequently prolonged. Further, as explained in last year’s report, the same declassification offices in many agencies are responsible for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR) requests as well as *FRUS* systematic reviews and declassification. Responding to time sensitive FOIA/MDR requests must take priority over *FRUS* reviews.

The responsibility of the contributing agencies for the breakdown of the process varies dramatically. The State Department's Office of Information Programs and Services (IPS) should serve as a model for other agencies and departments. The quality and timeliness of its reviews reflect the existence of team dedicated *FRUS* coordination and the experience and expertise of the former Foreign Service Officers that IPS employs to conduct the reviews. As in past years, State reviewed more volumes more promptly than any other agency.

The HAC also judges favorably the contributions of The National Security Council's (NSC's) Office of Records and Information Security Management. It both reviews documents with White House equities and comments on the declassification decisions of other reviewing agencies. Like State, its reviews were timely and of high quality. Further, the NSC was pivotal to resolving a seemingly intractable dispute between OH and DoD over one particular volume when National Security Advisor John Bolton intervened directly to support OH's request to refer the volume to the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP).

That it required Mr. Bolton's intervention to overcome DoD's resistance to submitting the disputed volume to ISCAP was symptomatic of its attitude toward *FRUS* and the review process. In 2018 the HAC criticized DoD for violating "egregiously" the Foreign Relations statute's requirements that 1) it conduct a declassification review of a *FRUS* compilation within 120 days of receiving it from OH; 2) it respond to any appeals of the first review within another 60 days; and, in order to make releasable a record that contains sensitive national security information; 3) it make an effort to redact the text. In 2019 DoD's violations of timeliness and quality were equally egregious. It responded to less than one-third of the volumes that OH submitted for its review, it took more than 4-times longer than the mandated timeline when it did respond, and its few responses were of poor quality. OH's inability to publish more than 2 volumes in 2019 can be attributed largely if not exclusively to DoD's failure to provide timely and quality responses.

The HAC has reason for some cautious optimism, nevertheless. The Defense Office of Prepublication and Security Review (DOPSR), which coordinates *FRUS* declassification reviews within DoD, came under new leadership in 2019. Far more frequently than in past years, this new leadership attended HAC meetings, providing fuller briefings, and pledging to do whatever was within its limited authority to improve. For this purpose, DoD has adjusted some of its internal processes. Yet DoD's ability to comply with statutory responsibilities, and by doing so set OH back on the path of meeting the statutory timeline for publishing *FRUS* volumes, will require the commitment and direction of high-level DoD officials.

Toward this end OH has received strong support from the Foreign Service Institute, most notably Ambassadors Daniel B. Smith (Ph.D. in History) and Julieta Valls Noyes, FSI's Director and Deputy Director, respectively. Under Secretary of State Brian Bulatao provided further support by personally engaging his DoD counterpart. As a result, direct discussions regarding resolving the issues have begun between the State and Defense Departments. The HAC strongly believes that integral to a viable resolution must be DoD's establishment of a centralized *FRUS* declassification coordination team similar to those established by both State and CIA.

In addition, the HAC worked with staff on the US House Armed Services Committee to include a section in the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (NDAA) aimed at promoting DoD compliance with the Foreign Relations Statute. The provision requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress on the “progress and objectives of the Secretary with respect to the release of documents for publication in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series or to facilitate the public accessibility of such documents at the National Archives, presidential libraries, or both.” This report should make more transparent DoD’s performance and the reasons for its declassification delays, an important step in precipitating improvements.

The HAC urges DoD to take its cue from the CIA, notwithstanding the challenges that agency confronts in declassifying documents and meeting the mandated timelines for *FRUS* reviews. In fact, CIA’s suspension in 2016 of the High Level Panel (HLP) mechanism that plays a vital role in evaluating OH’s requests to acknowledge covert actions has contributed to the drop in the rate of *FRUS* publications, and OH still awaits 9 overdue responses from CIA on documents that OH submitted for declassification review. Still, CIA had resumed its participation in the HLP process, and in 2019 it approved the first HLP issue since 2016. It also provided final responses on five volumes OH referred to in previous years. Further, the CIA’s declassification reviews and its responses to OH appeals are of the highest quality. This performance is a direct consequence of the dedicated *FRUS* coordination team that the CIA has in place. DoD should follow its lead.

### **The Review, Transfer, and Processing of Department of State Records**

The HAC monitored the review and transfer of State Department records and their accession and processing at NARA.

Consistent with past several years, the Systematic Review Program of the State Department’s Office of Information Programs and Services (IPS) made excellent progress in meeting its systematic declassification review requirements, responding to FOIA and MDR requests, and reducing its backlogs of both. Similarly, a new director appointed at the National Archives’ National Declassification Center (NDC) reinvigorated the Center’s promotion of interagency cooperation, resulting again in reducing its FOIA backlog and processing hundreds of thousands of pages with a withholding-from-declassification rate of less than 10%.

What is more, signaling both tangible and symbolic progress, a joint venture by both State’s IPS and NARA, led by the NDC, portends the resolution of problem that has festered for years. The two offices have formulated a yet-to-be-finalized plan by which IPS will perform the initial declassification review of the 1981 and 1982 N and P reels (microfilm of previously destroyed documents), perhaps at the secure NDC site. If implemented, this strategy will overcome the security and technological obstacles that have brought these reviews to a standstill.

The HAC compliments IPS and NARA on this initiative and will monitor progress toward bringing it to fruition. Yet it is concerned with other potential problems that loom ahead, all of which the HAC raised in the 2018 report and have if anything become more acute. These include budget-driven reductions in NARA’s personnel that slowed the accessioning and processing of State Department records and adversely affected researchers’ experiences by, for example,

normatively producing skeletal finding guides rather than the detailed ones that researchers require. A greater concern is the capacity of both NARA and the State Department to manage the explosion of electronic records.

Developments in 2019 all but assure that this management challenge will intensify. A memorandum issued jointly by NARA and the Office of Management and Budget in June directs all agencies to manage *in their entirety* their permanent records electronically by December 31, 2022. This directive demands that the agencies digitize all their remaining paper records because NARA will no longer accept paper records after that date.

This policy confronts each agency with an unfunded mandate that, in an era of constrained budgets, staff shortages, and an urgent need to purchase advanced technologies, imposes a cost that creates a severe burden on them. The HAC imagines a scenario in which departments and agencies hold their documents hostage and do not transfer them to NARA until they receive additional appropriations. In worst-case scenarios, the poor quality of the digitized records renders them unusable, or agencies even destroy records.

The State Department anticipated the digital deluge, and according to IPS, “is currently developing plans to comply with the June 2019 OMB and NARA mandate for transitioning to electronic records.” The HAC did not receive a briefing on those plans. (The HAC chair and another member received abbreviated briefings.) In December, however, the IPS director distributed to the HAC a paper on its modernization program. It made explicit that IPS applauded NARA’s establishing benchmarks for achieving a fully-digitized records management system and enthusiastically embraced the challenge of meeting those benchmarks. The HAC understands that enthusiasm for modernizing records keeping. Yet it is concerned that the IPS paper neglects to discuss the costs of the modernization program and the potential risks that inhere in such a rapid transition from paper to electronic records management.

The paper focused on the development of new records disposition schedules, a core concern of the HAC. IPS has pledged to present full briefings in 2020. The HAC intends to use these briefings to raise fundamental questions about the costs and risks. It anticipates asking: 1) How the consolidation of records into “big bucket” schedules will affect their discoverability by researchers? 2) What is the likelihood that in the rush to transition to big bucket records schedules valuable records will be mistakenly categorized as temporary and thus earmarked for destruction? and 3) Is it realistic to expect IPS to complete the modernization program in two years, and what if it does not?

The HAC also worries about the effects of budgetary and staff shortages on the Presidential Library system. NARA is transferring to the NDC all classified records held at the libraries, anticipating an expedited declassification review. The processing and classification review of emails from the Reagan and George H.W. Bush administrations continue to be stalled for lack of resources. Solving these problems is central to the future research needs of *FRUS* compilers and the public at large.

### **Recommendations:**

- Senior State Department Officials should work with counterparts at DoD to establish a centralized *FRUS* declassification coordination team which can more effectively meet DoD's mandate for the timely review and release of historically significant information that no longer needs to remain classified.
- NARA and IPS should solicit public comment on plans to convert to technologically driven records management and big bucket records disposition schedules.

Minutes for the HAC meetings are at <https://history.state.gov/about/hac/meeting-notes>.

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