

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

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

SUMMARY

The Final Report that follows represents two years of work on behalf of the entire archival community, victims of disasters, and others in the cultural sector who work to document and archive events of violence, natural disasters, and other tragedies. The Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force has compiled an extensive toolkit consisting of templates of forms and policies readily accessible to institutions and professionals all over the world responsible for documenting tragedies. The Task Force has also made recommendations for a continuing group who will oversee the vital work in a “cross-professional, cultural heritage advisory and/or planning group on tragedy response.” The Task Force has aligned its recommendations to conform to SAA’s strategic goals.

TASK FORCE CHARGE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Society of American Archivists Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force was created by the SAA Council in January 2018. The Task Force membership includes individuals from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and organizations who have either been involved in documenting tragic events ranging from natural disasters to international terrorism that have affected the communities served by their organizations, or have been involved in examining the need for and implications of this emerging area of archival work. Beginning their work in February 2018, members held monthly conference calls, a Think Tank event at SAA’s 2019 Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas, and organized a February 2020 follow-up meeting with key stakeholders at SAA headquarters in Chicago to address the following Council 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.”

Members participating in the work of the Task Force were:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| David Benjamin | Thomas Padilla (stepped down October 2018) |
| Steven Booth (Council Liaison) | Allen Ramsey |
| Lisa Calahan (Chair) | Patricia Rettig |
| Jackie Esposito | Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn |
| Kara McClurken (joined November 2018) | Susan Tucker |
| Felicia Owens (SAA Staff) | |

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Meetings, Including Think Tank and Capstone Meetings

The Task Force met regularly by phone during 2018 and 2019. The meetings during 2018 were sometimes twice monthly and sometimes every other month, but in 2019, meetings assumed a monthly pattern.

Through the meetings, committee members collaborated in the creation of the Tragedy Response Toolkit, “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit” and a bibliography of articles and monographs related to archiving memorial and commemorative collections. The creation of these materials met the first of the two charges given by SAA: creating and/or compiling material for ready accessibility by archivists who are facing a sudden tragedy.

In addition to regular Task Force meetings, members also made connections with cultural heritage workers and others who had experience documenting disasters. By connecting with colleagues who had experience responding to a tragedy, Task Force members were able to gather input from affected communities, learn what worked as a response mechanism, and gather examples of documentation that worked for various institutions and groups. For example, Task Force members communicated with and 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, among other materials from other institutions.

Not only did Task Force members consult with these and other members of the cultural heritage community, but also included them in conversations while considering our second charge: exploring the feasibility of creating a standing body within SAA that would update documentation as needed and serve as a volunteer tragedy response team.

In order to foster an open conversation and gather initial support as well as ongoing collaborative conversations, the Task Force proposed an in-person Think Tank during the SAA Annual Meeting in August 2019. To make it possible for non-archivist stakeholders to attend, the Task Force requested component funding to pay for travel and registration fees for seven participants and a facilitator.

During the Think Tank, seven guest presenters participated, including representatives from the American Alliance of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, Oral History Association, American Library Association, and National Heritage Responders. In addition, because the Think Tank was listed as an open meeting in the SAA conference schedule, Task Force members shifted focus to include additional participants. A total of forty-three people attended. The report and recommendations resulting from the Think Tank are available in full as an addendum to this report.

The most critical recommendation mandated a meeting in February 2020 to involve members of the Task Force and experts from other cultural heritage areas. Funding was obtained via SAA and a LYRASIS Performing Arts Readiness Grant. On February 19, seventeen people in total attended, 4 of whom attended virtually by Zoom.

Both the Think Tank and Capstone meetings' agendas and recommendations are available as an addendum to this report. The recommendations from this event are incorporated into the Task Force's final recommendations.

Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit

One of the key charges of the Task Force was to create or compile resources for archivists and other cultural heritage professionals facing a sudden tragedy. The members of the Task Force had many personal experiences upon which to draw and they reached out to others to gather their experiences as well. Along the way they made note of best practices, procedures, and other resources that had been utilized or created for known documented tragedies, including those used at the 9-11 Memorial Museum, Documenting Ferguson, Newtown, Boston Marathon Bombing Memorial, and the University of Virginia ("Unite the Right" rally and community response). The Task Force also surveyed SAA and allied association members on tools or documentation that they *wished* they had, or had thought of in hindsight. The Task Force members began to sort the shared and suggested documents into categories and look for gaps. Task Force members volunteered to draft best practices or templates for resources that were not readily available elsewhere and created a resource toolkit for documenting in times of crisis.

The Task Force created or adapted thirty documents, bibliographies, and templates for use by archivists and cultural heritage responders working on documenting tragedies. These templates and forms often include accompanying explanations for suggested use of the templates. The resources are divided into the seven following categories and available on the SAA website or for quick copy/transfer via a shared Google drive:

- Immediate Response
- Collection Management
- Administrative Policies and Agreements
- Digital Content
- Emotional Support
- Oral Histories
- Manuals and Resources

It was important that this documentation be available to the cultural community beyond the SAA membership, and that the resource not get buried on the website. Although the toolkit can easily be found through search engines, it is also available on the main SAA web page, underneath the Advocacy header, and does not require SAA membership credentials to access.

Before the toolkit was complete, individuals reached out to the Task Force for assistance with response and Task Force members provided advice and access to our working drafts to the following institutions:

- Johns Hopkins University
- UNC-Charlotte
- Parkland Historical Society
- History Colorado

These toolkit resources will need to be updated over time to ensure that they remain relevant (e.g., the section on digital collecting). Additional resources may also be developed, such as [University of Virginia's Digital Collecting Toolkit](#), which was released after SAA Council approval and may be a candidate for inclusion in the next round of updates. There are also areas where expansion would be welcome, such as resources specifically designed for emotional support of staff and users of archives documenting tragedy.

Associated Publicity

During the time the Task Force was convened, a number of tragedies occurred. As a result, local and national media discovered the Task Force's efforts through the work of local archivists. The following is a list of articles that either mention the Task Force and its work or include an interview with Lisa Calahan, the Task Force chair.

Associated Publicity

- April 2018. Lisa Calahan, the Task Force chair was interviewed about the Task Force for a piece on the 5-year commemoration of the Boston Marathon Bombing. <https://www.wbur.org/artery/2018/04/12/boston-marathon-memorial-archives>
- July 30, 2018. Off the Record blog post by Steven Booth. <https://offtherecord.archivists.org/2018/07/30/update-from-the-tragedy-response-initiative-task-force-guest-post-by-saa-council-member-steven-booth/>
- May 23, 2019. Lisa Calahan, the Task Force chair, was interviewed for this article. <https://www.wfae.org/post/archiving-unc-charlottes-difficult-present-future#stream/0>
- June 9, 2019. The Task Force is generally mentioned in this audio interview. <https://www.npr.org/2019/06/09/731044374/saving-shooting-memorials>
- June 9, 2019. Same interview on a local NPR station. <https://www.krcu.org/post/saving-shooting-memorials#stream/0>
- September 12, 2019. SAA Headquarters. Announcement for "Documenting in Times of Crisis." <https://connect.archivists.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?MessageKey=f5d9f5bb-e125-47cd-995d-28128ebdbc71&CommunityKey=3f130ed5-241d-4380-9775-eb85a8ea2cd0&tab=digestviewer>
- September 18, 2019. National Council on Public History "News Update." Announcement for "Documenting in Times of Crisis." <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/around-the-field-october-2-2019/>

Mentions and Shares

- Regional Archival Associations Consortium (RAAC), Disaster Planning and Subcommittee webpage. Link to "Documenting in Times of Crisis."

<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/regional-archival-associations-consortium-raac/disaster-planning-and-recovery-subcommittee>

- Presentation by Kara McClurken. “Collecting in Times of Crisis: 7 Steps to Increase Preparedness.” Keynote address for the Ohio Digital Network. <https://doi.org/10.18130/v3-waej-0p91>
- BlueShieldAustralia Tweet sharing “Documenting in Times of Crisis.” https://twitter.com/archivists_org/status/1182301568420450311
- Soc Amer Archivists Tweet sharing “Documenting in Times of Crisis.” <https://twitter.com/i/web/status/1171936598621138944>
- Philippine Librarians Association, Southern Tagalog Region Librarians Council. Shared “Documenting in Times of Crisis.” <http://plaistrlc.blogspot.com/2019/11/documenting-in-times-of-crisis-resource.html>
- International Council on Archives, Human Rights Working Group Newsletter. https://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/hrwg_newsletter_august_2019.pdf

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1: Determine immediate, available capacity to continue work

The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force has invested considerable time in creating the documentation toolkit as well as advocating to the SAA Council for resources to support initial planning and hosting the Think Tank and Capstone meetings. Because of the high use of these resources, members of the Task Force recognize that there is an immediate and ongoing need for tragedy response assistance that will continue after the end of the Task Force. As an interim plan, a few members of the Task Force have agreed to participate as an interim emergency response team offering guidance and support to those who need it until a permanent group can be finalized. Volunteers have agreed to continue on an interim basis April 1 through August 8, 2020. Interim volunteers are David Benjamin, Lisa Calahan, Jackie Esposito, Kara McClurken, Allen Ramsey, and Susan Tucker.

Recommendation #2: Formalize a cross-professional, cultural heritage advisory and/or planning group on tragedy response

The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force has proposed a vision and led initial discussions regarding network formation. However, in order for network planning to move forward, a new advisory or planning group should be formed with representatives from across cultural heritage stewardship.

Members of the advisory or planning group should reflect the range of criteria implicit in the goals and values articulated during the Think Tank meeting including:

- Representative of subfields across cultural heritage: museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, etc.;
- Knowledgeable about the structure and design of distributed networks;

- Experienced and knowledgeable about tragedy response—both sensitive to the trauma incurred by affected communities and therefore the limited capacity for action in the immediate response to the tragedy;
- Experienced and successful in grant writing and other forms of fundraising;
- Willing to take ownership over the planning and design phases of the network;
- Willing to dedicate a certain percentage of their time to the effort before initial funding is secured; and
- Representative of different positions within an organization—while “on-the-ground” practitioners are likely to have invaluable experience to offer and invest in the success of the network, if the network is aimed at assisting cultural heritage organizations and not just individual cultural heritage practitioners undergoing tragedy, the advisory or planning committee would benefit from administrative perspectives as well as departmental staff perspectives.

The advisory or planning group description should include a clear charge that emphasizes outreach, research, stakeholder alignment, and fundraising. Once the advisory group is established:

- Make sure any new stakeholders asked to join the group complete the questionnaire¹;
- Schedule regular calls; and
- Share the working Purpose & Possibilities document to all members of the group for comment and refinement.

Four Task Force members have volunteered to continue their participation by serving on the permanent group. In addition, the Task Force members have made a number of cross-association connections during their term and can use those connections to encourage volunteers for a permanent group, if helpful.

Recommendation #3: Create a preliminary alignment map

During the Capstone Stakeholder Mapping session, participants acknowledged cultural stewardship-specific tragedy response organizations including [National Heritage Responders](#), [Alliance for Response](#), and [Documenting the Now](#). While a full environmental scan is beyond the scope of what can be accomplished without additional funding, a preliminary alignment map² is an activity that advisory group members can do together on calls or asynchronously with limited time investment. By creating a preliminary alignment map illustrating the ways that the network complements or overlaps with existing efforts, the advisory group can assert a coordinating role within the field at-large, create a shared understanding of the landscape among advisory group members, and identify potential partners and funding sources. An alignment map starts with a spreadsheet or other tabular data format. Advisory group members would add names

¹ Think Tank Pre-meeting Questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VdQIB1eI7fHWiQGaGBUclDWgy0Txxx_W3Dug2amVgcA/edit?usp=sharing

² Copy of Software Preservation Network Alignment Map as example for Think Tank:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1t4FiKfKQOUM0DsXDVUw_yuUuSOguVda3s4e5pg1nfKM/edit?usp=sharing

from the Stakeholder Mapping produced at the Think Tank meeting, and then the group completes any additional information about those names (and others) such as:

- Mission
- Populations they serve
- Geographic reach
- Types of resources they produce
- Sources of funding

Recommendation #4: Secure funding

There were numerous acknowledgments of on-going tragedy response efforts outside of cultural stewardship to which the network can turn for potential partnership as well as models for how to organize tragedy response on a national scale including first responders, such as the American Red Cross, Everytown for Gun Safety, and Moms Demand Action. However, formation or start-up is the most resource-intensive phase of community development, and it will be difficult to move the idea of the network forward without a way to secure time from key individuals representing subdomains of cultural stewardship beyond archives. Advisory group members should prioritize the design and submission of a planning grant to provide resources to multiple professional organizations or institutions in order to substantively explore the feasibility of a national volunteer tragedy response network. This planning grant might include the following activities:

- **Conduct an environmental scan** that builds on the Think Tank stakeholder map and documents all related initiatives, their funders, and their partners. The environmental scan should include a survey and/or interviews with representatives from these initiatives. Survey and/or interview questions should be crafted to help advisory members determine gaps in cultural heritage tragedy response resources, and subsequently, whether the network is adding a new layer of activity to an existing national initiative, or if the network should be established as a stand-alone effort. As a result of the environmental scan, advisory group members should also be able to answer the following:
 - Online resource openly available v. “contact us” model?
 - Short term “emergent” v. long-term, “advisory” > does the network only exist when needed, or does it exist on an ongoing basis?
 - Providing resources v. providing advice?
 - Overall set of policies v. support more regional-based responses?
- **Compile a comprehensive list of existing tragedy response resources across cultural stewardship.** As a secondary outcome of the environmental scan, advisory group members should produce a comprehensive list of resources already available across cultural stewardship.
- **Governance and community development training for the advisory group** that introduces community/initiative lifecycle phases (Ex. Formation, Validation, Acceleration, Transition), growth areas (Ex. Vision, Infrastructure, Engagement, Finance & HR, Governance), and models for organizing the work of the network moving forward.

Mapping SAA Strategic Goals to Known Gaps in the Tragedy Response Landscape

The below recommendations made by the Capstone meeting participants and Task Force members are reframed in terms of SAA strategic goals.

Goal #1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

ADVOCACY

The lack of best practices for tragedy response in cultural heritage speaks to a need for national professional organizations to both raise awareness about archival organizations' current lack of preparedness to address tragic events, and to support archivists that have undergone and/or documented tragedy in sharing lessons learned. Advocacy is also needed to mobilize funders and archival repositories to invest resources in the development and testing of a comprehensive tragedy response training that targets each level of an organization including executive administration, middle management, operational staff, and researchers.

Goal #2: Enhancing Professional Growth

PUBLICATION

In addition to the publication and broader distribution of tragedy response tools (such as a “tragedy response preparedness plan” modeled after a disaster preparedness plan) and other resources included in the task force toolkit, SAA can leverage its publication arm to point a discursive spotlight on tragedy response through a “Trends in Archival Practice” module or entire module series³. If conceived as a series, each module could cover a specific known gap in the tragedy response landscape representing voices from experts within and beyond archival practice. For example, Kathleen Rennie (Capstone meeting participant) is a strategic communications expert that has provided “corporate and nonprofit seminars focused on communication and strategy” and teaches in the EMBA program entitled “Strategic Media Relations and Crisis Communication.”⁴ Dr. Rennie could be invited to contribute a chapter in a module on “crisis communication in disaster and tragedy response.”

Goal #3: Advancing the Field

COLLABORATION

The long-term effects of trauma on individuals that experience tragedy as well as the long-term effects on archivists resulting from routine exposure to documentation of tragic events are both documented issues in tragedy response. However, neither of these issues are sufficiently or even concertedly being addressed at a field level. Destigmatizing the act of asking for help or seeking mental health services requires collaboration between mental health service providers and SAA to develop guidance for managers and volunteer coordinators on signs to look for and resources for supporting staff.

³ Society of American Archivists - Publications - Book Publishing - Trends in Archival Practice: <https://www2.archivists.org/publications/book-publishing/trends-in-archives-practice>

⁴ Kathleen Donohue Rennie, Executive MBA Lecturer. Rutgers Business School: <https://www.business.rutgers.edu/faculty/kathleen-donohue-rennie>

EXPERIMENTATION

While the field currently lacks documented best practices for tragedy response, this gap creates an opportunity for SAA to experiment and to encourage experimentation among its members. On the one hand, archivists are one among numerous cultural stewardship professions that are part of a comprehensive tragedy response and should therefore draw on an extensive network of individuals and organizations that are already mobilizing resources effectively. On the other hand, there is so little documented about archival organizations and tragedy response that any systematic effort to develop, test, and document approaches to tragedy response will make a significant impact on policy development, training requirements, and preparedness.

Goal #4: Meeting Members' Needs

CONVENING

SAA has already invested in convening the Think Tank and Capstone meetings of the Tragedy Response Task Force. The lack of data about the current state of cultural heritage readiness for tragedy response presents an opportunity for SAA to convene a sustained conversation⁵. The two-tier tragedy response effort leans on SAA to recruit and onboard individuals from within and without SAA membership to participate. It also relies on SAA staff as a backbone to coordinate members, administer grants, and, and provide logistical support for virtual and in-person events.

CONCLUSION

During the term of the Task Force, the members have successfully completed its charge. Members have made significant strides in creating easily accessible resources for archivists and allied professionals responding to tragic events that proved immediately useful to the community, even while in draft form. Due to the immediate nature of tragic events, the Task Force recommends that the permanent tragedy response group create a plan for maintaining, updating, and expanding upon these resources.

The Task Force members have also investigated the sustainability of a permanent response team and have found significant need. The successes of both the Think Tank and Capstone events highlight the desire from the community for such an effort. Through the feedback received from both events, the Task Force members are confident that a permanent tragedy response group can be sustainably formed based on the existing collaborative committee model that SAA follows with a strong volunteer base.

In closing, the Task Force members would like to take the opportunity to thank the SAA Council for their support for the duration of the Task Force's charge. We are especially grateful for the incredible support and hard work on the part of Steven Booth and Felicia Owens in making our work possible.

⁵ Information about the University of Virginia's survey on digital collecting during emergencies can be found here: https://search.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/oc_ks65hc299

“Exploring Feasibility and Readiness for a National Volunteer Tragedy Response Network”

SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force
Think Tank Meeting | August 3, 2019
Final Report and Recommendations

Report prepared by: Jessica Meyerson

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Sincerest thanks to members of the SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force for their important work. Special thanks to Lisa Calahan, Kara McClurken, and Susan Tucker for their expertise, guidance and collaboration.

Introduction

In 2018, the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force was established by SAA leadership to address the increasing frequency of human-induced tragedy and environmental disasters. The Task Force was charged with 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. The Task Force initiated their work by researching best practices and reaching out to colleagues within and beyond the archival community that had experience in tragedy response. Research and synthesis of best practices for tragedy response resulted in the Task Force's publication of the [Tragedy Response toolkit drafts](#). These documents were left [open for comment](#) for two weeks in the summer preceding the 2019 SAA Annual Meeting.

Through their conversations with other cultural heritage professionals about tragedy response experiences, Task Force members determined that tragedy response should be an open discussion among a broader set of cultural stewardship stakeholders including oral history associations, museums, libraries and others. The Task Force expanded their original charge to explore the feasibility of a *national volunteer tragedy response network* including representatives from across cultural stewardship -- requesting support from SAA Council to host a Think Tank meeting with invited participants and members of the Task Force during the 2019 SAA Annual Meeting. Task Force members received funding from SAA Council to fund travel for invited participants and hire a consultant, Jessica Meyerson, to co-create the Think Tank meeting agenda, facilitate the meeting, and synthesize the outcomes. Together, they outlined a set of goals and objectives for a Think Tank meeting that would bring together cultural heritage professionals outside of archives with experience in tragedy response. Invited guests included representatives from The National Council on Public History, Oral History Association, FEMA Heritage Emergency National Task Force, and Documenting Ferguson.

A pre-meeting questionnaire⁶ was sent to invited participants three weeks in advance of the Think Tank meeting with the goal of identifying shared goals, observed gaps in the landscape and preliminary consensus on priorities for action. Organizers used responses⁷ to refine the facilitator agenda and desired meeting outcomes. This baseline questionnaire could be used in the future with any potential new participants in order to capture their current thinking about this work. Think Tank members can use those responses as a way of evaluating initial alignment between invited participants' and the evolving scope

⁶ Think Tank Pre-meeting Questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VdQIB1eI7fHWiQGaGBUclDWgy0Txxx_W3Dug2amVgcA/edit?usp=sharing

⁷ Think Tank Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Responses:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13rgTHVUQfGJrbogX1rVvoPHdLOT47b1EKLfPdXsvZ1c/edit?usp=sharing>

and objectives of the Think Tank, enabling more targeted and explicit communications about needs, priorities and next steps.

The Think Tank meeting was initially an invitation-only meeting with 15 participants expected. However, the Think Tank meeting was listed on the SAA Annual Meeting program schedule as an open session, and forty-two conference attendees indicated an interest in attending. The open meeting allowed for greater transparency about the work of the Task Force, clear documentation of interest in tragedy response within SAA, and contributed to a broader range of perspectives to the feasibility discussion. However, because the agenda was designed for the list of invited participants, organizers encountered several challenges including ensuring that all attendees shared appropriate background information and context for the discussion; managing the additional input in a way that still allowed organizers to accomplish meeting objectives and desired outcomes; and facilitating discussion and engagement among attendees.

All transcribed notes and materials resulting from the Think Tank are located in a single folder⁸ that should be migrated to the Task Force workspace. This report outlines the structure and outcomes from the meeting as well as recommendations and next steps.

Think Tank Meeting Objectives, Structure and Outcomes⁹

Objectives of the Think Tank Meeting:

Explore research amassed by the SAA Task Force as well as that of allied groups such as SAA’s own Disaster Planning and Recovery Subcommittee, AIC National Heritage Responders, and cooperative groups of museums, archives, and universities involved in earlier and current collecting efforts centered in repositories and communities across the United States.

This objective was addressed in part through an overview of the Task Force’s documentation toolkit. However, due to time, there was no formal or specific feedback gathered from participants during the meeting. The meeting did not address research by other groups, except in conversation with Think Tank participants. [Recommendation #3](#) and [Recommendation #4](#) address this objective more thoroughly.

Establishing a shared understanding of the archival concerns during tragedy response.

While specific archival concerns during tragedy response are highlighted in the Task Force documentation toolkit, the meeting agenda did not address this objective directly. The agenda emphasized the perspectives and experiences of invited participants, as well as, attempts to move the discussion from general framing to actionable next steps.

Provide an opportunity for stewards to come together and examine challenges and resources inherent in a coordinated national effort for tragedy response in cultural stewardship

⁸ Documentation: SAA Tragedy Response Task Force | Think Tank 2019:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mGgBaDPx9-O5erpshu7hX5_PkxWuqlKL?usp=sharing

⁹ Think Tank Meeting Facilitator Agenda: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KSAg0hUWQCFTEr-3gXYzdx7-b59HFneIPYmt0gNVPEM/edit?usp=sharing>

Participants accomplished this objective - most of the invited participants were able to attend and the meeting sessions were designed to help participants surface challenges and resources for a national volunteer tragedy response network.

Explore how stewards and the organizations they represent might best support each other in a volunteer response network

Throughout the meeting, participants talked about the network proposal in terms of their own experiences in tragedy response, reflecting on specific actions that worked and did not work. However, the work of determining exactly how stewardship professionals and organizations can best support each other in this network is the ongoing work of the Task Force and Think Tank participants - beginning with identification of resource allocators within participating organizations that have the authority to commit resources to the initiative.

Identify which stakeholders are missing from the current group discussion

Participants accomplished this objective during the Stakeholder Mapping session. Now that the Stakeholder Mapping is documented, there is additional work to be done in order to identify the nature of the relationship between specific stakeholders and the network, and to locate individual contacts within stakeholder organizations.

Determine concrete next steps and identify community leaders to advance this work beyond the Think Tank meeting

Participants accomplished this objective. Through the Planning to Action and How We Work sessions, participants identified next steps for both specific functions of the proposed network (ie, tragedy response hotline and mentorship program) and more general formation next steps (ie, creating a mailing list and creating an advisory/planning committee). Identifying community leaders is addressed in [Recommendation #2](#)

Desired Think Tank Meeting Outcomes:

- Understanding how your experience and current work related to other participants' tragedy response work
- Understanding how a Tragedy Response Volunteer Network could help to advance all participants' goals
- Alignment of stakeholders from allied professions towards building a sustainable volunteer network for tragedy response
- Purpose & Possibility Statement
- Stakeholder Map
- Recommendations for next steps and clear objectives for Fall 2019 Follow-Up Meeting

Participants achieved all desired meeting outcomes to greater or lesser degrees. Understanding one another's work was a major outcome. Participants conveyed a strong desire to share anecdotes about their tragedy response experiences throughout the meeting. It is less clear if all the participants saw a volunteer national tragedy response network as a mechanism for advancing their goals.

The pre-meeting questionnaire responses¹⁰ revealed alignment among participants. In particular, when asked to list one to three major challenges facing effective tragedy response, every respondent listed something similar to “insufficient infrastructure” and “lack of an existing set of best practices.” During the meeting, these challenges were reiterated by additional participants, however, there was some disagreement about the best actions to take to address these challenges.

All participants contributed Purpose & Possibility statements which will have to be analyzed for common themes and synthesized into a single statement for review by all Think Tank meeting participants. Participants also created an initial Stakeholder Mapping highlighting the unique positionality of cultural heritage in the tragedy response ecosystem - between first responders, community members, and service providers willing to host and store materials collected or captured about an event. This mix of stakeholders points to the temporal dimension of cultural stewards’ role in tragedy response -- active both immediately after the event and over the long term (whether that means addressing negative impacts on existing collections due to an environmental disaster or the creation of new collections that document the stories of those impacted by environmental and human-induced tragedies).

Finally, the meeting successfully produced next steps and clear objectives for the Fall 2019 Follow-Up meeting. While creating the agenda for the Fall 2019 Follow-Up Meeting was out of scope for the Think Tank facilitation contract, many of the recommendations and next steps outlined in this report can feed directly into agenda creation for the fall meeting.

Think Tank Meeting Structure:

The meeting began with an overview of the goals and discussion of ground rules. The ground rules discussion brought to light a critical consideration when working in the context of tragedy response - the need to tailor the brainstorming and data gathering to protect the anonymity of the participants.

Introductions followed the overview and partners were asked to interview one another regarding their organizational affiliation, personal learning goals for the Think Tank meeting, and ideas for additional individuals and organizations that they felt should be present in any conversation regarding the development of a national volunteer tragedy response network. Participant learning objectives could be categorized into several common objectives including engaging with other colleagues doing tragedy response work; scoping the national volunteer response network appropriately; looking for strategies and best practices in tragedy response to bring back to their organization; and sustaining a national volunteer tragedy response network. By the end of the introductory exercise, the group had established shared metrics of success for the Think Tank meeting and created an initial Stakeholder Mapping of individuals and organizations considered essential to the success of a national volunteer tragedy response network.

Once participant learning objectives and initial stakeholders were identified, participants were given anonymized responses from the pre-meeting questionnaire as a writing prompt for a Purpose & Possibility statement. The objective of the Purpose & Possibility is to solicit statements from individual participants about what they believe the focus of the national volunteer tragedy response network should be and the activities they believe the network should undertake.¹¹

¹⁰ Think Tank Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Responses:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13rgTHVUQfGJrbogX1rVvoPHdLOT47b1EKLfPdXsvZ1c/edit?usp=sharing>

¹¹https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uQ7ihy5vnRolOgQWzHqZIPK-r4tOUG5_1LasFGB0xMo/edit?usp=sharing, p.4-5

Because there were many points in common across individual purpose and possibility statements, a subset of the results from the activity are organized below according to **Who?** the network consists of; **What?** types of activity the network undertakes; **Why?** the network exists and chooses to undertake a specific set of activities; **When?** the network is expected to be operational; and **How?** or in what manner, the network is expected to operate.

Who:

- A network
- team of cultural heritage specialists trained to respond to tragedy
- A network of community partnerships with a shared responsibility
- a multifaceted collaboration of institutions and individuals that is responsive and sensitive to a variety of tragedies that occur
- an interconnected web of professionals and institutions from the archival and related fields

What:

- Support institutions
- Support archivists
- Create something sustainable
- Create a toolkit
- supports the documentation of community tragedy.
- Immediate networked response FOR cultural heritage PROFESSIONALS across organizational types
- Developing tools and policies
- Attention to emotional health, sensitive materials
- Documenting the stories of what happened, who was involved, how the community responded and the significance of the documentation
- Develop language and strategies for archivists and others to use in order to convince their organizations' authorities that this work is vital and worthwhile
- Less about policies and more about support and different ways to respond (not necessarily collect)
- resource development and experience sharing

Why:

- to offer assistance to librarians, archivists and communities responding to a tragedy
- to ensure tragedies & victims are remembered in appropriate and sustainable ways
- To respond to a tragedy scenario
- be a support system for the next institution faced with collecting tragedy

When:

- during and after a tragedy

How:

- Rapid
- Flexibility
- Adaptable
- Dispersed
- Allowing communities to find their own way

- timely, sensitive manner respectful of impacted communities
- timely, ethical, trustworthy and sensitive manner
- a culturally humble approach

After reflecting on shared purpose and possibility for the national volunteer tragedy response network, participants were asked to return to the Stakeholder Mapping. Ultimately, participants identified several major constellations of tragedy response effort that would be critical partners for any coordinated cultural heritage response including technical experts¹², service providers¹³, other Task Forces, funders, legal professionals, federal agencies, interfaith organizations, regional organizations and associations¹⁴, and national professional associations (within and beyond cultural heritage).

Once participants elaborated on the national volunteer tragedy response network Stakeholder Mapping, the discussion turned toward activities that need to be undertaken in order to fulfill the purposes and possibilities outlined earlier in the meeting. This discussion produced several major areas of activity that participants believed would be valuable for the volunteer network to undertake:

- Publicize resources that are already available through the SAA Tragedy Response Task Force
 - Create a Communication Plan
- Create additional advocacy tools to convince administration that cultural heritage organizations have to provide time and recognition/compensation for emergency and tragedy response
- Directory of responders
- Hotline
- Mentorship program
- Establishing a source of funding to form and sustain the national volunteer tragedy response network
 - With support from the same or different funding source, work with Brandon Butler, Peter Jaszi and Pat Aufderheide to develop a Code of Best Practices for Fair Use in Tragedy response
- Training for our own organizations
- Training for cultural heritage practitioners - there was agreement among participants that any directory of responders or mentorship program would require some standardized training

Once participants had an opportunity to think about specific functions of a network and the associated tasks, the focus shifted to *how* the network should work together to address the functions and associated tasks.

This discussion surfaced a shared philosophy for tragedy response work that emphasizes an “inside-out” approach, local communities, flexible best practices and clarity of communication. The “inside-out” approach begins with honest personal reflection, followed by attempts to address gaps in our own organizations’ policies regarding tragedy response, and finally externalizing valuable local resources in support of cultural heritage colleagues undergoing tragedy and its aftermath. There was also repeated

¹² One participant explained the importance of information technology professionals that can assist in developing tools and workflows for capturing specific documentary formats.

¹³ Participants provided [Reclaim Hosting](#) and [Archive-It](#) as service providers that have volunteered storage space and web hosting at low to no cost in the wake of tragedies. [Omeka](#) was named as content management content platform that has actually developed features in direct response to tragedy response and documentation needs.

¹⁴ This category includes first responders, public education, municipal government representatives, mental health professionals, local business owners, and social workers.

emphasis on tailoring response to the specific needs of the community. Participants that had undergone a local tragedy reflected on instances in which organizations and media outlets that intended to help by requesting supplies or letters of support from the public unintentionally overwhelmed the already stretched resources of the community in need. Flexibility was another area of emphasis - more specifically, disabusing the notion that there are rigid rules and workflows that can be followed in any tragedy response content. In practice, cultural heritage practitioners need clear and expedient ways to locate resources, and be given the space to determine the best course of action.

The “How We Work” session helped the participants to clarify the population that the volunteer network is really hoping to reach. The group agreed that the designated population for the national volunteer tragedy response network is the professional community of cultural stewardship professionals. However, participants also emphasized the impact of any tragedy response work on the impacted community, and to bring that awareness to work in the volunteer national tragedy response network.

Several leadership functions emerged in response to the actions outlined for the volunteer network. These included fundraising & development; training & education leads; communication leads; hotline responders; and mentorship program directors. Each of these functions can be covered by one or more people depending on funding. The workshop had to conclude before participants were able to come to agreement on how decisions might be made among network participants, or how the network participants will meet and coordinate their work.

Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Determine immediate, available capacity

The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force has invested considerable time into creating the document toolkit as well as advocating to SAA Council for resources to support initial planning and hosting for the Think Tank meeting. However, the recommendations and next steps outlined in this report hinge on additional time from Task Force members over the next few months. Before implementing recommendations or following-up on next steps, the Task Force should take stock of available capacity among members and SAA Council prior to finalizing a plan of action.

Recommendation #2: Formalize a cross-professional, cultural heritage advisory and/or planning group on tragedy response

The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force has proposed the vision and led initial discussions regarding network formation. However, in order for network planning to move forward, a new advisory or planning group should be formed with representatives from across cultural heritage stewardship such as the individuals invited to attend the Think Tank meeting.

Invitees to participate in the advisory or planning should reflect range of criteria implicit in the goals and values articulated during the Think Tank meeting including:

- Representative of subfields across cultural heritage: museums, libraries, archives, historical societies, etc.
- Knowledgeable about the structure and design of distributed networks

- Experienced and knowledgeable about tragedy response - that are both sensitive to the trauma undergone by affected communities and therefore the limited capacity for action in the immediate response to the tragedy
- Experienced and successful in grant writing and other forms of fundraising
- Willing to take ownership over the planning and design phases of the network
- Willing to dedicate a certain percent of the time to the effort before initial funding is secured
- Representative of different positions within an organization - while “on-the-ground” practitioners are likely to have invaluable experience to offer and invest in the success of the network, if the network is aimed at assisting cultural heritage organizations and not just individual cultural heritage practitioners undergoing tragedy, the advisory or planning committee would benefit from administrative perspectives as well as departmental staff perspectives

Invitations to participate in the advisory or planning group should include a clear, time-bounded charge which emphasizes research, stakeholder alignment, fundraising. Once the advisory group is established:

- Make sure any new stakeholders asked to join the Think Tank group complete the questionnaire¹⁵
- Schedule regular calls
- Shared the working Purpose & Possibilities document to all members of the group for comment and refinement

Recommendation #3: Create a preliminary alignment map

During the Think Tank Stakeholder Mapping session, participants acknowledged cultural stewardship-specific tragedy response organizations including [National Heritage Responders](#), [Alliance for Response](#), and Documenting the Now. While a full environmental scan is beyond the scope of what can be accomplished without additional funding, a preliminary alignment map¹⁶ is an activity that advisory group members can do together on calls or asynchronously with limited time investment. By creating a preliminary alignment map illustrating the ways that the network complements or overlaps with existing efforts, the advisory group can assert a coordinating role within the field at-large; create a shared understanding of the landscape among advisory group members; and identify potential partners and funding sources. An alignment map starts with a spreadsheet or other tabular data format. Advisory group members would add names from the Stakeholder Mapping produced at the Think Tank meeting, and then the group fills in additional information about those names (and others) such as:

- Mission
- Populations they serve
- Geographic reach
- Types of resources they produce
- Sources of funding

¹⁵ Think Tank Pre-meeting Questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VdQIB1eI7fHWiQGaGBUcIDWgy0Txxx_W3Dug2amVgcA/edit?usp=sharing

¹⁶ Copy of Software Preservation Network Alignment Map as example for Think Tank:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1t4FiKfKQOUM0DsXDVUw_yuUuSOguVda3s4e5pg1nfKM/edit?usp=sharing

Recommendation #4: Secure funding

There were numerous acknowledgments of ongoing tragedy response efforts outside of cultural stewardship to which the network can turn to for potential partnership as well as models for how to organize tragedy response on a national scale including first responders, American Red Cross, Everytown, and Moms Demand Action. However, Formation¹⁷ or start-up is the most resource intensive phase of community development and it will be difficult to move the idea of the network forward without a way to secure time from key individuals representing subdomains of cultural stewardship beyond archives. Advisory group members should prioritize the design and submission of a planning grant to provide resources to multiple professional organizations or organizations in order to substantively explore the feasibility of a national volunteer tragedy response network. This planning grant might include the following activities:

- **Conduct an environmental scan** that builds on the Think Tank stakeholder map and document all related initiatives, their funders, and their partners. The environmental scan should include a survey and/or interviews with representatives from these initiatives. Survey and/or interview questions should be crafted to help advisory members determine gaps in cultural heritage tragedy response resources, and subsequently, whether the network is adding a new layer of activity to an existing national initiative, or if the network should be established as a stand-alone effort. As a result of the environmental scan, advisory group members should also be able to answer the following:
 - Online resource openly available v. “contact us” model?
 - Short term “emergent” v. long-term, “advisory” > does the network only exist when needed, or does it exist on an ongoing basis?
 - Providing resources v. providing advice?
 - Overall set of policies v. support more regional-based responses?
- **Compile a comprehensive list of existing tragedy response resources across cultural stewardship.** As a secondary outcome of the environmental scan, advisory group members should produce a comprehensive list of resources already available across cultural stewardship.
- **Governance and community development training for the advisory group** that introduces community/initiative lifecycle phases (Ex. Formation, Validation, Acceleration, Transition), growth areas (Ex. Vision, Infrastructure, Engagement, Finance & HR, Governance), and models for organizing the work of the network moving forward¹⁸.

Another set of activity that reflects the “inside-out” approach emphasized by Think Tank participants is organizational training development. There is a growing body of work on “trauma-informed” approaches to organization and system-level change. Using The Missouri Model as a guide, the advisory and planning group might consider one of the broader goals of the network to be moving the field from trauma-aware to trauma-informed.¹⁹ If stakeholders agree on this goal, the planning group could use the

¹⁷ Educopia Community Cultivation Field Guide: <https://educopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CommunityCultivationFieldGuide.pdf>

¹⁸ Educopia Community Cultivation Field Guide: <https://educopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CommunityCultivationFieldGuide.pdf>

¹⁹ The Missouri Model: <https://dmh.mo.gov/trauma/MO%20Model%20Working%20Document%20february%202015.pdf>

model as a framework for additional phases of funding following the planning grant or in addition to/in parallel to the planning grant. For example:

Phase 1: Trauma-aware: organizations have become aware of how prevalent trauma is and have begun to consider that it might impact their staff and their patrons

Funded work could include:

- Compiling and sharing a body of existing resources more broadly
- Develop and pilot tragedy response awareness training for organizational leadership in cultural stewardship

Phase 2: Trauma-sensitive: organizations have begun to explore the principles of trauma-informed care; build consensus around the principles; consider the implications of adopting the principles within the organization; and prepare for change.

Funded work could include:

- Develop an organizational self-assessment for identifying strengths, resources to support tragedy response locally, as well as barriers to providing support
- Develop and pilot tragedy response training for cultural stewardship staff

Phase 3: Trauma-responsive

Funded work could include:

- Develop a “Tragedy Response Toolkit for Cultural Stewardship” combining resources from across cultural stewardship, building on the outcomes of pilot training above as well as existing resources from professional organizations, including the Task Force

Phase 4: Trauma-informed

Funded work could include:

- Design and perform a broader assessment on a selection of cultural stewardship organizations (mix of archives, libraries, museums, historical societies) to determine the impact of tragedy response training on staff and community members.
- Based on the findings from the field-level assessment, determine concrete ways that the network can fill crucial gaps in organizational capacity for tragedy response

Next Steps

Immediate (1-2 months):

- Publish meeting materials (or a subset of meeting materials) as open documentation per documentation:
 - Attendee agenda
 - Facilitator agenda
 - Shared meeting notes document
 - Transcription of session
 - Working documents (see below)
- Send out the feedback form to attendees

- Create a mailing list
 - Start a new document with a list of questions to follow-up on
- Establish an advisory group with invited participants from the Think Tank meeting

Short-term (3-6 months):

- Finalize the following:
 - A draft of the Purpose & Possibility statement to share with advisory group members [[working document](#)]
 - Initial Stakeholder List (may involve identifying additional contacts for organizations represented by thin tank participants as well as organizations mentioned in the Stakeholder Mapping)
- Finalize agenda for November stakeholder meeting and conduct the meeting
 - Categorizing activities based on “current capacity”, “planning grant”, “follow-on grants”, and “hoped-for ongoing activities of the network” [working document]:
 - Activities that can be supported in the short term, with no additional funding, by the Task Force members and broader advisory group
 - Activities that need additional funding and resources before undertaking
 - Determine *how* the work will be completed and *by whom*
- Create a preliminary alignment map
- Develop a funding prospectus that outlines a phased approach to planning, design and implementation of a national volunteer cultural heritage network for tragedy response

Medium-term (6-12 months)

- Submit two - three separate funding requests
 - Planning grant
 - Organizational training on tragedy response

“Two-Tier Tragedy Response Effort: Three-Year Roadmap”

SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force
Capstone Meeting | February 19, 2020
Final Report and Recommendations

Report prepared by: Jessica Meyerson

Why do you think it is important for SAA to participate in and support an interorganizational tragedy response effort (with both reactive and proactive streams of activity)?²⁰

“Archives are the bridge between the past and the future. In times of tragedy archivists need to document, preserve, organize and mediate. These activities require support beyond the usual day-to-day operational requirements because tragedies require a moderator to take the “jumbled narrative” and assist in weaving it “together as a cohesive story.””

“SAA is extremely well-suited to be the lead in this effort with the work the group has been doing in both archiving incidents and the memorials left behind after an incident. And, it is also a necessary effort across all types of arts and cultural organizations. The week after the TRTF meeting in Chicago, I was talking with a State Arts Council Executive Director who immediately recognized and appreciated the difference between standard disaster response and the tragedy response work that this group has been doing.”

“I think part of SAA's professional responsibilities should include being socially responsive. After speaking with some colleagues who have been “on the ground” in a community that has experienced tragedy, I began to realize how little support or guidance these colleagues had. We need to anticipate, educate, and prepare our colleagues to react and adapt to current events -- including, unfortunately, tragedies. Given SAA's national presence, commitment to archival training and education, and it's advocacy for its constituents, it's only logical that this group lead a national effort centered on tragedy response for archivists.”

“No matter how much we plan (or for those who don't plan) for a tragedy, when you are faced with documenting something that happens in your community, you need resources readily available. You also need help. Just as with disaster recovery, archivists on the front lines need the support of our professional organization and need to feel confident that they can trust the people to whom they turn at these times.”

²⁰ SAA Tragedy Response Task Force Capstone Meeting 2020 : Follow-up (Responses): <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1D9Eo2883qGcZCIJ8hcp5SZQpCMxRgjTR5cE0ECi5UJE/edit?usp=sharing>

If you had to pick one provocation to share with the SAA Council what would that be?

“I wish I could say we don't need this task force because there will not be another reason to respond to a tragedy. But we cannot stop these events. We instead need to be proactive in our ability to effectively document and record how tragedies affect our communities and our history - the history we are charged with keeping safe.”

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Warmest appreciation to members of the SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force for evolving our professional understanding of tragedy response and elevating the long-term impact of tragedy (whether experienced directly or indirectly) on human lives. Special thanks to Lisa Calahan and Felicia Owens for your coordination and communication. Many thanks to SAA Council for approving the funds that sponsored my role as facilitator.

Introduction

In August 2019, the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force²¹ hosted a Think Tank Meeting, sponsored by SAA Council, with invited participants and members of the task force during the SAA's Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas²². Key outcomes of the Think Tank meeting included a stakeholder mapping; a purpose & possibility statement for a national, volunteer tragedy response network; and a set of four recommendations for the Tragedy Response Task Force including:

Recommendation #1: Determine immediate, available capacity

Recommendation #2: Formalize a cross-professional, cultural heritage advisory and/or planning group on tragedy response

Recommendation #3: Create a preliminary alignment map

Recommendation #4: Secure funding

The 2019 Think Tank Meeting expanded the discussion of tragedy response within SAA, engaging both invited participants (with professional experience responding to tragic events) and participants of the annual meeting with an interest in helping to shape the discussion. While the task force agrees that it was critical for the Think Tank to embrace polyvocality, they were cognizant of scope creep and decided to anchor their remaining activities in the scope of their initial charge:

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.

Task Force Chair, Lisa Calahan, invited Jessica Meyerson to work with the task force a second time to develop an agenda for a Capstone meeting with members of the task force and an intentionally small number of invited guests including Tom Claerson, Kathleen Rennie, Stephen Booth, Felicia Owens, Lauren Otis, Rebecca Elder, and Kate Hudja. Limiting the size of the meeting and knowing the names of the attendees in advance gave organizers a high degree of specificity and control over the agenda -- allowing a tighter coupling between activities and objectives. Planning discussions leading up to the Capstone meeting revealed a growing consensus among the task force members regarding the need for council recommendations to map directly to existing strategic priorities for the Society and to leverage the association's existing governance mechanisms. Organizers incorporated lessons from the Think Tank meeting and extended the time spent building shared context that included the task force origin story, the results of the think tank meeting, and the desired outcomes of the Capstone meeting.

²¹ The task force was established by SAA leadership to address the increasing frequency of human-induced tragedy and environmental disasters. The Task Force initiated their work by researching best practices and reaching out to colleagues within and beyond the archival community that had experience in tragedy response. Research and synthesis of best practices for tragedy response resulted in the Task Force's publication of the [Tragedy Response toolkit drafts](#).

²² The planning process, outcomes, and recommendations resulting from the Think Tank are documented in the Think Tank final report entitled "Exploring Feasibility and Readiness for a National Volunteer Tragedy Response Network": <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o8X83yIfuWEndTunjfaeUvz3v5GFXFCwzyPHf3-B1c4/edit?usp=sharing>

Similar to the Think Tank meeting, Meyerson developed a pre-meeting questionnaire²³ that was sent to invited participants three weeks in advance of the Capstone meeting in order to introduce attendees to the topical areas of focus, gather initial ideas regarding sustainable rapid response, and begin to articulate next steps in terms of the society's strategic priorities. Organizers used responses²⁴ to refine the facilitator agenda and inform the resulting roadmap for tragedy response within SAA.

All transcribed notes and materials resulting from the Think Tank are located in a single folder²⁵ that should be migrated to the Task Force workspace. This report outlines the structure and outcomes from the Capstone meeting as well as recommendations and next steps.

²³ Capstone Pre-meeting Questionnaire:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1VdQIB1eI7fHWiQGaGBUclDWgy0Txxx_W3Dug2amVgcA/edit?usp=sharing

²⁴ Capstone Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Responses:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13rgTHVUQfGJrbogX1rVvoPHdLOT47b1EKLfPdXsvZ1c/edit?usp=sharing>

²⁵

Documentation: SAA Tragedy Response Task Force | Capstone Meeting (February 2020):

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mGgBaDPx9-O5erpshu7hX5_PkxWuqlKL?usp=sharing

Capstone Meeting Objectives, Structure and Outcomes²⁶

Objectives of the Think Tank Meeting:

Convene task force members and invited attendees together to bring the task force’s work to a productive conclusion.

Prior to the start of the Capstone meeting, it was critical that every participant understood the [temporal bounds] of the task force. The lack of clarity around the limited charge of the task force contributed to the rapid expansion of scope during Think Tank meeting discussions. Recentering the discussion on available time and scope of activity for the task force allowed all participants to focus their contributions towards the design of high-level tragedy response objectives and next step recommendations for council, rather than coordinating activities that would rely on external resources and near-term execution.

Come to agreement on the steps to transition task force structure and outcomes to a permanent presence within SAA.

The Capstone meeting agenda was designed with concrete, next-step recommendations at the forefront. As the day’s discussions narrowed in on specific streams of activity (rapid response and long-term planning), there was some debate over how these streams of activity would coordinate with one another. Ultimately, participants left the details of governance implementation to council, assuming that as long as goals and activities were sufficiently described that the best means of coordinating those activities would be easier to determine.

Desired Think Tank Meeting Outcomes:

- Roadmap for SAA’s ongoing involvement in tragedy response
- Tragedy Response Advisory Committee Criteria

Participants not only accomplished all desired meeting outcomes, they produced additional recommendations regarding the interim period of time between the submission of the task force final report and council’s decision at the annual meeting.

The pre-meeting questionnaire responses²⁷ speaks to the aforementioned alignment among Capstone meeting participants. In particular, when asked to rank the importance of the four topical focus areas, attendees agreed that determining the shape and activities of rapid response and a longer-term inter-organizational Advisory Committee were the most important. Determining ways in which SAA is uniquely positioned to fill the gaps in the tragedy response landscape²⁸ was ranked as the third most important area, likely because the rapid response and advisory committee tiers of activity are presumed to be vehicles through which SAA would address these gaps.

²⁶ FINAL Feb 2020 TRTF Capstone Meeting Facilitators Agenda:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1KSAg0hUWQCFter-3gXYzdx7-b59HFneIPYmt0gNVPEM/edit?usp=sharing>

²⁷ Capstone Pre-Meeting Questionnaire Responses:
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/13rgTHVUQfGJrbogX1rVvoPHdLOT47b1EKLfPdXsvZ1c/edit?usp=sharing>

²⁸ SAA Tragedy Response Task Force Capstone Meeting: Focus Areas:
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z7OogT70D06x4eSaE6HMox6ZoKThuGIRC6G2hqG1Jg0/edit?usp=sharing>

Building on the results of the Think Tank meeting, Capstone meeting participants all worked to elaborate on the known gaps in the tragedy response landscape - providing follow-up questions (that, if answered, could provide greater clarity around resources or next steps), recommended actions, SAA functions that correspond to those actions, and stakeholders that might be involved if the recommended action are taken.

Most importantly, the meeting successfully produced a three year roadmap for SAA's ongoing involvement in tragedy response. While the recommendations and next steps outlined in the Think Tank final report featured less heavily in the Capstone meeting agenda than originally anticipated, almost all of the data that was produced in the run up to or during the Think Tank was reused in preparation for the Capstone meeting.

Think Tank Meeting Structure:

The meeting began with an overview of the goals and discussion of ground rules. As mentioned in the introduction, the Capstone meeting agenda dedicated considerably more time to the establishment of shared context than the Think Tank meeting. Topics included the task force charge, an introduction to each member of the task force with some background information on why they chose to join, task force work to date, results of the think tank meeting, and explicit articulation of the Capstone meeting objectives. The ground rules discussion provided an opportunity to acknowledge the emotional labor of tragedy response work, encouraging participants to step away from the group discussion when necessary. Requesting ground rules from the group also served as an important reminder that several of our participants did not professionally identify as archivists, and should therefore be encouraged to ask questions and request definitions. The group agreed on a "minimal device" rule, meaning devices were to be stowed during discussion sessions but could be accessed during breaks.

The overview was followed by an icebreaker in which participants were asked to select a known gap in the tragedy response landscape, document a reason why they selected that gap, and share one of their learning goals for the meeting. By the end of the icebreaker, 1) each participant had articulated the area of tragedy response activity they felt uniquely positioned to address 2) the facilitator determined the organization of breakout groups for the "Minding the Gaps" activity based on the selection of known gaps, and 3) the group outlines additional measures of success for the Capstone meeting (to be revisited by the entire group at the end of the day).²⁹

Once participant learning objectives were documented and break-out groups were identified, participants were asked to describe the gap in greater detail, including the implications of that gap at a field level. Then participants were asked to think of several questions that, if answered, would help to flesh out the gap even further. Next participants were asked to define several actions that might help to address the gap. Finally, each group was asked to prioritize or sequence their actions from more immediate to longest term.³⁰

²⁹ Notes and Transcriptions from 2020 Capstone Meeting SAATRTF: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bxKvonZWKVASTKb-Fvss2UNmwwn1UcuXk7XStz69mGE/edit?usp=sharing>

³⁰ Known Gaps in the Tragedy Response Landscape: SAATRTF 2020 Capstone Meeting: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BcnRQUFaqXFXiChat1C3sFrLi4ZctlECVMmPc5Y14dM/edit?usp=sharing>

Following the elaboration on known gaps in the tragedy response landscape, participants were asked to take steps towards “Filling the Gaps” by framing the recommended actions in terms of the Society of American Archivists’ core functions described in the society’s vision, mission, and values.³¹

Below is an example of the mapping between SAA core functions and the detailed description of the “Lack of Training” known gap area.

| | |
|--|---|
| Known gap area | “Lack of training and experience across the field” |
| Elaboration of the gap | Leadership training would include proactive planning; raising awareness; team building; asserting themselves into a crisis leadership: program; identifying key archivists to lend expertise; ambassadors; trust/clear expectations. If leaders WERE trained, they would understand the importance of tragedy/crisis response; setting/approving policies and procedures; and networking connections. |
| Questions | Lack of programmatic training is an issue of structure and protocols - where do you start? What is the level of activation? Who does what? |
| Actions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Coordination across allied organizations ● Promote or make training open across allied organizations ● Encourage enhancing training descriptions for applicability ● Provide a variety of training - practical and theoretical and determine the audience level ● Identify key affiliated sectors ● Appoint ambassadors who work to train, advocate, connect, facilitate |
| SAA Functions that support the actions suggested to fill this gap | Training, Fostering collaboration, Publication, Advocacy, Representing |
| SAA Strategic Goals³² | Goal #2: Enhancing Professional Growth, Goal #3: Advancing the Field |

The final task in the “Filling the Gaps” exercise was to revisit the list of stakeholders produced during the Think Tank meeting and to map stakeholders to recommended actions. The purpose of this last task was to remind the group that potential stakeholders for tragedy response have already been identified and that the more challenging question is *how* and *when* to collaborate with each potential stakeholder group.

Once participants had the opportunity to revisit and workshop the known gaps in the tragedy response landscape, the discussion turned toward the goals and activities of each tier within a two-tier tragedy response effort within SAA. The session entitled “Establishing and Sustaining Permeable Boundaries for Tragedy Response Part I” began by elaborating on characteristics of rapid response and transitioned to goals and activities. Capstone meeting participants pointed out the need to articulate a set of high-level

³¹Society of American Archivists. Strategic Plan: <https://www2.archivists.org/governance/strategic-plan>

³² Society of American Archivists. Strategic Plan 2020-2022: <https://www2.archivists.org/governance/strategic-plan/2020-2022>

objectives for each proposed tier prior to brainstorming activities and goals. The resulting objectives that distinguish rapid response and advisory streams of tragedy response activity are as follows:

Rapid Response Stream Objectives

- Mobilizing trusted sources
- Distributing emotional labor of tragedy response
- Provide clear communications regarding available resources
- Providing rapid response to archivists in crisis
- Represent the needs of individuals and organizations in crisis to the Advisory Committee (ie document review, etc.)

Advisory Committee Stream Objectives

- Advocacy and recognition
- Providing resources and support
- Building infrastructures
- Relationship building and cultivation

Once the high-level objectives for each tier of tragedy response had been articulated, participants were asked to brainstorm activities and goals. After groups had identified numerous activities for each tier, they were asked to prioritize the activities into three chronological buckets: “Immediate”, “Medium”, and “Long-term.” Once the groups had sorted tasks into the three broader categories, they were asked to refine those recommendations by placing them along one of four phases: “3 months”, “6 months”, “1 year”, “3 years.” The resulting timeline maps out activities for both tiers of tragedy response over a three-year period.

Throughout the Capstone meeting, participants were invited to post ideas to the “Recommendations/Parking Lot”³³ -- this space allowed the group to acknowledge and capture contributions from participants that may have been out of scope for planned discussions but could nonetheless be great additions to the final report. The parking lot made it easier for the facilitator to keep everyone on task to accomplish the desired outcomes, and also gave the participants a designated space to conceptualize and reflect on tragedy response.

The Capstone meeting wrap-up began by returning to participants’ individual learning goals for the meeting. Most participants could say they successfully addressed their learning goals which included “identifying things we can do now with limited to no funding,” “developing the roadmap for the rapid response tier,” “having clarification as to where we are in the process for the task force,” and figuring out a way to “keep the discussion and the work going.” The only learning goals that we did not address explicitly during the Capstone meeting were goals pertaining to grant opportunities and stakeholder analysis. During the planning phase organizers considered both of these topics as potential discussion points but determined that time was better spent mapping out a detailed recommendation for a permanent tragedy response effort within SAA than determining how that effort will be supported. While we only spent a few minutes during the Capstone meeting discussing stakeholders in reference to known gaps in the tragedy response landscape, organizers felt that the stakeholder mapping completed during the Think Tank meeting provides council (and any future iteration of the task force) with a sufficient starting point

³³ Notes and Transcriptions from 2020 Capstone Meeting SAATR TF, p.5
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bxKvonZWKVASTKb-Fvss2UNmwwn1UcuXk7XStz69mGE/edit?usp=sharing>

for identifying external partners. Task force members also outlined next steps for all participants including the timeline for the submission of the task force final report to council. Stephen Booth, the task force council liaison, provided an estimated time for council deliberation. A smaller group of task force members and invited partners committed to keeping the conversation going in the interim between the conclusion of the task force and the target date for council's decision (SAA annual meeting).

The day concluded with a meta-analysis of the meeting, requesting feedback on structure, content, and pacing. One major reflection shared by all participants was the challenge of equitable engagement with remote participants during a hybrid (half participants in-person and half participants virtual) meeting. Capstone meeting organizers discussed tactics for remote engagement at length during planning calls that resulted in a moderately successful approach that involved 1) a person in the room with the in-person participants that is dedicated to working with the remote team - making sure that the discussion in the room is being heard, and that the contributions of remote participants are being heard by those in the room; 2) translating breakout activities for virtual brainstorming - creating Google Doc worksheet equivalents of the Post-It's and whiteboards used by in-person participants so that virtual participants' contributions are captured as part of the meeting outputs; 3) specifically calling out virtual participants by name during each group discussion to ensure they have the opportunity to contribute their thoughts without the barrier and very real risk of interrupting someone in the room (a barrier imposed on remote participants due to signal latency).

Roadmap for Two-Tiered Tragedy Response Effort

Recommendation #1 from the SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force Think Tank Meeting Final Report & Recommendations³⁴ was the basis for scoping discussions among task force members and the Capstone meeting facilitator. Ultimately, the known term limit and the emphasis in the task force's original charge on a "standing body within SAA" placed clear limits on the immediate, available capacity of the task force to flesh out and implement additional Think Tank recommendations. Instead, the task force elected to focus their remaining time defining the objectives and activities for two parallel streams of tragedy response activity within SAA. This two-tiered tragedy response effort is meant to address the needs of the national archival community when tragic events take place (and the weeks shortly thereafter) as well as the planning and relationship cultivation activities that need to take place on an ongoing basis in order to grow capacity for tragedy response in the field more broadly. The roadmap for the recommended two-tier approach to tragedy response (rapid response and long-term planning) created during the Capstone meeting incorporates Think Tank Recommendations #2³⁵, #3³⁶, and #4³⁷ and Next Steps in parts or in whole.

³⁴ SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force Think Tank Meeting Final Report & Recommendations, pp.11-12: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o8X83yIfuWEndTunjfaeUvz3v5GFXFCwzyPHf3-B1c4/edit?usp=sharing>

³⁵ Think Tank Recommendation #2: Formalize a cross-professional, cultural heritage advisory and/or planning group on tragedy response

³⁶ Think Tank Recommendation #3: Create a preliminary alignment map

³⁷ Think Tank Recommendation #4: Secure funding

| Activity Stream | 3 months | 6 months | 1 year | 3 years |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| Advisory and Long-Term Planning | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish lines of communication with the rapid response stream of activity Lay the groundwork for trust with allied organizations Identify funding sources for "immediate"/"rapid response" activities - including travel stipends for volunteers Develop an Advisory Committee recruitment call (a few folks in SAA that in carrying recruitment efforts forward) Establish an initial set of volunteers/participants - a core group of regional organizations that work as a broader network for mobilizing resources, applying for grants, and communicating important information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding conversation - what is needed? who would be appropriate sources of funding? what is the process and timeframe for the funding request? Looking at legal risk, management/insurance risk - making sure that policy oriented action is accounted for in the toolkit or any proposed training Commission a more comprehensive literature review on crisis response that looks at other models in other sectors and distills key findings for cultural heritage Develop or design an awareness raising campaign or program - consider different types of archival repositories as audiences for the campaign Presidential Libraries, Arts Archives - attempt to do some tailoring to make it relevant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sharing events (where members of the overall SAA crisis response group get together for structured reflection) - possibly as part of the Annual Meeting Design resources for the organizational liaisons or crisis response ambassadors - could be an outcome of a grant funded effort Establish funding for a more comprehensive climate survey that involves survey and interviews - as part of the grant, partner/contract assessment experts Develop a tragedy response plan similar to a disaster preparedness plan - add to toolkit and socialize the idea through planned communications campaign | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design and fund the development of a comprehensive organizational (cultural heritage) crisis response training with modules or sections for management/administration, staff, researchers³⁸ Media training - learning/teaching orgs how to talk to the media in times of crisis Establish annual risk management review, and legal/insurance review for the SAA crisis management group Continuing to seek funding opportunities Develop and maintain string connections across cultural heritage organizations Maintain, update, and do calls for contributions on the toolkit Continue cultivating buy-in - complete an evaluation and synthesis of the results of the comprehensive organizational training - establish a longitudinal study that checks in with the organizations that have undergone the training and how it is impacting the organization 3-5 years following the training Develop feedback mechanisms to evaluate effectiveness |

³⁸ A multiphased approach to organizational training for tragedy response is described in the SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force Think Tank Meeting Final Report & Recommendations, pp.13-14: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o8X83yIfuWEndTunjfaeUvz3v5GFXFCwzyPHf3-B1c4/edit?usp=sharing>

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Rapid Response | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting access to available resources • Create a standardized intake form so that all the information coming in from elsewhere is standardized and can be routed to the appropriate person or organization in the directory • Create a directory with a list of available organizations • What does immediate mean? Setting expectations for a 9-5, M-F hotline, writing those expectations down (both for volunteers and for the broader community of colleagues in crisis) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • User testing for the toolkit - possibly seeking out a group just to review the toolkit and provide feedback on how to make it more useful, searchable, etc. • Iterate on the toolkit to make a clearer delineation between materials that are useful in crisis/rapid response - and resources that are aimed at preparedness planning • Recruit volunteers for "rapid responders" and provide a brief training on the current available resources (also on how to complete a standardized intake form) • Develop more extensive training and resources to support volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick user guide/infographic - making it easier and easier for colleagues in crisis to absorb the information they need quickly • Develop a longer and more comprehensive rapid response volunteer training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a regular mechanism for folks in rapid response to discuss what's working, what's not working |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|--|

Topics for Further Discussion

Bridging task force sunset and the annual meeting: There were task force members and invited participants that were concerned about leaving a gap in the archival landscape in the months between the end of their charge and the council's review of the task force recommendations. There is an ongoing need for designated points of contact that can provide information resources for tragedy response.

Funding: While the roadmap for two-tier tragedy response paints a clear picture of the activities that distinguish rapid response from long-term planning, the Capstone meeting did not explore possible funding sources for the activities described. One task for Council members or the next iteration of the tragedy response task force is to identify which activities most closely align with the programmatic investments of the Society, foundations and national funding agencies. One “parking lot” recommendation for funding included travel support for archivists to spread the word about the tragedy response toolkit at regional archives meetups.

Meeting documentation: While this report summarizes the results of the Capstone meeting, the larger body of documentation developed in the planning and execution of both the Think Tank³⁹ and Capstone⁴⁰ meetings will be valuable to the group that may be responsible for implementation of the task force recommendations including pre-meeting questionnaire responses, discussion notes, transcriptions of post-it's and worksheet responses for each facilitated exercise, the facilitator and attendee agendas for both meetings, virtual participant worksheets, meeting feedback survey responses, meeting handouts, and photos taken during the meetings.

Mapping SAA Strategic Goals to Known Gaps in the Tragedy Response Landscape

As a follow-on from the description of the “Minding the Gaps” and the “Filling the Gaps” exercises, the non-exhaustive list below recommendations made by meeting participants and task force members can be reframed in terms of SAA strategic goals.

Goal #1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

ADVOCACY

The lack of best practices for tragedy response in cultural heritage speaks to a need for national professional organizations to both raise awareness about archival organizations’ current lack of preparedness to address tragic events, and to support archivists that have undergone and/or documented tragedy in sharing lessons learned. Advocacy is also needed to mobilize funders and archival repositories to invest resources in the development and testing of a comprehensive tragedy response (or potentially more inclusively, “disaster response”) training that targets each level of an organization including executive administration, middle management, operational staff, and researchers.

Goal #2: Enhancing Professional Growth

PUBLICATION

In addition to the publication and broader distribution of tragedy response tools (such as a “tragedy response preparedness plan” modeled after a disaster preparedness plan) and other resources included in the task force toolkit, SAA can leverage its publication arm to point a discursive spotlight on tragedy response through a “Trends in Archival Practice” module or entire module series⁴¹. If conceived as a series, each module could cover a specific known gap in the tragedy response landscape representing voices from experts within and beyond archival practice. For example, Kathleen Rennie (Capstone meeting participant) is a strategic communications expert that has provided “corporate and nonprofit seminars focused on communication and strategy” and teaches in the EMBA program entitled “Strategic

³⁹ SAA Tragedy Response Task Force | Think Tank 2019: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1mGgBaDPx9-O5erpshu7hX5_PkxWuqIKL?usp=sharing

⁴⁰ SAA Tragedy Response Task Force | Capstone Meeting (February 2020): https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1K_t0ucKS0GFijRvEfsqDCSIpq93YhsyT?usp=sharing

⁴¹ Society of American Archivists - Publications - Book Publishing - Trends in Archival Practice: <https://www2.archivists.org/publications/book-publishing/trends-in-archives-practice>

Media Relations and Crisis Communication.”⁴²Dr. Rennie could be invited to contribute a chapter in a module on “crisis communication in disaster and tragedy response.”

Goal #3: Advancing the Field

COLLABORATION

The long-term effects of trauma on individuals that experience tragedy as well as the long-term effects on archivists resulting from routine exposure to documentation of tragic events are both documented issues in tragedy response. However, neither of these issues are sufficiently or even concertedly being addressed at a field level. Destigmatizing the act of asking for help or seeking mental health services requires collaboration between mental health service providers and SAA to develop guidance for managers and volunteer coordinators on signs to look for and resources for supporting staff.

EXPERIMENTATION

While the field currently lacks documented best practices for tragedy response, this gap creates an opportunity for SAA to experiment and to encourage experimentation among its members. On the one hand, archivists are one among numerous cultural stewardship professions that are part of a comprehensive tragedy response and should therefore draw on an extensive network of individuals and organizations that are already mobilizing resources effectively. On the other hand, there is so little documented about archival organizations and tragedy response that any systematic effort to develop, test, and document approaches to tragedy response will make a significant impact on policy development, training requirements, and preparedness.

Goal #4: Meeting Members Needs

CONVENING

SAA has already invested in convening the Think Tank and Capstone meetings of the Tragedy Response Task Force. The lack of data about the current state of cultural heritage readiness for tragedy response presents an opportunity for SAA to convene a sustained conversation. The two-tier tragedy response effort leans on SAA to recruit and onboard individuals from within and without SAA membership to participate. It also relies on SAA staff as a backbone to coordinate members, administer grants, and, and provide logistical support for virtual and in-person events. Felicia Owens, SAA Governance Manager, was essential to the success of both the Think Tank meeting and the Capstone meeting. Ms. Owens communicated with organizers regarding the specific needs of the space and the participants. She reserved the venue, purchased supplies, booked hotel reservations for meeting participants, set up the meeting room, and managed the camera and microphone for our remote Capstone meeting participants. Ms. Owens' perspective as a participant in the Capstone meeting was essential to making appropriate recommendations to the council regarding several topics including funding strategies to support the activities of the two-tier tragedy response effort.

⁴² Kathleen Donohue Rennie, Executive MBA Lecturer. Rutgers Business School: <https://www.business.rutgers.edu/faculty/kathleen-donohue-rennie>