

**Society of American Archivists  
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**Report: Human Rights Archives Section's  
"Rights and Records" Webinar Series  
(Prepared by Itza Carbajal, Section Chair)**

For SAA's FY 2020 budget, the Human Rights Archives (HRA) Section submitted and received a component funding request in the amount of \$2,000 to create the "Rights and Records" webinar series. This series, produced in partnership with SAA Education, provided SAA members, the archival community, and allied professionals with two free, web-based, live recordings highlighting new and ongoing initiatives and research on Human Rights issues and records and their presence in various archival settings and scenarios.

The topics explored in the webinar series included the digital and physical access to disbursed Native American Boarding School records, and the use and preservation of digital video recordings from citizen journalists and human rights observers. Below is a summary of each webinar.

**Digital Access to Dispersed Records: A Look at Native American Boarding School Records (October 2019)**

For this webinar, the HRA Section collaborated with the SAA Native American Archives Section and the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS. Christine Diindiisi McCleave and Stephen Curley from the NABS along with Dr. Rose Miron (Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies at the Newberry Library) discussed their work to identify and collect nationally dispersed Native American boarding school records as well as implement digital access to these vital records. Webinar attendees learned about broader efforts to provide access to and information about those impacted by Native American boarding schools through the NABS's digital archive. Specifically, how this digital archive brings together digital surrogates of historical documents held by individuals and institutions across the United States, including libraries, state archives, federal archives such as the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), universities, colleges, schools, and other resources. As the project continues to grow, the team at the NABS requested guidance, assistance, and support from archivists and the archival community. The webinar reached capacity of 150 participants within the first few days of registration with approximately 140 participants logging in to the live webinar. Attendee evaluations showed a majority of positive reviews for both the content and presenters. Since the webinar went live, the video has been accessed more than 360 times.

## **Citizen Journalists/Witnesses and AV Human Rights Archives (February 2020)**

For this webinar, the HRA Section collaborated with WITNESS, a global organization that helps people use video and technology to protect and defend human rights. Yvonne Ng and Arul Prakkash from WITNESS shared insights on ongoing projects, the work of equipping activists with archival knowledge and skills, and how archivists can join efforts to preserve this relatively new, but undoubtedly common form of human rights records. Webinar attendees learned how WITNESS supports activists to document and preserve human rights video. Also, the use of video footage as an increasingly prevalent form of evidence (legal or historical), and how WITNESS trains activists on archival practices and principles. This webinar had a global audience with folks from Europe, and speakers based in Prague and Kuala Lumpur. 119 people registered for the webinar, 72 people joined live with overall positive feedback on the work of WITNESS.

### **Budget**

With the allocated \$2,000, SAA provided the institutions of four presenters with an honorarium of \$500. The funding request outlined paying the individuals, but they were prohibited from accepting payment for their participation in the webinars.

At the request of one of the participating organizations, a third speaker was added to the first webinar; however, their institution did not receive additional compensation as the budget did not allocate for the expense.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The success of the webinars was a collaborative effort between the HRA Section and SAA Education, which involved each entity doing several tasks as outlined below.

The HRA Section contacted presenters, designed promotional materials, compiled event description and biographical information, coordinated speakers, and co-authored an article for *Archival Outlook*.

SAA Education coordinated registration, created event pages, provided templates, provided technical support for rehearsals and the webinars, and distributed honorarium payments.

The webinars were promoted by multiple entities via SAA communications, social media, and by other groups and affiliated organizations.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

A few roadblocks occurred, while not severe, created small hurdles for the project or slightly deviated from the vision and/or goals of the intended proposal.

- For each webinar, the HRA Section should have designated two project leads instead of one. This resulted in lack of work distribution within the Section. The sole project lead attempted to recruit Steering Committee members to assist, but unfortunately no one volunteered. (For the first webinar, the NAAS Section assigned two of their Steering Committee members to the project).
- The web streaming service is somewhat restrictive considering it lacks video streaming of presenters, collaborative features, screen sharing permissions, and video players.
- Registration was required through the SAA Education system. While free and relatively easy to do, directions were not clearly communicated from the onset causing a little confusion from interested attendees.
- Including three speakers for the first webinar caused the event to feel overcrowded.
- There was little to no time for Q&A because of this not all questions were addressed and unfortunately there is little bandwidth to coordinate a follow-up event to address questions.
- There is no established procedure for sharing webinar recordings, evaluation, transcript although the SAA Education team was open to sharing these upon request.

Overall, the series was a huge success given that it was the first webinar endeavor involving multiple SAA component groups and affiliated organizations in conjunction with SAA Education. The majority of the issues outlined above were addressed on the spot or work was adapted using the available options. Issues with the streaming service was also not a huge issue, but it did limit the ability for presenters to engage with the audience rather than presenting in a lecture style only.

### **Next Steps**

In addition to creating the series, the funding request also specified the desire to transcribe the webinars. AVP has offered to assist and has proposed hosting the webinars for free in Aviary and using the platform's automated transcription service to generate transcripts. This would allow the HRA Section to review and make necessary edits. Afterwards the transcripts can be re-uploaded into Aviary with access being provided and managed by the HRA Section within the platform. Additionally, the platform can support multiple transcripts for a given webinar, which would allow for transcript translation into multiple languages.

The HRA Section is interested in pursuing this offer and would like to coordinate with AVP and SAA Education in the foreseeable future to chart a path forward in order to provide greater access to the webinars. In particular, this attention to exploring captioning and translation will expand the reach of SAA beyond English dominant and oral language speakers. For example, given the diversity of Indigenous languages in North America translation work through captions would facilitate wider reach by the webinar collaborators as well as archivists working with Indigenous users and communities. By expanding on the work of the webinar speakers and the

HRA Section, these webinars will create a more accessible and inclusive online learning environment for archivists and others interested in human rights archives, documentation, and community histories.

## **Conclusion**

The webinar series affirmed our Section's goal of fostering rich, relevant, and meaningful conversations on the role and responsibility of archivists working towards the adoption of ethical and moral practices. As a learning opportunity, these webinars attracted a global audience of archivists working with sensitive materials especially those documenting period of turmoil, conflict, or forced change; archivists seeking to reimagine uses for their collections; and archivists, educators, and students seeking to learn more about preservation, usage, access considerations, and challenges of human rights related records.

By funding this project, SAA helped create new dialogue around the potential impact of archives, archivists, and the profession on the defense of human rights, well-being of people and their communities, and the betterment of earth and society.

The HRA Section would like to thank all of the presenters and their organizations listed above for sharing their time and subject matter expertise with SAA and the archival community; Rana Hutchinson Salzmann and Akila Ruffin at SAA for their service with assisting us throughout this project; and SAA Council for providing us with the funding to make this project possible.