

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
May 19, 2021  
Virtual Meeting**

**Proposal for the Privacy and Confidentiality  
Advocacy and Scholarship Award**

**(Prepared by Rachel Gattermeyer, Elizabeth Russell, and Katrina Windon, on behalf of  
the Privacy and Confidentiality Steering Committee)**

**BACKGROUND**

The mission of the Privacy and Confidentiality (P & C) Section is to provide a space to discuss privacy and confidentiality issues and their legal and ethical implications for archival practice. Understanding legal requirements and ethical standards is essential for the development of best practices; however, many archivists may feel they need more guidance and resources to handle a range of concerns such as HIPAA, FERPA, and new quandaries posed by developing technologies.

In 2019, the Privacy and Confidentiality Award was established by the P & C Section Steering Committee as a way to incentivize scholarship, workshops, software development, and other professional research into privacy and confidentiality related issues in the archival profession. Projects by individuals, groups or organizations that advance professional understanding of and design practical approaches to these issues within the two years preceding the application deadline were accepted, including: scholarly written works (published or unpublished); presentations or workshops; projects (internal and across organizations); software development; and policy and procedure development. The steering committee granted the monetary award from Section pilot funds, and the project received recognition on the P & C blog. The inaugural recipient was Itza Carbajal, whose paper examined the significance of empathetic donor relations and the impact on privacy within a collection.

In fiscal year 2021, the P & C Section Steering Committee was unable to grant the award as a result of overall budget cuts to SAA Section funding. Since the steering committee believes the need to encourage projects examining privacy and confidentiality issues has only grown over the past year, we ask the Council to ensure funding sustainability and ongoing support by establishing the Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award.

## DISCUSSION

The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award is proposed on behalf of the Privacy and Confidentiality Section as a way to promote and increase the interest in research and advocacy for topics relating to privacy, confidentiality, and access restrictions in archives.

Because of the interdisciplinary legal and ethical knowledge required for addressing privacy and confidentiality issues in archives, many archivists are discouraged from engaging in the necessary exploration of these critical topics to develop best practices and guidelines. The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award will encourage archivists to overcome this challenge and participate in moving the discussion forward. An official award, as well as associated prize money, can be very incentivizing. The financial incentive would enhance the prestige of the award, as well as offer a monetary reward to archivists who pursue this important and comparatively neglected area of the profession. Additionally, as the award is promoted each year, it will also raise awareness among archivists that privacy, confidentiality, and restriction issues are important and worthwhile topics to study.

The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award would act as a compliment to existing SAA Awards of Excellence, including the J. Franklin Jameson Archival Advocacy Award, which promotes greater public awareness, appreciation, or support of archival activities or programs, and the C.F.W. Coker Award, which recognizes achievements in finding aids, tools or projects that involve innovative development in archival description.

**Pros:** The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award will help fill a gap in archival advocacy and research, and demonstrate SAAs leading role in contributing to the important and underserved areas of privacy and confidentiality in archival practice. It will also increase the awareness of privacy, confidentiality, and restriction issues as vital topics in the profession, and encourage more engagement.

**Cons:** There is a financial component that would require continuous funding by the SAA Foundation.

## RECOMMENDATION

**THAT the Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award be established and awarded for the first time at the 2022 Annual Meeting;**

**THAT the following award description be approved:**

### **Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award**

#### **Purpose and Criteria for Selection:**

Created in 2021, this award recognizes and acknowledges significant innovation and scholarship in the area of privacy and confidentiality as it relates to archival work. This award supports the Society of American Archivists' and the Privacy and Confidentiality Section's objectives of:

- Promoting discussion of privacy and confidentiality issues and their legal and ethical implications for archival practice;
- Fostering a culture of creativity, collaboration, and experimentation across the association; and
- Advancing the field.

Recipients will be selected based on their submission of a completed application and the strength of the nomination essay and project documentation. Applications will be evaluated on:

- Innovation
- Impact
- Relevance to the award's focus on issues of privacy and confidentiality in archival work

#### **Eligibility:**

Individuals, institutions, or groups of individuals or institutions. There are no restrictions on the format in which information is presented. Both published and unpublished works produced during the preceding calendar year are eligible.

The project must have at least one component (such as an article, report, blog post, policy document, presentation, workshop, research data set, instructional materials, or software) that is or will be made publicly available.

#### **Sponsor and Funding:**

The award is sponsored by the SAA Privacy & Confidentiality Section and funded through the SAA Foundation.

#### **Prize:**

A certificate and a cash prize of \$250. For awarded projects with multiple authors or participants, the cash award will be split equally among recipients.

#### **Selection Committee:**

The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Award Subcommittee of the SAA Awards Committee comprises four members of the Society of American Archivists (one of whom shall be the current chair of the Privacy & Confidentiality Section, who shall serve a term concurrent with their office) and one of the co-chairs of the Awards Committee (*ex officio*). Of the three remaining members, one shall be appointed each year by the SAA President-elect to serve a three-year term, and shall serve as chair of the subcommittee in her/his third year.

## **Application Deadline and Requirements:**

**All applications shall be submitted to SAA by February 28 of each year.**

Applications must include the following documents:

- A cover letter stating interest in the award and how the applicant meets eligibility requirements;
- Essay of no more than 500 words discussing the significance of the project and how it will advance knowledge and understanding of privacy and confidentiality issues in archival work;
- A URL link or a copy of the project's public components;
- [Click here to download the application form.](#)

Questions should be directed to the Chair of the Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Subcommittee.

**Support Statement:** The Privacy and Confidentiality Advocacy and Scholarship Subcommittee provides SAA with an opportunity to support, incentivize, and advance scholarship and innovation in the area of privacy and confidentiality, a subfield of archival work that has historically received less attention and scholarship, and that is fraught with legal and ethical questions.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** Addresses Goal 3: Advancing the Field, Strategy 3.1, Identify the need for new standards, guidelines, and best practices and lead or participate in their development; and Strategy 3.2, Foster and disseminate research in and about the field.

**Fiscal Impact:** This award would cover a \$250 annual award and printing of certificate(s) for award winner(s). The average fiscal impact of this award should mirror the fiscal impact of the C.F.W. Coker Award for Description.