

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 18-20, 2022
Chicago, Illinois**

**A*CENSUS II Update
(Prepared by Elizabeth Myers, Chair)**

Executive Summary:

The A*CENSUS II Working Group was created by the SAA Council in December 2020 to work with SAA's survey research consultants (Ithaka S+R) to design, field, and report out on the second iteration of Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States (A*CENSUS). The survey project, conducted from September 2020 to February 2023, is being funded by a National Leadership Project Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The Working Group is responsible for 1) reviewing and discussing previous survey instruments and findings to determine what information should be captured to enable longitudinal analyses, 2) identifying new areas of interest for incorporation into the survey, 3) developing thematic areas of interest for a new survey of archival institutions, and 4) assisting in identification of groups and institutions that should be invited to participate in the survey.

Membership

Cheryl Beredo, member
Paul Conway, member
Audra Eagle Yun, member
Meredith Evans, member
Jennifer Johnson, member
Meredith Lowe, member
Jamie Martin, member
Elizabeth Myers, chair

Erin Passehl Stoddart, member
Greta Pittenger, member
Aaron Ramirez, member
Thomas Ruller, member
Gayle Schechter, member
Makala Skinner, ex officio
Rachel Vagts, ex officio
Jacqueline Price Osafo, staff liaison, SAA

Past Activities

The working group met nine times from January 2021 to May 2022. Additionally, the project team leads (Myers, Vagts, Beaumont or Price Osafo, Skinner, and Wolf-Eisenberg) met bi-monthly over the same time period, or nearly thirty times. Ithaka S&R project point person Makala Skinner and Elizabeth Myers conducted additional weekly check-ins, or nearly 60 times. Meeting agendas were set by consensus of the project lead team, led by Myers and Skinner.

The working group met more frequently early on in the A*CENSUS All Archivists planning, to help determine themes and raise topical issues for the survey. Additionally, a subcommittee of the working group contracted with and executed a branding plan for the A*CENSUS II rollout (June - July 2021). That process was also chaired by Elizabeth Myers, and included Makala Skinner, Meredith Evans, Jennifer Johnson, and Nancy Beaumont. The working group had access to each survey before distribution and provided important feedback, in addition to nominating test survey takers who, though not a formal part of the working group, provided crucial feedback to the survey instruments. As such, each survey instrument was reviewed multiple times by multiple stakeholders.

The first iteration of A*CENSUS—All Archivists—opened in October 2021 and remained open for six weeks. 7,583 individual surveys were opened, 6,970 were started, and 5,699 were completed. Ithaka S&R has worked through the results at a high level and begun the report-back process to the working group.

The second iteration of A*CENSUS—All Administrators—opened in March 2022 and remained open for seven weeks. Though recently closed, the initial tally of completed survey responses is 676.

Response rates for both iterations of A*CENSUS II are above expectations set by Ithaka S&R, and though difficult to form an exact comparison to A*CENSUS I, the response rates are higher than the original 2004 survey.

Current Activities

The working group voluntarily formed two subcommittees between the All Archivists and All Administrators surveys that make up A*CENSUS II. The first was a marketing subcommittee, chaired by Jennifer Johnson, with Gayle Schechter, Meredith Evans, and Audra Eagle Yun. The subcommittee charge was: (1) adopt and adapt the existing communications toolkit from the All Archivists Survey, (2) develop a marketing plan that caters to the specific needs of the Administrators Survey, and (3) work with SAA staff to implement the plan. This work was well and successfully completed—a substantial reason for the successful response rate of the All Administrators survey.

The second group is the dissemination subcommittee. Chaired by Erin Passehl Stoddart, with Jamie Martin, Paul Conway, Meredith Lowe, and Thomas (Tom) Ruller as members. As formally charged, the dissemination subcommittee was established to collate recommendations on how the data from the two surveys can be further deployed and refined through scholarship and similar expression. It will:

- Examine the grant narrative and deliverables with an eye toward obligations to disseminate, share, and promote the data from A*CENSUS II;
- Among committee members and others as relevant, gather and vet pathways to dissemination, promotion, and use of the data from A*CENSUS II—including defining the relationship between CORDA and SAA with respect to A*CENSUS II; and

- Craft a clear set of recommendations that are actionable and reasonable for the dissemination, promotion, and use of the data from A*CENSUS II. Examples of suggestions include:
 - Ingestion plan and timeline for data into SAA Dataverse, and
 - A special edition of *American Archivist* with the final report and A*CENSUS II essays

The dissemination subcommittee has met and will continue to meet through 2022. Under Passehl Stoddart's leadership, the group has created a brainstorming document to capture ideas related to the promotion and use of A*CENSUS II data beyond the life of the A*CENSUS Working Group. This includes discussion around the sharing of data at the 2022 SAA Annual Meeting; the use of *American Archivist* as a tool to general and share data-based scholarship; the relationship between data results and the recently approved SAA Strategic Plan; the use and promotion of the data via CORDA; and the ingest timing of the data into SAA Dataverse.

Future Activities

- The working group will continue to meet and review survey results for both iterations, provide feedback to Ithaka S&R, read and review the grant-mandated report prior to its dissemination.
- Myers and Skinner will plan for and execute high level data results sharing at the 2022 SAA Annual Meeting in Boston.
- The working group will be called to a close in early 2023, as dictated by the grant, with a final report that includes recommendations for the SAA Council and future A*CENSUS iterations.