

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting**

May 2026

Virtual

**Establishment of Council Subcommittee
on the Future of the Annual Meeting**

Prepared by: Jillian Cuellar, Angel Diaz, Teresa Mora, Selena Ortega-Chiolero

Executive Summary

The topic of the future of the Annual Meeting was discussed at the November 2025 Council Meeting. At that time it was determined that there is a need to task a group to assess the current Annual Meeting model, explore other potential models and make a recommendation to Council as to how to reconceive the Annual Meeting to ensure it remains both sustainable and a significant benefit to our membership. The above-named members of Council were asked to draft a charge for a new group to lead this work.

Contextual Information

In the face of ever rising conference costs, SAA Council recognizes that the current Annual Meeting model is unsustainable. In light of escalating costs and evolving member needs, SAA must examine the current meeting model to ensure the continued viability of the Annual Meeting as a singular educational and networking opportunity for archivists while balancing the fiscal needs of the organization. SAA must also investigate alternative models for the Annual Meeting that will ensure organizational sustainability; meet member needs and expectations; and provide innovative engagement, networking, and educational opportunities.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities

The Annual Meeting is a singular educational and networking opportunity for archivists and directly supports SAA's Goals (2023-2025) of Meeting Member's Needs; Advancing the Field; Enhancing Professional Growth; and Advocating for Archives and Archivists.

Fiscal Impact

The estimated staff time associated with this Subcommittee is 120 hours.

Potential Benefits

Better understanding of the cost implications and potential models to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the Annual Meeting. Building confidence among membership that the organization is committed to providing an excellent meeting experience that balances affordability with fiscal responsibility.

Potential Drawbacks

None identified.

Recommendation

That SAA Council establish a Council Subcommittee on the Future of the Annual Meeting with the following charge:

Council Subcommittee on the Future of the Annual Meeting

BACKGROUND

In the face of ever-rising conference costs, and availability of alternative meeting platforms, SAA Council recognizes that the current Annual Meeting model is unsustainable. In light of escalating costs, evolving member needs, and growing awareness of the environmental impacts of in person meetings, SAA must examine the current meeting model to ensure the continued viability of the Annual Meeting as a singular educational and networking opportunity for archivists while balancing the fiscal needs of the organization. SAA must also investigate alternative models for the Annual Meeting that will ensure organizational sustainability; meet member needs and expectations; and provide innovative engagement, networking, and educational opportunities.

DISCUSSION

A thorough examination of the various factors that determine a successful Annual Meeting requires a singular focus that can be sustained for the duration of the work. A task force can provide this focus in a way that SAA Council or Staff alone cannot. This task force would call on members and staff who have strong knowledge of the diverse needs of members, understand the components of what makes a successful meeting, and bring an informed perspective on the meeting's financial implications for the organization.

RECOMMENDATION

That a Subcommittee on the Future of the Annual Meeting be created and charged per the following description:

Task Force on the Future of the Annual Meeting

I. Purpose:

The Subcommittee will develop recommended changes to the current Annual Meeting model to ensure the long-term sustainability of the conference with the goal of changes to be implemented in time for the 2031 meeting. The work of the Subcommittee will be inclusive of a diverse range of perspectives by engaging widely with membership. Its work will center fiscal responsibility to ensure the ongoing sustainability of both the meeting and the organization. Its work and final recommendations will be data-driven, allowing Council to make a fully-informed decision about the future of the Annual Meeting. The Subcommittee reports to Council and is expected to coordinate with SAA component groups and SAA staff to gather data and other relevant information.

II. Selection, Size, and Length of Term

This Subcommittee will consist of:

- Co-Chairs (2)
- Members (6)

The Subcommittee will consist of 8 members, including two Council members, at least one of which will be in their second year on Council. The second year Council member will serve as co-chair. Members will be selected by the President-Elect and include representatives from the following component groups: Membership Committee; Finance Committee; Diversity Committee; and Accessibility Committee. Additional members will include a past Program Committee chair and a SAA staff member to be designated by the CEO. Representation should include members at various stages in their career: early, mid and late (or retired).

The length of term extends from July 2026 through December 2027.

III. Reporting Procedures

The Subcommittee reports to the Council. It submits progress reports to the SAA Executive Committee on a monthly basis and quarterly to the Council (to be submitted by chair and

council liaison). A final report will be submitted to Council by December 2027 for discussion at the February 2028 Council meeting.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

Co-chairs will be responsible for scheduling meetings, assigning tasks, tracking progress, and reporting. Members of this Subcommittee will attend scheduled meetings regularly, and complete all tasks as assigned. To fulfill its purpose as described above, the Subcommittee is charged with the following:

- Understand the current Annual Meeting Model and the costs associated with the conference.
- Research similar conferences held by other affiliated and/or organizations of similar size (eg. RBMS, ARLIS, ACRL) to understand how they are addressing these issues.
- Analyze other potential models to compare benefits and drawbacks of each, based on factors including cost, location, size, and format. Example models to consider include, but are not limited to virtual only meetings; in-person only meetings; alternating years of in-person only and virtual only; regional gatherings in lieu of one national gathering; one-day registration options; alternative conference venues; or a cap on registration.
- Providing opportunities for member engagement to better understand what members most value in regards to the Annual Meeting. Examples include: holding an in-person forum at the 2027 Annual Meeting; community bulletin board at the 2027 Annual Meeting to solicit feedback of both in-person and virtual attendees; targeted online survey of past registrants; and solicitation of feedback from key component groups.

V. Meetings

The Subcommittee will convene at the 2026 Annual Meeting in New Orleans. The co-chairs will convene monthly meetings thereafter, which will be held virtually. More frequent meetings may be required to meet the expected reporting deadline.

SUPPORT STATEMENT

The Annual Meeting is a critical feature of the SAA. It provides key member benefits, offers opportunities for learning, networking, and collaboration. It supports organizational initiatives by bringing in revenue to fund those initiatives and increasing the visibility of the organization. It is also a moment to collectively celebrate and honor the accomplishments of our institutions, supporters, and colleagues. The creation of this Subcommittee will enable SAA to make

informed decisions regarding the format of future meetings that support both the continuing health of the organization and member satisfaction.

IMPACT ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The goals of this Subcommittee are most closely aligned with Strategic Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth. The Annual Meeting provides opportunities for career development (Goal 2.1); innovative professional content (Goal 2.2); accessible, relevant education (Goal 2.3); and community building and networking (Goal 2.4). It also responds to Strategic Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs. The Annual Meeting provides opportunities for professional participation (Goal 4.2) and skill development (Goal 4.3).

FISCAL IMPACT

The estimated staff time associated with this Subcommittee is 120 hours.