

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
June 8 – 10, 2012
Chicago, Illinois**

**Review of Fellows Steering Committee
(Prepared by: Jackie Dooley)**

BACKGROUND

In the course of making the 2012 committee appointments, the following observations led me to pursue a Council discussion prior to inviting anyone to serve on the Fellows Steering Committee:

- The charge to the Fellows Steering Committee is extremely broad and, to my knowledge, few of its elements have ever been pursued by the Committee.
- When the group was established by the Council in 2002, a five-year review was mandated that was never performed: “The Council shall review the Fellows’ Steering Committee after five years (that is, in 2007) to determine whether it is effective and whether it warrants continuation. There should be thereafter a periodic review of the Steering Committee on a schedule to be determined by the Council.”
- Only two Fellows volunteered for appointment to this group, one of whom was the sole volunteer for another group for which being a Fellow is a requirement.

The charge specifies the following responsibilities:

- Organizing a program (on a topic of professional relevance and drawing primarily on the expertise and experience of Fellows, as reflected on the Fellows’ SAA email list) for the Fellows each year at the Society’s Annual Meeting;
- Advising the Council and other Society members as appropriate on fundraising initiatives (including annual giving, planned giving, and other ideas as they might be proposed) for the Fellows, as well as on how the funds that are raised might be expended;
- Suggesting initiatives (including, for example, sessions at the Annual Meeting, grant-funded projects, or agenda items for constituent groups) germane to the Society’s mission and goals that might be undertaken; and
- Serving generally as an informal sounding board in those situations in which the expertise and experience of Fellows can contribute to the well being of the Society in particular and, through it, the profession more generally.

During the first few years of the Committee's existence, its members hosted a reception at the Annual Meeting at which Fellows were solicited for monetary contributions to SAA. The receptions have continued, but the fundraising aspect was abandoned due to poor reception and limited success. Since then, the Society has continued to fund a Fellows reception, at which attendance has been respectable, at best. This past January, the Council decided to eliminate this reception for the 2012 Annual Meeting and instead include all Fellows in the guest list for the President's reception.

I queried the current members of the Fellows Steering Committee for their opinions as to the group's effectiveness. Three of the five members responded:

- "It has never served as more than a sounding board and should be disbanded, now that we have a Fellows listserv and can float any issues there."
- "The potential is there, but we haven't been able to live up to it. From a pragmatic standpoint, it has proven helpful to have the Steering Committee available to assist with questions that may come up regarding such things as what criteria should be considered when naming Fellows...but that's far different than the scope listed in the Committee's web page."
- "I would question whether [it] is serving a useful purpose. It has never functioned as originally constituted and has been virtually non-existent for the last few years. Originally, I believe that the Committee was formed to engage the Fellows...I don't believe that [it] has been a force in any of those activities. Perhaps it is the nature of the Fellows themselves. They really don't need a Committee to involve themselves in SAA activities ... the vast majority of them remain actively engaged. If the Committee is to continue to exist, I think it is worth taking a really hard look at its mission. Perhaps some of my colleagues have a different view, but I would suggest that it be discontinued at this time."

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Based on the above, I ask that the Council consider these questions:

- Has the Fellows Steering Committee served a useful purpose? If so, how?
- Is the current charge reasonable?
- Are there other ways in which such a committee could effectively utilize the experience and talents of our cadre of Fellows?
- If we were to agree that the Committee has not achieved effective outcomes to date, and if we do not foresee ways in which this could be remedied, should it be disbanded?