

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
July 2023
Hybrid Meeting - Washington DC**

Section Health Assessment Working Group

(Prepared by: Joyce Gabiola, Jasmine Jones, Dominique Luster, and Lydia Tang)

During the May 2023 SAA Council meeting, a verbal update was given on the work of the SAA Section Health Assessment working group. Since then, Gabiola, Jones, Luster, and Tang have met monthly as a group to move the project forward – analyzing and compiling a report on the member and non-member survey on SAA sections and preparing for the next phase of section health assessment. Also, during this time, Council members have engaged in a phase 1 assessment of the sections for which they are liaisons.

BACKGROUND

Over the past year, the SAA Council Section Health Assessment Working Group has been engaged in planning and supporting actions that will improve section health and nurture and sustain an effective and flexible system that supports members’ interests and needs over time. This is built on years of work of past Section leadership, Council cohorts, working groups, and SAA staff to assess and grow section support and maintenance.

At the May Council meeting, the Working Group launched the first phase of a two-phase assessment of current sections. The first phase allows decisions to be made about sections and their disposition based on sections’ recognition and standing, as [defined in the SAA Governance Manual](#). Since the May meeting, Council members have completed an assessment of their assigned sections based on the criteria for recognition and good standing and provided recommendations for how their assigned groups should proceed. The recommendation made based on the assessment and conversation with Section leadership is being brought to Council for discussion and vote. The culmination of this vote will mark the next phase of the section assessment.

DISCUSSION

The Working Group proposes to move forward with a vote on the recommendations made by the Council liaisons in conversation with section leadership. Based on a review of their recognition and standing, as defined in the SAA Governance Manual, the following sections were given recommendations other than continuation:

- Archival Educators Section (Liaison: Derek Mosley) – Recommendation: Transition to a discussion group
- Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives Section (Liaison: Derek Mosley) – Recommendation: Discontinue

- Government Records Section (Liaison: Krystal Appiah) and Local Government Records Section (Liaison: Jasmine Jones) – Recommendation: Merge
- Women’s Collections Section (Liaison: Krystal Appiah) – Recommendation: Merge
- Military Archives Section (Liaison: Rachel Winston) – Recommendation: Transition to a discussion group
- Women Archivists Section (Liaison: Rachel Winston) – Recommendation: Merge
- Human Rights Archives Section (Liaison: Stephen Curley) – Recommendation: Transition to a discussion group
- Security Section (Liaison: Stephen Curley) – Recommendation: Merge

At the culmination of the phase 1 assessment and decision-making, the Working Group will move forward with actions to support phase 2 of the assessment and the closure of this Working Group.

Timeline	Action	Who?
August 2023	Finalize guidance for sections that will transition	Working Group
August 2023	Finalize the phase 2 assessment spreadsheet and guidelines and communicate out with Council and Section leadership	Working Group
August 2023	Define and document guidelines for Council liaisons	Working Group
August-December 2023	Engage in phase 2 assessment in collaboration with section leadership	Council Liaisons
February 2024 Council meeting	Submit a report on the phase 2 assessment by Council liaisons	Working Group
May 2024 Council Meeting	Develop and submit a report to the Council with recommendations for the next steps, Section governance updates, and sustainable models, technology, and ideas for supporting SAA membership and communities of practice.	Working Group

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

For the Council Liaisons represented above

- For sections not-in-good standing, what did your conversation with section leadership uncover?
- What insights emerged during the assessment process that will help us to support section health and sustainability?
- For those sections that wish to merge, would they need to use the next fiscal year to determine the sections they are merging with, or has the discussion between merging sections occurred?

For Council members that are not the section liaison

- In reviewing the phase 1 assessment spreadsheet, what additional context could Council liaisons provide about the recommendations and their conversations with section leadership to inform your vote on the recommendations?
- Are there any disagreements with the recommendations made?

For the Council and SAA staff

- From your conversations with section leadership and from a governance perspective, what do we need to include in transition protocols and guidelines?

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the SAA Council,

1. Moves forward a vote on the Council liaison recommendations on the disposition of the sections named above;
2. Approves the next steps of the Section Health Assessment Working Group.

Support Statement:

SAA Council is tasked with overseeing the well-being and vitality of the organization. We support the flexibility of sections to sunset, merge, or transition into discussion groups and also support sections that choose to remain in their current format. We recognize the complexity and emotions bound up in exploring radical changes to the organization and understand that introducing change needs to be done thoughtfully, transparently, empathetically, and informed by data and input by the membership.

Impact on Strategic Priorities:

This work supports Goal 4. Meeting Member's Needs.

Fiscal Impact:

There is no fiscal impact on the organization to carry out the remainder of the Working Group actions beyond minimal support from SAA staff in answering questions or supporting the preparation of communication to the membership.