

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 11-12, 2014
Washington, D.C.**

**Standards Committee:
Proposal for SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force for Development
of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy
(Prepared by Co-Chairs Lisa Miller and Dan Santamaria)**

The Standards Committee recommends the approval of a proposal for the creation of an SAA-Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)/Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Joint Task Force for the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy. The idea originated with RBMS and was proposed for SAA approval by the Reference, Access and Outreach (RAO) Section. The proposal (Appendix A) follows SAA's standards development procedures.

BACKGROUND

The RBMS Task Force on Metrics and Assessment¹ was established in 2012 to examine current practices for gathering and reporting information to demonstrate the value and impact of special collections and archives. One action item in its June 2013 final report² was a "motion to ... seek advice from appropriate ACRL leaders ... regarding the formation of a task force to draft Primary Source Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education to complement ACRL's Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education and other related standards." Two members of that task force, Anne Bahde and Heather Smedberg, have been working with the RBMS Executive Committee and SAA's RAO Section leaders to create a joint task force to develop the guidelines.

As the proposal to the Standards Committee indicates, instruction using primary source material has been an area of growing interest within the archives and special collection communities over the last several years. RAO has been working in this area independently of RBMS. Its Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group surveyed archivists on their teaching activities with an emphasis on current practices, resources, successes, and needs. In its August 2013 final report the group identified a lack of "guides and/or materials for helping archivists develop successful instructional sessions and programs."³

¹ http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/

² http://www.rbms.info/committees/task_force/metrics_assessment/metrics_final_report.pdf

³ <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-with-primary-sources-working-group-final-report>

DISCUSSION

The Standards Committee recommends the development of primary source literacy guidelines for higher education because there are no information literacy guidelines specific to archival and special collections materials. The guidelines would systematically identify, articulate, and describe the many archival and artifactual literacy skills taught by instructors in special collections and archives. They would be a building block for future work in this area.

RAO submitted a first version of this proposal in April 2014. The Standards Committee believed that the proposal's concept was worthy but thought the desired implementation was unclear. It seemed to cover too many age levels while not mentioning education standards, and whether it intended to address both instructional guidelines and measurement of outcomes was uncertain. The committee returned the proposal for revision, requesting a better description of the purpose and desired outcomes to clarify the direction. The revised proposal (Appendix A) better addresses these concerns, and the committee thought that the task force description could be used to cover some residual concerns about the scope of the proposed guidelines. It also suggests that a definition of primary source literacy be an outcome of the group's work.

The timeline proposed by RAO, with the group forming in early 2015, does not mesh with SAA's appointment cycle. Two other scenarios are more likely. If the joint task force description can be approved by SAA and RBMS by the end of 2014, it might be possible to include a call for volunteers for this group in SAA's annual call for volunteers. A second option is for SAA to issue a special call later in 2015, as occurred with the joint task forces on holdings metrics and use metrics in late spring 2014. In either case, this joint task force would not begin work until September 2015.

As noted, SAA and RBMS are collaborating on two other task forces, holdings metrics and use metrics, which will officially begin work in September 2014. A third joint task force will stretch the bandwidth of both SAA and RBMS. However, we think that SAA can find the capacity to manage multiple groups working on significant standards development projects such as this. We are told that RBMS is also fully committed to this effort. The fact that this third task force would be on a separate timeline, staggered relative to the other two, should help even out the administrative load. Our experience in establishing the two previous joint task forces should also help facilitate the creation of this third group, which will require extra vigilance in coordinating with RBMS.

On the RBMS side, we understand that the RBMS leaders on this effort, Bahde and Smedberg, consulted with ACRL last year and were encouraged to pursue this approach. The RBMS Executive Committee has endorsed the creation of this joint task force. At its most recent meeting on June 30, 2014, the RBMS Executive Committee received an update on the effort; it indicated that it was ready to vote on the establishment of this committee and approval of a task force charge as soon as the SAA Standards Committee had news from the SAA side.

The RBMS Executive Committee is aware that Bahde and Smedberg will continue to work with Lisa Sjoberg, vice-chair/chair-elect of RAO, on the development of a charge, which will be

submitted to both governing bodies for review. (A draft description of the group is provided as Appendix B for the Council's information.)

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT an SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force for the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy be established; and

THAT a description of the SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force for the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy be developed for Council review and approval no later than November 2014.

Support Statement: SAA participation in the development of primary source literacy guidelines for higher education will fill a void in information literacy guidelines specific to archival and special collections materials. The guidelines will systematically identify, articulate, and describe the primary source literacy skills taught by instructors in special collections and archives.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: This addresses SAA's strategic goals of participating in new standards development (3.1), participating in partnerships (3.3), and creating opportunities for members to participate in SAA (4.2).

Fiscal Impact: The task force will require meeting space at the SAA Annual Meeting and will slightly increase the administrative load of SAA staff and infrastructure. Funding for the work of the subcommittee is not requested nor anticipated; its description will be drafted to negate the need for financial support.

Proposal for Standards Development

Proposal type: *
Development of a new SAA standard

Contact Information
Name of submitting group: RAO

Date submitted: *
23 June 2014

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Title of Standard: *
[Proposed] Primary Source Literacy Guidelines

Type of Standard: *
Guidelines

Topic(s): *
Reference and Access

Description of Standard: *

Identified Need for the Standard

In a 2004 article, Elizabeth Yakel called for a paradigm shift in how archives and special collections frame the teaching and learning that happen in their repositories, similar to how libraries have shifted their models from bibliographic instruction to information literacy competencies.¹ Over the last five years, there has been a noticeable increase in the archives and special collections literature of articles and books related to instruction in our environments (as evidenced by the database of articles on instruction maintained by the RAO Section).² In addition to published literature, numerous seminars and programs at recent SAA Annual Meetings, RBMS Preconferences, and ACRL Conferences have served as exploratory venues for

the idea of developing information literacy guidelines that are specific to archival and special collections materials and contexts; attendance at these programs has been very high and support for these ideas has been overwhelming.

This recent activity in the archives and special collections instructional community has pointed to a clear need for established primary source literacy guidelines to evaluate and improve teaching, learning, and assessment.³ For example, in their 2013 report titled “Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group Survey Findings and Recommendations” the Teaching with Primary Sources Committee of SAA’s RAO Section, recommends developing best practices for instruction stating that a “shared understanding of what makes instruction successful will help archivists improve their practices (and cut down on time needed to develop assessment methodologies).”⁴ Despite this desire for a common set of guidelines, there are currently no nationally or internationally agreed upon definitions or guidelines concerning what and how we teach in these archival and special collections settings. While broader concepts of information literacy have been carefully articulated in ACRL’s competency standards, they do not adequately address primary source literacy and instructional goals sought in archival and special collections repositories (please see the discussion under “Related Standards” below).

Expected Impact

The benefits of establishing primary source literacy guidelines are numerous. First, these guidelines would, for the first time, systematically identify, articulate, and describe the many archival and artifactual literacy skills taught by instructors in special collections and archives. Further, primary source literacy guidelines would enable the future development of meaningful assessment tools that measure student learning and instructional impact. Individual repositories will thus be able to present a clearer picture of the educational value they contribute to their institution. The guidelines will also illuminate areas of partnership and collaboration within institutions. Finally, these guidelines will facilitate further pedagogical contributions within our field, such as learning outcomes, exercises, lesson plans, and courses.

Anticipated Format and Content

The guidelines will provide a framework of best practices for teaching primary source literacy skills with a focus on instruction to college and university students. While it is anticipated that the [joint] task force, once convened, would determine the scope and specific format of the guidelines, we anticipate the guidelines would articulate the primary source literacy skills taught in special collections and archives instructional environments, as well as performance indicators that can be used to demonstrate student learning and teaching efficacy. The guidelines could also include a list of potential outcomes associated with these performance indicators, which would articulate and describe each primary source literacy skill.

Scope of Coverage/Application

While the guidelines, when established, can likely be applied in elementary and secondary settings, specific articulation of applications at the primary and secondary levels, or intentional mapping to K-12 standards such as the Common Core State Standards, is beyond the scope of the proposed guidelines. To create a set of guidelines that are applicable across these settings is not realistic given that standards vary radically from state to state and school districts are at different stages of implementing the Common Core. Further, this proposal is to develop guidelines specific to the instructional activities of archives and special collections repositories,

which could possibly be adapted to other educational settings and instructional activities, but that is not the primary goal.

These primary source literacy guidelines are a first step in the development of a cadre of tools for teaching with primary sources. Armed with a common set of guidelines, archivists and special collections librarians will be better prepared to create learning objectives, exercises, and assessment measures. While developing assessment measures and tools is beyond the scope of this proposal, it is important to note that without a commonly agreed upon set of guidelines, it is challenging for archives and special collections repositories to assess the contributions they make in the teaching and learning enterprise at their institutions. Therefore, it is hoped that the proposed primary source literacy guidelines will provide a strong first step to the future development of assessment rubrics and tools.

References:

¹ Elizabeth Yakel, "Information Literacy for Primary Sources: Creating a New Paradigm for Archival Researcher Education," *OCLC Systems & Services* 20, no. 2 (2004): 63.

² Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group, "Teaching with Primary Sources Bibliography, Version 2012 July 1," *Society of American Archivists' Reference, Access and Outreach Section*, <http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-with-primary-sources-bibliography>.

³ Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7 (2009): 41-50; Magia G. Krause, "It Makes History Alive for Them": The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 36, no. 5 (2010): 401-411; Magia G. Krause, "Learning in the Archives: A Report on Instructional Practices," *Journal of Archival Organization* 6, no. 4 (2008): 233-268; Elizabeth Yakel, "Information Literacy for Primary Sources: Creating a New Paradigm for Archival Researcher Education," *OCLC Systems & Services* 20, no. 2 (2004): 61-64.

⁴ Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group, "Teaching with Primary Sources Working Group Survey Findings and Recommendations," *Society of American Archivists' Reference, Access and Outreach Section*, http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/TPS_survey_final_report_080513.pdf.

Related Standards: *

The most closely related standards to those we are proposing are the Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education approved by ACRL in 2000. These standards are currently undergoing a substantial revision, but our conversations with the task force charged with the revision have indicated that the new version most likely will not include any more specific guidance for instruction based on primary sources. In fact, the task force leadership has suggested that a complementary standard or set of guidelines be developed by the archives and special collections community. As Peter Carini has remarked, current information literacy standards "do not cover several areas of particular importance to anyone learning to use and utilize primary sources. These areas include the evaluation of the physical artifact...the importance of audience, the information of a narrative..., date, and chronology. While some parts of IL sound relevant, these aspects are generally too limited in scope to be useful in the area of primary source research."⁵ This sentiment is also echoed in Magia Krause's 2010 article where she states: "Many archivists provide instruction to students independent of the main library in their institution and others may be uncomfortable with the term information literacy--seeing it as too broad for the type of tailored instruction archives professionals provide to students."⁶ Certainly the general guidelines provided in the ACRL standards can be applied to archives and special collections; however, more focused learning outcomes are challenging with these standards because archives and special collections use different terminology, tools, practices, and

often teach distinct skills not covered by the ACRL standards. Further, as ACRL guidelines exist now, only three of the outcomes directly address primary source research:

- Differentiates between primary and secondary sources, recognizing how their use and importance vary with each discipline (1.2e);
- Realizes that information may need to be constructed with raw data from primary sources (1.2f);
- Uses surveys, letters, interviews, and other forms of inquiry to retrieve primary information (2.3d).

Developing more specific guidelines would better equip archivists and special collections librarians to measure their efficacy and articulate their impact to broader constituencies.

References:

⁵ Peter Carini, "Archivists as Educators: Integrating Primary Sources into the Curriculum," *Journal of Archival Organization* 7 (2009): 27.

⁶ Magia G. Krause, "It Makes History Alive for Them": The Role of Archivists and Special Collections Librarians in Instructing Undergraduates," *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 36, no. 5 (2010): 405.

Related Organizations for Consultation and Review: *

This proposal was prompted by recommendations issuing from the final report of a Metrics and Assessment Task Force that was convened by ACRL's Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS). RAO's Teaching with Primary Sources Committee has also recommended the development of these standards.

ACRL/RBMS proposes the formation of a jointly charged and jointly appointed SAA-RBMS task force to develop joint primary source literacy guidelines. Precedents for working with ACRL/RBMS in this manner have included the development and maintenance of the ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access: Guidelines for Access to Original Research Materials and the recent endorsements of the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections and the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Special Collections Materials. Moreover, SAA has recently approved proposals to form joint SAA-ACRL/RBMS task forces to develop "Standardized Statistical Measures for the Public Services of Archival Repositories" and "Special Collections Libraries and Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries."

In order to develop primary source literacy guidelines, consultation with various organizations would be necessary. First, collaboration with the group rewriting the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education would be essential. Component groups in SAA, particularly the Reference, Access, and Outreach and College and University Archives Sections as well as the Archives Management and Archival Educators Roundtables should be involved in this project. Finally, the ALA/SAA/AAM Joint Committee on Archives, Libraries, and Museums (CALM) would be a helpful group to provide advice and review. We also recommend collaboration with external organizations, such as the American Historical Association, that have a vested interest in this topic.

References:

ACRL/RBMS Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Special Collections Materials
<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/archives-management-roundtable/acrlrbms-guidelines-for-interlibrary-and-exhibition-loan-of-special-collections-materials>

ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections
<http://www2.archivists.org/standards/acrlrbms-guidelines-regarding-security-and-theft-in-special-collections>

ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access: Guidelines for Access to Original Research Materials
<http://www2.archivists.org/statements/ala-saa-joint-statement-of-access-guidelines-for-access-to-original-research-materials-au>

Projected Timetable: *

Because the chairs and immediate past chairs of the SAA Standards Committee and current SAA Council members have expressed interest in supporting this standards development proposal, if the proposal can be forwarded through the next stages of the review and approval process in a timely manner, it is possible that Council could act on it during its August 2014 meeting, which would still allow time for SAA and ACRL to coordinate task force appointments through their normal processes the next spring. Thus, it is feasible that a joint task force could be charged following the SAA Annual Meeting in August 2014 with the goal of forming the joint task force by early 2015. If given a typical two-year mandate, the task force could aim to have a draft standard ready for initial public hearings by the 2016 ALA and SAA Annual Meetings. The task force could then focus on integrating feedback and soliciting additional comments from the larger archival and library communities and allied organizations during 2016-2017 with the goal of presenting by July 2017 a final draft for review and approval by the respective ACRL and SAA standards committees and executive leadership committees during 2016-2017.

Budgetary Implications: *

We do not envision any particular budgetary implications associated with the development of this standard. Even though it will require the coordination of a jointly appointed task force, we expect that task force members will be able to communicate with each other electronically using equipment furnished by their local institutions or personally owned. Ideally, members will be appointed who have the financial resources at their disposal to be able to attend the annual meetings of both SAA and ALA to facilitate face-to-face meetings, but this should not be made a requirement for membership, especially if other members can host audio or video-conferencing sessions with their own equipment. Since drafts and documents can be shared electronically via email and free online collaboration sites, there should not be any expenses incurred for photocopying or postage. Also, since the review and approval of the standard will be managed by appointed and elected SAA members, there should not be any impact on SAA staff time.

DRAFT DESCRIPTION**SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force for the Development of
Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy****I. Purpose**

The SAA-ACRL/RBMS Joint Task Force for the Development of Guidelines for Primary Source Literacy (hereafter “Task Force”) is responsible for the development of guidelines (hereafter “Guidelines”) that will provide competency standards for primary source literacy tied directly to the unique needs of archives and special collections repositories. The Guidelines will define “primary source literacy.” Focusing on instruction to college and university students, the Guidelines will consider and address students’ ability to interpret and analyze primary sources (artifactual literacy) and students’ understanding of and ability to apply effective research skills (archival intelligence) across multiple disciplines.¹ The Guidelines might also address ethical uses of primary sources, the understanding of legal and social implications of records, the cultivation of historical empathy, the contextualization of documents into broader historical frameworks, and the curiosity and appreciation for the past.

The Guidelines will be submitted for approval by the appropriate standards review committees and executive bodies of SAA and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) and ACRL’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS). The Task Force will recommend a plan for maintenance and review of the Guidelines at the time the Guidelines are submitted to SAA and ACRL/RBMS for approval.

II. Selection, Size, and Length of Term

The Task Force is charged for a two-year period that begins in September 2015 and continues through the 2017 SAA Annual Meeting. The Task Force may be charged for an additional year if SAA or ACRL standards and executive bodies determine that the Guidelines need further development before they can be approved. The Task Force will include ten members with an equal number of members appointed by SAA and ACRL according to their normal appointment procedures. A Task Force member may be a member of both organizations but will be appointed to the Task Force representing one organization only. Due consideration will be given by each organization to appointing members who have the requisite knowledge and experience in instruction within special collections and archives settings and prior experience with standards development. In addition to the committee members, *ex officio* members, and liaisons will be appointed by each organization according to its normal procedures. One member appointed by each organization will be designated to serve as a Task Force co-chair. The co-chairs will be responsible for convening Task Force meetings, leading Task Force work, ensuring that deadlines are met, following procedures of their respective organizations, and communicating as needed or required with the standards and executive bodies of their respective organizations.

III. Reporting Procedures

The Task Force co-chairs will report at least semi-annually to the chairs of the standards committees of their respective organizations. In conjunction with the chairs of their respective standards committees and in coordination with each other, the co-chairs may also schedule public hearings or conduct public comment periods or both to solicit input on draft versions of the Guidelines. The

public hearings may be conducted in person at the SAA Annual Meeting, the midwinter or annual meetings of the American Library Association, biennial ACRL conferences, and/or annual RBMS pre-conferences. Public hearings may also be conducted virtually.

If the Task Force is granted funding support from its parent or extramural organizations, the co-chairs will provide all necessary narrative reports to the SAA and ACRL offices to ensure that reporting requirements of SAA and ACRL and the funding source are met.

IV. Duties and Responsibilities

To fulfill its purpose as described above, the Task Force is specifically charged to:

- Develop a definition of primary source literacy and set of guidelines -- standards, performance indicators, and outcomes -- for teaching primary source literacy to college and university students. The Guidelines will be applicable to a wide range of institutional types that offer instructional services.
- Ensure that the language and scope of the Guidelines are appropriate to archival repositories and special collections libraries in the United States, with due consideration given to aligning the Guidelines with terminology, definitions, and formats employed in other relevant national and international standards.
- Publicize and conduct public hearings, public comment periods, or both to ensure that members of the archives and library professions have adequate opportunities to become aware of and contribute to the development of the Guidelines.
- Follow procedures outlined in SAA's *Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard* and ACRL's *Procedures for Preparation of New Standards and Guidelines* to ensure that SAA Standards, ACRL Standards, and RBMS Executive Committee can approve and adopt the Guidelines in a timely manner.

V. Meetings

The Task Force will carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, conference calls, and online meetings in accordance with the meeting policies of the respective organizations.² Face-to-face meetings will also be scheduled during the SAA Annual Meeting and the midwinter and annual meetings of the American Library Association, which is when ACRL/RBMS business meetings are conducted. Task Force members will be encouraged but not required to attend face-to-face meetings in person; if possible, however, the co-chairs will make arrangements for virtual participation in these meetings via conference call or online meeting software. Co-chairs will be required to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings held during the regular meetings of their respective organizations and will be strongly encouraged to attend (in person) the face-to-face meetings of the other organization.

Minutes will be prepared for each face-to-face meeting and any conference call or online meeting that meets policy definitions for a meeting, and the minutes will be posted within thirty days to the public websites of the respective organizations.

References

¹ These literacy domains were introduced in Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah A. Torres, "AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise," *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (2003): 52.

² See http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/appendices/app_a/Group_Support_AM and <http://www.ala.org/acrl/resources/policies/chapter8>.