

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
August 11 – 12, 2014  
Washington, DC**

**Task Force on Member Affinity Groups: Interim Report  
(Prepared by Shawn San Roman, Chair)**

The SAA Task Force on Member Affinity Groups, created by the SAA Council in May 2013, met via telephone conference on Friday, June 13, 2014. In attendance were Rachael Dreyer, Rebecca Goldman, Francine Snyder, and Jordon Steele. Also in attendance were newly-appointed *ex officio* members Mark Duffy and Bill Landis. Task Force Chair Shawn San Roman did not attend.

The task force met to address the following Council charge: “The Task Force on Member Affinity Groups is charged to consider the most effective structures to encourage flexible, inclusive, and participatory opportunities for the membership. This should include an evaluation of the effectiveness of current affinity groups (sections and roundtables) and consideration of whether a different structure would better serve SAA’s members. The group is also charged with identifying what kinds of support and resources are needed to allow current and proposed potential affinity groups to work most effectively.”

**BACKGROUND**

During the June call, the task force discussed the Council’s response to the task force’s preliminary recommendations submitted for the May 2014 Council meeting. The initial response of the Council noted that the task force may have “gotten a bit far afield of its charge.” Therefore, in order to bring the task force back on track, Mark Duffy and Bill Landis were asked to mentor the task force and redirect its efforts back to the specific issues that the Council wanted addressed.

Specifically, the Council noted the task force lacked analysis on the following important issues:

1. Identifying what kinds of support and resources are needed to allow current and potential affinity groups to work most effectively.
2. What sections and roundtables have been doing and how they have supported their members.
3. What happens when sections and roundtables succeed and how they work when they fail?

During the meeting, the task force discussed the possibility of extending its duration through the Annual Meeting and into mid-October. The rationale was to allow the task force time to directly address the points made by the Council. Specifically, extending the duration of the task force would allow it to meet with members at the Annual Meeting and specifically ask section and roundtable leaders about the issues raised by the Council.

After discussions within the task force and with SAA leaders, Danna Bell, Kathleen Roe, and Nancy Beaumont, the task force is requesting an extension on its duration until mid-October and that its final report be due in time for the mid-November 2014 Council meeting (with a due date for all materials of mid-October 2014).

## **DISCUSSION**

The initial charge of the task force was broad and open to much interpretation. As the task force met, there have been discussions of what the group's goal should be and how to accomplish that goal. After each report to the Council, the task force's mission has been further refined and articulated. Nevertheless, the task force has been focused on three main areas:

1. Recommending changes to SAA affinity group structure.
2. Recommending changes to strengthen leadership experience for affinity group leaders.
3. Recommending changes to help affinity groups meet member needs.

The various approaches of the task force members, ranging from conservative to radical, have been, perhaps, overly-considered during the initial phase of the study. The result was a delay in releasing a survey to membership. The survey focused on determining whether members knew about the role and mission of the various affinity groups and what changes, if any, would be considered by members. The task force was able to collect a good data set which captured the wide ranging nature of the SAA membership and leaders. However, the survey was not able to address the specific needs of the Council in regards to identifying the resources sections and roundtables need and "best practices" of those groups.

The next step in the task force's plan was to conduct interviews with affinity group leaders. After conducting the survey, writing the report, and obtaining feedback from the Council, the task force concluded that there was insufficient time to properly address all of the issues.

One of the newly appointed *ex officio* task force members, Bill Landis began speaking with Danna Bell, Kathleen Roe, and Nancy Beaumont about extending the duration of the task force. This extension would allow the task force to address the specific issues raised by the Council and allow the task force time to conduct interviews of affinity group leaders.

Further email discussion between the task force members concluded that the SAA Annual Meeting presented a great opportunity for the task force to conduct a discussion with affinity group leaders and interested members. To that end, the task force contacted Nancy Beaumont about the possibility of obtaining either formal or informal meeting space at the SAA Annual Meeting. The task force was able to obtain one of the "Open Forum" spots on Thursday, August 14.

The task force is confident that this forum will provide an adequate opportunity for the task force to discuss the noted areas of concern raised by the Council.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT the original term of the Task Force on Member Affinity Groups (July 1, 2012, to September 1, 2014) be extended to allow the task force to seek member feedback at the 2014 Joint Annual Meeting and to prepare a final report for the November 2014 Council meeting.**

**Support Statement:** Extending the duration of the task force allows for the collection of additional data, specifically reporting on the responses from members attending the Forum on Thursday, August 14, at the 2014 Annual Meeting.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** The work of the task force is important to all aspects of the SAA's purpose and mission. By extending the duration of the task force, the Council is ensuring that the task force has sufficient time to speak with members, section leaders, and roundtable leaders about what support structures will help affinity groups succeed and, conversely, help them when they are failing. Ultimately, the service that SAA provides for its affinity groups will determine the future health of the organization.

**Fiscal Impact:** There is no direct fiscal impact on extending the task force's term.