The SAA Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force was created by the SAA Council in January 2018. Members hold monthly conference calls to address the following Council charge:

“The Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force is responsible for 1) creating and/or compiling material for ready accessibility by archivists who are facing a sudden tragedy and 2) exploring the feasibility of creating a standing body within SAA that would update documentation as needed and serve as a volunteer tragedy response team.”

Members in attendance in meetings and participating in the Task Force are:

David Benjamin
Steven Booth (Council Liaison)
Lisa Calahan (Chair)
Jackie Esposito
Kara McClurken (Joined November 2018)
Felicia Owens (SAA Staff)

Thomas Padilla (Stepped down October 2018)
Allen Ramsey
Patricia Rettig
Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn
Susan Tucker

Documentation Toolkit:

Between January and December 2018, members of the Task Force focused their efforts on researching current best practices, compiling professional policies and best practices, and building relationships with allied organizations. As part of that process, we invited members of SAA and allied professional organizations to request types of documents that would benefit them (or would have, if available). This was an important aspect of the work conducted at the time to ensure that we were creating useful tools for communities.

Between December 2018 and May 2019, members of the Task Force drafted 31 documents based on shared examples and requests from community responders responsible for archiving the aftermath of a tragedy. In June, we circulated the drafts for two open-comment periods. The first was a directed request to those with whom we had built relationships during our research and those who had reached out wanting to help with the work. The second was an open-call announcement through SAA and also shared with RAAC, the Oral History Association, the National Council on Public History, American Alliance of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, the American Library Association, and the SAA/SSA National Disaster
Recovery Fund for Archives Review Committee. The Task Force collected and reviewed the comments during this period, revised the draft documentation as needed and submitted it to the SAA Council for approval and publication. (See agenda item 0819-1-IV-A-TragRespDocResources.)

In addition to the Documentation Toolkit, the Task Force has begun exploring the sustainability of a volunteer network. At the 2019 SAA Annual Meeting, the Task Force will be leading a Think Tank to facilitate a conversation investigating the framework for a volunteer response network. The Task Force will submit a report highlighting the outcomes and recommendations of the Think Tank prior to the Fall meeting. The following is a list of presenters slated to speak and participate in the Think Tank:

  Melissa Bartholemy, UC Santa Barbara (Isla Vista shooting, CA wildfires responses)
  Ashley Maynor, NY University (Virginia Tech shooting, writes on tragedy response best practices)
  Pam Schwartz, Orange County (FL) Regional History Center (Pulse nightclub shooting, museum curator)
  Steven Sielaff, Baylor and OHA Archives Interest Group member (oral historian and has worked on projects related to genocide and the Holocaust)
  Nadia Ghasedi, Washington University Saint Louis (Documenting Ferguson)

Although our documentation toolkit is in draft form, we openly share it for those who have immediate need due to a recent tragedy response or continued management of collections as a result of tragedy response. Archivists, allied professionals, and community members have contacted us directly, been directed to us or SAA through colleagues, and (surprisingly) have made use of the toolkit through our efforts to share it for comments/edits. Marshall County Public Library (KY), History Colorado, and the University of North Carolina, Charlotte have all contacted the Chair of the Task Force regarding use of the documentation since May 2019.

Additionally, as more media attention is focused on the aftermath of tragic events and the work of communities and archivists to document and preserve memorial material and artifacts from these events, there were several opportunities where the work of the Task Force was mentioned in the media:

- May 23, 2019. Lisa Calahan was interviewed for this article. [https://www.wfae.org/post/archiving-unc-charlottes-difficult-present-future#stream/0](https://www.wfae.org/post/archiving-unc-charlottes-difficult-present-future#stream/0)
