

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 3, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

**Discussion to Integrate Security Section
(Prepared by Council Liaison Stephen R. Curley)**

BACKGROUND

The Security Section was formed "...to focus on issues relating to the prevention of theft in archival and manuscript repositories. The mission of the Security Section is to combat theft, mutilation, forgery, hacking, and other acts that compromise the integrity of the historical record and deny access to users."

It is evident this Section is exhibiting critical areas of concern regarding member engagement and leadership retention despite numerous tactics and strategies employed to keep Section operations and activities consistently sustained. Although this Section does, indeed, possess merits and relevance to the Society, sustained inactivity has not improved.

All SAA sections are held to a basic set of requirements to ensure a strong experience for the respective section members. Section IX. C.2 of the Governance Manual outlines the requirements for all sections to remain in good standing, including holding an annual business meeting, conducting an annual election, and submitting an annual report by September 1.

DISCUSSION

For a few consecutive years, the Security Section has struggled with both member engagement and leadership continuity. The section listserv has been inactive, despite efforts by the chair to send messages and encourage conversation. The steering committee also struggles to secure candidates for each annual election. New leadership in the last year or two have unfortunately had to step down, all for personal reasons related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In July 2020, then Security Section liaison Audra Eagle Yun debriefed current liaison Stephen Curley on these two recurring shortcomings and indicated this Section may be considered for deactivation with a recommendation for integration into the Preservation Section. Subsequent discussions with Security Section leadership involved recommendations for integration with the Privacy & Confidentiality Section.

In its 2019-2020 Section Annual Report, the Security Section describes these retention shortcomings with the hopes that member engagement will increase: "...The loss of 66% of our

steering committee coming into the year made continuity a bit of a challenge. The presence of the newly elected member and a dedicated past member has hopefully set us up for better things in the near future” (SAA Section Annual Reports 2019-2020, pg.129). Moreover, although Section Officers “...expressed a desire to maintain the current role of the section as a passive information resource...they have likewise repeatedly declined to participate very often in interactive discussion on the list, while stating they do not wish the section to close or merge with another” (SAA Section Annual Reports, 2019-2020, pg. 131). Since this report, Section Officers and Volunteers have stepped down or remained largely inactive leaving Immediate Past Chair, James Havron to bear the brunt of leading Section activities and fulfilling Section requirements (outlined in Section IX. C.2 of Governance Manual).

To discuss the future of the Security Section, Governance Manager Felicia Owens and Council Liaison Stephen Curley met by phone with active section leader Jim Havron in May 2021. Section leadership was described as tenuous, with the current section chair being undecided as to whether he was going to stay on next year (2021-2022). Havron further described other conversations he has had with other past Section leaders to attempt to secure their continued involvement with the section—no indication was given that future sustained involvement was promising. Discussions involved consideration of the following possible options for the Security Section going forward:

- While activity within the section has been minimal, Security as a special interest topic is critically important for archivists, especially digital security. Despite a lack of energy toward this topic, it is important archivists recognize these issues and are proactive, to mitigate future disasters/hacker attacks/etc.
- Where can security as a topic live, an intuitive place where members (new and seasoned) will think to find this topic and go to ask questions/seek advice? Top recommendation would be Privacy and Confidentiality Section, though there is also crossover with the Preservation Section.
- Given the lack of general interest within the section, perhaps an SAA appointed group should take up security as a topic to promote across the organization/profession. This topic cuts across many groups, but initial ideas could be the CDTRWG or the Standards Committee (to develop guidelines/best practices) for a more focused impact.

Havron recommended the Security Section integrate into the Privacy and Confidentiality Section, which does have a rapport with the Security Section as they conducted a joint section meeting at the 2019 SAA Annual Meeting.

The Privacy and Confidentiality Section, given its mission, does serve a specific purpose that has evident merit when considering the intersections between archival practice and nascent technological interfacing applications. As curation modalities within archival institutions begin to integrate more widely with data management, asset storage, and delivery platforms, security concerns are an integral component to this discourse involving sustainability. It can be speculated that these shortcomings experienced by the Security Section can be attributed to the niche and specific interests of this discourse not translating to the broader audiences of the Society at large—perhaps these interests have yet to be normalized into archival practice and discourse?

It should be of note that, although this Section is exhibiting critical areas of concern regarding member engagement and leadership retention, the section leadership is comprised of a small group of dedicated professionals who want to bring security interests to the fore. This has been expressed in Section leadership's extended tenures being held and communication activities sustained in the listserv and in the Section blog (found at: <https://saasecuritysection.wordpress.com/>)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- Since the Security has been struggling for a few years now to maintain Steering Committee Leadership, how can “security” special interest topics best be supported beyond being its own section?
- What are the components of the Security Section that have relevance in one of either Privacy and Confidentiality Section or the Preservation Section? Do these recommended Section integrations make sense?
- If integration is the reasonable and most feasible solution, what should the next steps be? For Council liaisons and staff to reach out to those respective sections? Should there be specific parameters established?

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2019-2020 Section Annual Report**

Security Section

Council Liaison: Audra Yun / Stephen Curley

Report Submitted by: James (Jim) Havron

2019-2020 Steering Committee Roster

Position	Name	Term Start	Term End
Chair	James Havron	8/18/2018	9/1/2020
Vice Chair / Chair-Elect	Kenneth Fieth	8/15/2019	9/1/2020
Immediate Past Chair	Bryan Whitledge	8/1/2019	9/1/2020
Council Liaison	Audra Yun	7/29/2017	9/1/2020
Council Liaison	Stephen Curley	7/30/2020	9/1/2023

ACTIVITIES

Completed: There were no specific projects scheduled for completion this past year. The loss of 66% of our steering committee coming into the year made continuity a bit of a challenge. The presence of the newly elected member and a dedicated past member has hopefully set us up for better things in the near future.

Ongoing: Survey results in the past have been inconsistent and vague, and yielded no volunteers to assist with the few desired programs of the section. Discussions in person, both at conference and individually, and by email between officers and a significant sample of the membership have suggested that one of the main sources of value found in the section is through the use of the blog and discussion list as a source of news and topic information. Also mentioned was the programming at the annual meeting. These are ongoing. We have maintained a resource page for members and as outreach to non-members, and promoted outside events related to security.

New: When given specific examples of resources, education, collaborative projects, or outreach, sampled membership (see “Ongoing”), there has been interest. We started pursuit of these with the beginning of commemoration of National Cyber Security Awareness Month (supported by multiple government, private for profit, and nonprofit entities); beginning focused blog posts from the viewpoint of a hacker (ethical) looking at archives and their procedures as targets or security risks, and making plans for further posts on security “fails”, i.e. archivists discussing times when security hailed in their collections and the results. This last focus is based on a perceived reluctance of section/list members to discuss things going wrong, and a hope that if we initiate such discussions others may feel led to enter in. We decided to acquire some volunteers from the less experienced and student members to increase the ranks of leadership. We elected an Early-career volunteer and appointed 2 others.

STRATEGIC PLAN

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Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

Plans for advocating in 2019-2020 included increasing the security awareness among those with records and in archives, promoting understanding of the need for a secure awareness for collections, “tools” and people, and production of resources for this in the [2020] spring. Virus Time conflicted with these plans. Efforts primarily ended up as participation as archivists in public security awareness programs, the creation of a few resources for use by archivists in outreach and promotion, and establishing relationships/connections in preparation for future opportunities.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

Enhancing professional growth, in light of the programming challenges of restructured leadership and COVID, was in the form of advancing security awareness, providing education resources specific to cybersecurity and risk, and the bringing aboard of several volunteers earlier than their scheduled start times of post-meeting to establish tasks for them and arrange for mentorship.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

As with numerous other information fields, the archives profession has a small connection to the rapid technological advances that both create and endanger records. We have used the news forum of the discussion list, targeted blog posts, and a term/word education program for cybersecurity awareness to take some steps to address this deficit.

Goal 4: Meeting Members’ Needs

Members have repeatedly, through various means over three years, signaled a desire to meet annually with educational programming, while treating other methods of connection as passive means to acquire news and current information regarding security. When queried, there has been significant opposition to dissolving or restructuring the section, or merging with another. With the addition of some additional angles of news, education and resources, this level of interaction was largely met, with the addition of some additional angles to view security in news and posts. The exception was the actual annual meeting program, which had to be canceled because of concurrent emergencies that conflicted with the online version of the meeting. Elected officers are willing to accept the need for a passive resource if that is what is wanted, but wish to offer more opportunities for interactive connection to members, whether they choose to participate or not. We have brought aboard volunteers and elected leaders to help provide the human resources needed to provide opportunities of this nature. They came aboard prior to the elections to be ready to move forward as soon as possible.

ANNUAL MEETING

Number of Attendees: 12 (?) Some appeared to have left the meeting early, absent the program. There did not seem too much interest in the specifics of the business meeting per se since the agenda was mostly recognizing people past and future and listing of past and present p

Summary of Meeting Activities: Both meetings were run by outgoing Chair Jim Havron, and incoming Vice-chair/Chair-elect JoAnna Lincoln. Originally a few members logged in who later, mostly, dropped from the meeting, leaving primarily the incoming/outgoing Steering Committee

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and a few members who remained until the end or near to it. The Council Liaison, Stephen Curley, was unable to attend but had provided a video of his report (which was not playable by several software programs, unfortunately,) and the Staff Liaison, Felicia Owens, lost her connection and was unable to return. (Note: Email discussions indicated that being dropped from the Zoom session had happened in numerous meetings, often to the person acting as host.) Introductions and thanks to outgoing Steering Committee member Bryan Whitley, were made and extended. The officers explained the decision to add an Early Career Volunteer to the ballot, as well as appoint 2 other volunteers to serve with the steering committee, was made to help increase human resources and different ideas that might provide new opportunities for programs and interaction within the section and in outreach to others.

They expressed a desire to maintain the current role of the section as a passive information resource, but with a desire to work to become a more active source of information, discussion, aid, and outreach. The incoming committee, with the volunteers, was working on projects to focus on events related to security that were already in use with others, do outreach to other societies and individual repositories, interact with security focused groups in other professions, and work in cooperation with other sections or groups as the occasion presented it. Volunteers had already expressed interest in new means to share knowledge, interest people of the profession and community in general, and establish new resources to aid those in need.

The volunteers were to reach out to the section for assistance and mentorship, and the leadership requested the section to be alert for such opportunities. It was noted that several members had already stated, before we took on volunteers, that they would help, but since the section had a diverse membership, the officers called upon the membership to step up and mentor emerging colleagues in the field. Before the meeting closed, it was noted that such a call would need to be made by other means to members not present. Steering Committee members present agreed to stay for a short meeting to go over some of the specifics of their roles in the upcoming year. There is also support for maintaining resources for use with their own security needs. They have likewise repeatedly declined to participate very often in interactive discussion on the list, while stating they do not wish the section to close or merge with another. The primary need that has come from this is maintaining the list, the blog, and other content as our resources allow, and we have done this. The current officers, including appointed volunteers, feel that there are resources and issue discussions that the membership might find useful they were available, and might help members feel more inclined to participate in a more active. So although we have met the only needs really

It is difficult to describe the health of the section, although “fair to middling” might be good. Engagement is the same, and for the same reason (below). The energy is generally low unless some event takes place or something is said that is of specific interest to a member.

Link to Meeting Minutes:

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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How would you describe the health or energy of your section? How engaged are your members?

A few of the “leadership” in the past few years have discussed the role of the section. We have looked at a couple of surveys, including pre-section days, and have shared discussions we have had with members. We have asked the membership for views and received them by email, personal conversations after the annual meeting and elsewhere. The chairs this last year compared notes and came to the conclusion that almost all who were interested in speaking out, a significant portion of both the membership and other section members who liked attending our meeting programs and checking the list, wanted the section to exist, to be here. At the same time, they were not very interested in being active parts of discussions. Things stood out: a) many felt that security was something that was done for them by others and that they, personally, really didn’t have much to contribute, b) many were afraid to speak about security failures, sharing such things with others, c) Members felt that many security issues “really” belonged as part of another section or group, and d) although interested in news about security-related events, many members just felt they had no real security issues.

What forms of communication work best for your section members? (For example: email listserv, conference calls, in-person meetings)

Email lists are the general means to get messages to people, but personal interactive communication, e.g. phone calls, conference calls, in-person meetings, tend to do a better job of getting the message(s) across. Security is a complex field, and messages tend to not be interpreted as intended. Those of us in other groups who have been able to have video conferences have found them useful and a promising means of communication for us.

The steering committee has been composed of 3 members who were not assigned to the group, which creates a different dynamic. It has not been uncommon for 2 to have an email discussion and decide the third should be brought in, so the discussion has been held by individual email. The 3-way email has also been useful when schedules don’t fit, and a majority of 2 is awkward at best. Eventually we can all be on the same page. Adding the liaisons is problematic. If a suggestion for a change is made, there are 66% more contacts to be made to keep them apprized. It might be noted that on 2 occasions last year, one the Cybersecurity Term for the Day series and the “Hacker’s View of Archives” series (the last took, will take, multiple forms from list posts, blog posts, other written work and programs), well over a dozen non-section/list members asked to be notified or sent the material that would be provided to members on one program or the other, or both. They did not wish to join another section or subscribe to another list, but wanted the content.

SAA is exploring programming and topical affinities between sections. ([Learn more here.](#)) Does your section share issues or scope overlap with other sections? If so, which sections?

The most obvious shared scope sections would be privacy and confidentiality; preservation; independent archivists; lone arrangers; science, technology, and healthcare; electronic records; Human Rights Archives; Archival Management. The submitter of this report also works with security on a regular basis. He constantly works with things that are part of all of these sections.

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How does one preserve records that have been stolen, destroyed, or altered? Preserve human rights or protect collections or staff connected with sensitive issues that may require privacy standards if one cannot guarantee there will be no unauthorized access or that the documents will not be altered? Obviously, this applies to the more general privacy and confidentiality focus. And health records? Manage archives without an awareness of the threats to the records, facilities, and staff? Work solo in an institution or as a consultant or archivist in an unusual setting, and where do you turn to establish security, confidentiality and assurance of integrity? Electronic records? The basics on what constitutes assuring reliability of electronic records, at least outside cultural heritage and libraries, are radically different today than just 10 months ago. Do we keep up with them? Issues and advocacy or reference, access, and outreach, without being able to show that records are accurate according to current standards and that donors will not have to worry about the security of their gifts?

All of the people I wrote security policies and plans for or with during at least the last 5-8 years (some longer, but all for that time) have a section of working remotely from home, conducting remote communications, what steps to take if disaster, crime, structural integrity issues, contagious illness, transportation failures, or infrastructure issues made it impossible to carry out the mission from the usual location in the usual ways. In other words, they had a plan for COVID-19 in their Security Plan. That is a security issue. It is also an issue in other areas, but it is a security issue. Was this the case for our archival institutions and professional groups, or did we have to invent, improvise, etc...?

Archives are supposed to permanently preserve records and documents of enduring historical value, along with aspects of that value, regardless of the format, providing for reasonable accessibility over time. Preservation is very difficult to argue convincingly without including the ability to demonstrate the record integrity to a standard acceptable to those who may need to use them in the future (e.g. a court).

Archives are all about doing things in a secure manner that can be proven to be so. There is little point otherwise. I frankly do not know of a section that does not need security built into its purpose.

If your section were to be part of an umbrella of affiliation with other sections, how would you describe the overarching theme of that umbrella?

Archives are all about doing things in a secure manner that can be proven to be so. There is little point otherwise. Whether preserving, appraising, describing, accessing, doing outreach or advocacy, establishing secure control over the items at hand is a necessary part of the work. I frankly do not know of a section that does not need security built into its purpose.

Do you have any concerns or questions about the potential for your section to merge or affiliate?

Temporary work or meeting with others does not concern me. In fact, we welcome it. But while I think security should be a part of pretty much all we do in our profession; I have been made very aware over time that others do not feel that way. So: 1) very heavy feedback over the years from

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archivists and librarians who feel that security is not really an “archives” thing; at least it isn’t a skill we should develop like arrangement and description; 2) archivists tend to lack security awareness and cybersecurity awareness, with the result that programming and initiatives with a security focus do not engender enthusiasm; 3) as odd as it might sound to some, many archivists see security as an obstacle, even though they may not admit it to themselves. This is actually common in the world at large, at least as seen by security professionals; 4) An example: It is difficult to deal with issues of identity theft, often not well understood outside of the security profession anyway, and their connection to archives, when one is primarily concerned with preserving records that may not be digital yet. So the latter group is only concerned, at best, with security as it relates to physically securing those documents. It may be a rare archivist that can see 10 ways that identity theft is related to security of those documents, so the tendency will be to focus on the part of the preservation that is not dependent on security, and that group will see its role as the most important. (Although this is not a representative sample, I have been in 5 programs in archives professional groups that were collaborations with others on mutually agreed upon subjects, only to have the control of the programs taken completely by the others.)

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

his issue has been voiced in a few section presentations, as a question to a guest presenter at an annual section meeting, and among steering committee members during the past few years. The members of the most recent past steering committee are concerned with the lack of education about security, in its various forms, in archives training. Outside our field(s), security in general, and cybersecurity in particular, are consistently among the top 5 training and personnel issues in organizations of all types. I (Jim Havron) work in security, particularly cybersecurity, as well as archives. Where possible, I combine the two, practicing my cybersecurity audit, data recovery, intruder defense and mitigation, and general cyber hygiene training skills in cultural heritage environments. I, along with other professionals who have worked with me, have found that criminal/cybercriminal motivations and methods have long ago moved beyond the awareness of the average archivist or archival institution. While this is true of many organizations, a significant portion have at least acknowledged it and in many cases begun to rectify the situation. Unlike many of the others who have yet to become aware of the situation, the archives field has a specific security-based mission.

Why do we not have an area of our practice engaged in security and cybersecurity, with skills and knowledge coming from training by security professionals (preferably with some archival training, but with security as a primary field of practice)?

My personal security experience includes checking efficiency by hacking computers/networks/systems, picking locks, capturing radio/WiFi/magnetic wave/near frequency communications, hacking drones and using drones for surveillance, altering records without altering checksums, capturing keystrokes, rerouting Internet traffic, setting building environmental and emergency software to destroy archival collections with 3 days of soaking by water and temps over 95 degrees. It also includes rescuing people from rivers in canoes, caves, being adrift at sea for days, dealing with hurricanes and tornados, recovering from those storms

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and other disasters, keeping missions going when criminals try to stop you, analyzing email and radio calls for help to determine real ones from fakes designed to divert resources, first aid, serving as a first responder for fire, law enforcement, and disaster response in many environments. And of course, the work I have done for years in archives and cultural heritage institutions.

At the same time, security professionals, both in the profession and not, listened to statements made by members and concluded that they may not be aware of how insecure their worlds really are. A security professional who worked for several archives professional groups had discovered massive numbers and levels of intrusion, theft, corruption, and use of material for personal attacks against individuals, but could not manage to make the archives professionals see the damage or danger.