

**Society of American Archivists
Council Conference Call Minutes
October 14, 2019
3:00 – 5:00 pm EST**

Agendas and background materials for SAA Council meetings (including conference calls) are publicly available via the SAA website at: <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/reports>. Each Council meeting agenda comprises Consent Items, Action Items, Discussion Items, and Reports, and the number/letter in the minutes (e.g., II.A.) corresponds to an item listed on the agenda. The minutes summarize actions taken and the outcomes of discussions. Reports generally are not summarized in the minutes, but provide a wealth of information about the work of component groups and the staff. To view the reports—and all other background materials—see the SAA website.

President Meredith Evans called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m. on Monday, October 14. Present were Vice President Rachel Vagts; Treasurer Amy Fitch; Executive Committee Member Audra Yun; Council members Steven Booth, Eric Chin, Melissa Gonzales, Brenda Gunn, Petrina Jackson, Ricardo Punzalan, Mario Ramirez, and Meg Tuomala; and SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont, Publications Director Teresa Brinati, Finance/Administration Director Peter Carlson, and Governance Program Manager Felicia Owens.

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS

A. Adoption of the [Agenda](#)

Evans introduced the agenda. Punzalan moved adoption of the agenda, Gunn seconded, and the agenda was adopted unanimously (**MOTION 1**).

Move: Punzalan

Second: Gunn

Vote: PASSED

B. Status of Council Action List

Council members briefly reviewed and provided updates on the status of actions listed in this internal working document.

II. STRATEGIC PLANNING

A. [Current Strategic Plan Dashboard](#)

The current strategic plan dashboard was provided for reference.

III. ACTION ITEMS

A. Operating Reserve Policy / Rename Tech Fund

Fitch and Carlson presented the Council with a draft Operating Reserve Policy, as prepared by the Finance Committee, to ensure that “SAA builds and maintains an adequate level of unrestricted net assets to support the organization’s day-to-day operations in the event of unforeseen shortfalls.” The aspirational goal is to maintain sufficient reserves to cover six months of general operating expenses, which currently would be approximately \$1 million. Carlson noted that SAA currently has approximately \$600,000 in operational reserves. The Council thanked the Finance Committee for their diligent work and approved the operating reserve policy as presented.

MOTION 2

THAT the following SAA Operating Reserve Policy be approved:

Society of American Archivists Operating Reserve Policy

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Operating Reserve Policy is to ensure that SAA builds and maintains an adequate level of unrestricted net assets to support the organization’s day-to-day operations in the event of unforeseen shortfalls. The reserve may also be used for one-time, nonrecurring expenses that will build long-term capacity, such as research and development, staff development, or investment in infrastructure. Operating reserves are not intended to replace a permanent loss of funds or eliminate an ongoing budget gap. SAA intends for the operating reserves to be used and replenished within a reasonable period of time. This Operating Reserve Policy will be implemented in conjunction with the other financial policies of the organization (see SAA Governance Manual, [Appendix A. Current SAA Policies and Procedures](#)), and is intended to support the goals and strategies outlined in those related policies and in strategic and operational plans.

II. DEFINITIONS AND GOALS

SAA’s reserves will be held in two discreet funds: 1) the Operating Reserve Fund and 2) the Projects Fund. Both will be funded by retained earnings from SAA operations.

The Operating Reserve Fund is established to provide sufficient funds to maintain ongoing operations and programs for a period of six months. The target minimum to be held in this reserve fund is equal to a rolling six-month average of recurring operating costs for the immediate prior period in which the SAA annual meeting occurred.

The Projects Fund may be used to fund specific strategic or organizational goals, beyond what might be considered “ongoing operations.” (This fund serves a purpose much like the Technology Fund, which was established in 2001 and superseded by this Projects Fund.) This fund will not be subject to a target minimum.

III. ACCOUNTING FOR RESERVES

The Operating Reserve Fund and the Projects Fund will be recorded in the accounting and financial statements as Council-designated funds. Both will be funded by and available in cash or cash equivalents and/or conservative long-term bond investments. Operating and Projects reserves will be commingled with the general cash and investment accounts of the organization.

IV. FUNDING OF RESERVES

The Operating Reserve Fund and the Projects Fund will be funded with surplus unrestricted operating funds. The SAA Council may, from time to time, direct that a specific source of revenue be set aside for either fund. Examples may include one-time gifts or bequests, special grants, or special appeals.

V. AUTHORITY TO USE THE OPERATING RESERVE FUND

The Executive Director and Director of Finance/Administration will identify the need for access to the Operating Reserve Fund, confirm that the use is consistent with the purpose of the reserves as described in this Operating Reserve Policy, notify the Finance Committee, and make a recommendation for approval to the Executive Committee. Determination of need requires analysis of 1) the sufficiency of the current level of reserve funds, 2) the availability of any other sources of funds before using reserves, and 3) the time period during which the funds will be required and replenished. Should the Executive Committee determine that replenishment would likely take more than twelve months from the date of notification, it will seek approval from the full Council.

Upon funding approval, authority to implement use of the Operating Reserve Fund is delegated to the Executive Director and the Director of Finance/Administration in consultation with the Treasurer and the Finance Committee. Disbursement of Operating Reserve Fund reserves will be reported to the SAA Council at its next scheduled meeting, with a description of the rationale for the use of funds and plans for replenishing the Operating Reserve Fund to the target minimum amount (or other such level as determined by the SAA Council).

The Operating Reserve Fund will be reviewed annually by the Finance Committee and target levels adjusted as internal and external changes require.

VI. AUTHORITY TO USE THE PROJECTS FUND

The SAA Council will identify the need for access to the Projects Fund and confirm that the use is consistent with the purpose of the reserves as described in this Operating Reserve Policy. Authorization for the use of funds from the Projects Fund will require a Council resolution identifying the purpose and duration of the financial support and its relation to the SAA Strategic Plan.

Authority to implement use of the Projects Fund is delegated to the Executive Director and the Director of Finance/Administration in consultation with the Treasurer and the Finance Committee, as appropriate. Use of the Projects Fund will be reported to the Finance Committee and the Council according to the routine financial reporting schedule.

VII. REPORTING AND MONITORING

The Executive Director and Director of Finance/Administration are responsible for ensuring that the Operating Reserve Fund and the Projects Fund are maintained and used only as described in this Policy. The Executive Director and Director of Finance/Administration will maintain records of the use of funds and the plan for replenishment, and will provide regular reports to the Finance Committee and the Council.

Each year, the Executive Director and Director of Finance/Administration will discuss with the Finance Committee and the Council what additional risk factors might be considered for the organization, the impact of budgeting on operating reserve levels, and any requirements with funders.

VIII. REVIEW OF POLICY

This Policy will be reviewed by the Finance Committee every year, or sooner if warranted by internal or external events or changes. Changes to the Policy will be recommended by the Finance Committee to the SAA Council. This policy, upon every revision hereof, must be distributed by the Director of Finance/Administration to the following: the SAA Council, the SAA Foundation Board of Directors, SAA staff directors, and SAA's audit partner.

Move: Gonzales

Second: Punzalan

Vote: PASSED

Support Statement: The purpose of this Operating Reserve Policy is to ensure that SAA builds and maintains an adequate level of unrestricted net assets to support the organization's day-to-day operations in the event of unforeseen shortfalls. Standard best practices strongly advise that organizations such as SAA have appropriate reserve funds prepared for difficult financial times, whenever they may occur.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: A healthy operating reserve, including a Projects Fund, will ensure that SAA can continue to support operations and strategic initiatives during challenging fiscal times.

Fiscal Impact: As has been standard policy, the Council will allocate net gains realized at the end of each fiscal year to the Reserve Fund.

B. Funding Request: Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force

The Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force requested funding for a late fall meeting in Chicago for the group to continue work on developing a volunteer network to respond to and assist archives with tragedies as needed. The task force requested that the facilitator who led the Tragedy Response Think Tank session at the 2019 Joint Annual Meeting be contracted again to guide them through this next phase.

C. Other Action Items from Council Members

No other action items were brought forward.

IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Archival Salaries

1. [Archival Salary Advocacy Group](#)

2. [Business Archives Section Salary](#)

Gonzales brought forward the results from a survey conducted by an independent group of SAA members, which sought archivists' opinion on whether to require salary range information on all SAA-sponsored media, including the Career Center job listings. The majority of respondents to that survey agreed that SAA should require salary ranges; free-response answers provided nuance on this position. Gonzales suggested appointment of an SAA group "to serve as a hub to gather, disseminate, and develop solutions to improve compensation for the profession that is on par with our professional peers."

Booth brought forward results from a similar survey conducted by the SAA Business Archives Section, in which they sought feedback from their section members on the issue. The steering committee noted that many members were concerned that such a policy would significantly hinder the number of corporate archivist positions listed on the job board.

The Council reviewed the reports and will have an in-depth discussion at its December 2019 meeting, with the intention of deciding next steps to continue progress on this issue.

B. Update on *American Archivist* Article Controversy

Evans, Ramirez, and Brinati reported that the *American Archivist* Editorial Board continues to make progress on completing the fall/winter issue of the journal. SAA will make use of the Allen Press's "advance publishing" feature to publish the majority of the issue online as soon as the articles are ready. The Boles article and responses to it will be published online once they are received, and then the entire issue will be printed. (Journal Editor Cal Lee has invited four individuals to respond to the article, and one letter to the editor has been received.) The Editorial Board will meet in Chicago October 27-29 discuss peer review and publishing practices, and will provide a status report for the December 2019 Council meeting.

C. [Update on A*CENSUS II](#)

Evans reported that the A*CENSUS II Task Force received a positive response from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to our draft of a two-page preliminary proposal for funding of the survey. The preliminary proposal was submitted on September 24 in advance of the IMLS deadline. If SAA is invited to submit a full proposal, it will be due by March 30, 2020.

Beaumont reported that the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) provides "cooperative agreements," less-formal, out-of-cycle opportunities to partner on projects of \$25,000 or less. Based on SAA's and NHPRC's strategic priorities, Beaumont spoke with NHPRC Executive Director Christopher Eck and several program officers about a couple of possible opportunities, including conduct of A*CENSUS II; a project related to workforce issues in the profession; support for SAA's new Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment initiatives; and support for development of the association's new management education and training track. There was particular interest in the management track, and SAA will plan to submit a request for a cooperative agreement in May, prior to the Commission's spring/summer

meeting. Should SAA not be invited to submit a full proposal to IMLS for A*CENSUS II, the task force may suggest that SAA submit a grant proposal to NHPRC in fall 2020.

D. Update on Vendor Guidelines Task Force

Beaumont informed the Council that a full roster of task force members has been confirmed: Jessica Farrell (Educopia), Jennifer Johnson (Cargill), Jasmine Jones (UCLA), Jeremy Katz (William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum), Bertram Lyons (AV Preserve), and Dennis Riley (New York State Archives). The group will meet via conference call in November and will have a final report with recommendations to the Council for May 2020.

E. Update on 2019 Conference Livestreaming

Beaumont provided a preliminary report on the costs and participation rates for live streaming of the 2019 Joint Annual Meeting in Austin, noting that 35 individuals purchased the live stream package and an additional 52 individuals purchased the on-demand recordings following the meeting. A complete written report will be submitted for the December 2019 Council meeting.

F. Other Discussion Items from Council Members

No other discussion items were brought forward.

G. Executive Session (as needed)

No items were brought forward for Executive Session.

V. REPORTS

Reports are discussed by the Council only as needed and generally are not summarized in the minutes (with the exception of the Executive Committee report, which details interim actions of the Executive Committee). They do, however, provide a wealth of information about the work of appointed and component groups and the staff. To view the reports—and all other background materials—see <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/reports>.

A. Treasurer

Fitch presented the August-end financial report, which does not include the final reconciliation of Annual Meeting expenses. She noted that August 2019 is the first August since 2007 that saw a decline in dues revenue, which may be a reflection of the end of the stepped dues increase. The Council will be discussing dues at its December 2019 meeting.

B. Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment

The Council reviewed, but did not discuss, this detailed report of the Committee's progress to date.

C. Council Representative to Academy of Certified Archivists

Gunn reported that the Academy of Certified Archivists Board has approved including questions related to cultural competency in future certification exams. The Item Writing Group has begun drafting questions and hopes to implement this new aspect of the exam soon. Gunn looks forward to further updates about ACA's activities in time for the December meeting.

D. Other Reports from Council Members/What Are You Hearing from Members?

No additional reports were brought forward.

I. COUNCIL BUSINESS (continued)

A. Review of October 2019 To Do List / Talking Points

Beaumont noted that draft talking points and the to-do list would be sent to Council members via email within two days.

B. Adjournment

Punzalan moved adjournment, Vagts seconded, and the Council meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:58 p.m.