

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 8 – 10, 2015
Chicago, Illinois**

**Discussion: Council Proposal re Member Affinity Groups
(Prepared by Council Working Group Member Lisa Mangiafico and
Executive Director Nancy Beaumont)**

BACKGROUND

Working from a set of [recommendations](#) submitted by the Council-appointed Task Force on Member Affinity Groups in November 2014, an internal working group of Council members was charged to, "...explore options for simplifying component group structure while preserving the advantages and services provided by existing Sections and Roundtables. The internal working group will assess the impact of a flatter organizational structure, provisions for sun-setting component groups that become inactive, and support for virtual groups as an alternative way of organizing within SAA."

Working group members Mark Duffy, Lisa Mangiafico, and James Roth noted in their [May 2015 proposal](#) to the Council that, "SAA Council has stated its preference for flexible, agile governance structures that are responsive to members' needs. All levels in a membership association should strive for accountability and transparency, and these values are best achieved by uncomplicated structures that encourage communication to flow in ways that are appropriate to the members' organizational needs. Time-consuming administrative controls that inhibit program development, create overhead for volunteers and staff, and become a resource drain on governance budgets warrant periodic review for improvement."

The SAA Council agreed to seek member comment on the proposed changes in member affinity groups before proceeding with any changes, and a [call for member comment](#) was distributed broadly beginning on August 13, 2015.

In response to significant concerns expressed by members attending the 2015 Annual Business Meeting in Cleveland, the Council passed the following motion at its August 22 meeting:

MOTION 2

THAT the deadline for member comment on "[Proposed Changes in Member Affinity Groups](#)" be extended from September 1 to September 15, 2015;

THAT all member comments be considered by the Council at its November 2015 meeting and a second member comment period be instituted if warranted by a substantial change to the proposal as a result of that meeting; and

THAT the Council reach a decision about the proposal only after considering the second round of member comments (if instituted).

Move: Mangiafico

Second: Vagts

Vote: PASSED (Yes: Cary, Hackbart-Dean, Jules, Kiesling, McGovern, Mangiafico, Smith, Stadel-Bevans, Vagts. Absent: Pyatt, Roth.)

Support Statement: The level of concern expressed regarding the proposal at the Annual Membership Meeting and via social media is significant. Additional time for comment is warranted so that members can confer with their component groups and prepare their comments for the Council's consideration. This item will be placed on the Discussion agenda for the November 2015 Council meeting.

Appendix A (pages 4-20) includes all comments received via the SAA website and Appendix B (pages 21-41) includes all comments received via the SAA Leader List and Headquarters email inbox or sent directly to individual Council members by the September 15 deadline. See also comments on page 41 received after the deadline. (Following page 40 are PDFs of comments received from the Web Archiving, Issues and Advocacy, and Students and New Archives Professionals roundtables.)

Based on the Council's discussion of the following points – as well as our own gathering of updated statistics associated with SAA's current component groups – we would propose to develop a second draft set of recommendations for member comment. The draft would first be submitted to the Council for review and discussion either online or via conference call.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In light of the significant member feedback on the original proposal regarding changes to Member Affinity Groups and creation of Virtual Community Groups, we would be grateful for the Council's direction on the following "themes" in the proposal. Do you agree or disagree:

1. That the affinity group structure be "flattened" to remove the distinction between Sections and Roundtables and to standardize the responsibilities for bylaws, organization, and reporting, and that current Sections and Roundtables be permitted to maintain their current names.
2. That SAA members be invited to join as many member affinity groups as their interest and time permit. (Currently members may join – at no additional cost – up to two Sections and an unlimited number of Roundtables.)
3. That only SAA members may participate at any level in Member Affinity Groups (formerly sections and roundtables) and that nonmembers may participate in Virtual Community Groups. (Currently nonmembers may not belong to Sections [i.e., may not hold office, serve

on a steering committee, or vote in elections or referendums] and may not participate on Section discussion lists. Nonmembers may not belong to Roundtables but are permitted to participate on Roundtable discussion lists.)

4. That Member Affinity Groups be “automatically closed” if:
 - They fail to meet reporting, election, or other annual requirements or
 - Their membership were to fall below 4% of total SAA individual membership (currently $5,616 \times .04 = 225$).
5. Alternatively that Member Affinity Groups’ standing be determined by their level of purposeful activity. (If so, how would this be determined and by whom?)
6. That SAA proceed with creation of Virtual Community Groups based on the proposal put forward by the Council Working Group, including:
 - They are constituted by the Council under the leadership of SAA members.
 - They are provided with “information technology support and use of [SAA’s] communication platforms.”
 - Participation is open to nonmembers.
 - They are not provided with space at the Annual Meeting.
 - They will be “automatically retired if a timely request for renewal is not received or the website or listserv shows limited member activity beyond the convener’s/editor’s postings.”
7. Does the Council have certain “core principles” that should be applied to any revisions of the original proposal?

**Member Affinity Groups Proposal:
Member Comments Received Via SAA Website
(As of September 15, 2015)**

**Council Seeks Comment on Proposed Changes in
Member Affinity Groups**

UPDATE AS OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2015--Thanks to the more than 50 individuals and component groups that responded to the call for comments! The call for comments on this draft is now closed. Council members will consider all feedback at their November 2015 meeting and will issue a second draft for comment.

UPDATE AS OF AUGUST 26, 2015--In light of significant comment at *ARCHIVES 2015*, the Council has extended the deadline for member comments on this proposal until Tuesday, September 15, 2015.

August 13, 2015—Working from a set of [recommendations](#) submitted by the Council-appointed Task Force on Member Affinity Groups in November 2014, an internal working group of Council members was charged to, "...explore options for simplifying component group structure while preserving the advantages and services provided by existing Sections and Roundtables. The internal working group will assess the impact of a flatter organizational structure, provisions for sun-setting component groups that become inactive, and support for virtual groups as an alternative way of organizing within SAA."

Working group members Mark Duffy, Lisa Mangiafico, and James Roth noted in their [May 2015 proposal](#) to the Council that, "SAA Council has stated its preference for flexible, agile governance structures that are responsive to members' needs. All levels in a membership association should strive for accountability and transparency, and these values are best achieved by uncomplicated structures that encourage communication to flow in ways that are appropriate to the members' organizational needs. Time-consuming administrative controls that inhibit program development, create overhead for volunteers and staff, and become a resource drain on governance budgets warrant periodic review for improvement."

The SAA Council agreed to seek member comment on the proposed changes in member affinity groups before proceeding with any changes.

Briefly, the revised structure would support two types of member affinity groups:

SAA Affinity Groups

- All existing Sections and Roundtables would maintain their identity within SAA Affinity Groups and the current distinction between Sections and Roundtables would disappear. They would keep their current names, have access to space at the annual meeting, and receive technology support for microsites, listserv hosting, elections, and AV at the annual meeting.
- Bylaws, annual reports, and elections would be normalized for Affinity Groups.

- These groups would continue to have direct access to the Council through their liaison assignments and all groups would be able to petition the Council (with equal footing) for project or initiative funding.
- SAA members would be able to associate with an unlimited number of Affinity Groups. SAA membership would be required for membership in an Affinity Group. The current inclusion of nonmembers as Roundtable “participants” would be discontinued.
- Affinity Groups would be required to have as members at least 4% of the total membership of SAA (currently 6,201) and would have two years to reach that threshold if they are shy of it now. The Council would refine this threshold membership level as needed in the future. Affinity groups that cannot meet the threshold would be permitted to continue as Virtual Community Groups.

Virtual Community Groups

Virtual Community Groups would be created as a means of lowering the barriers to participation and involvement in networks of shared professional interest.

- Virtual Community Groups could be started with as few as 50 SAA members.
- An annual renewal request and compliance with general SAA policies on [member conduct](#) would be the only requirements to operate as a Virtual Community Group.
- No bylaws or annual reports would be required, although some monitoring would be necessary as part of an annual renewal assessment to ensure ongoing usefulness.
- The groups would be supported by SAA with listserv, microsite, and, where possible, social media technology support. They would not be assigned a Council liaison.
- Virtual Community Groups would not be eligible for space at the annual meeting.
- The groups would be managed by one or more coordinators who must be SAA members.
- Nonmembers would be permitted to participate in Virtual Community Groups.

According to the working group, “The proposal aims to find the sweet spot of maximizing dues-paying members’ privileges while controlling the costs of administering and resourcing (space and technology) our diverse bodies. A threshold membership number will guide the Council in its decision to initiate or retire affinity groups. A two-year grace period would be given to all current groups to allow the Council to fine-tune the membership threshold. Virtual Community Groups would merely have to show purposeful activity and make an annual renewal request to keep their active status.”

The Council seeks member comment on the proposed changes in Member Affinity Groups. Read the complete proposal [here](#). Provide your comments on any aspect of the proposed changes at saahq@archivists.org by September 1, 2015.

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UPDATE AS OF SEPTEMBER 16, 2015--Thanks to the more than 50 individuals and component groups that responded to the call for comments! The call for comments on this draft is now closed. Council members will consider all feedback at their November 2015 meeting and will issue a second draft for comment.

Comments

LET'S KEEP LOOKING

rbizonet - 09/15/2015 - 5:30pm

I share the concerns of many commenters regarding the value of these changes and their possible unintended negative effects. In particular, what might be lost if non-members are excluded from the affinity group listservs? As we as a profession, and an organization, are trying to become more engaged with the rest of society, and to diversify our ranks, this move seems like a step backwards, and it risks, as others have mentioned, limiting participation from donors groups, affiliated professional or community organizations, the international community, and so on. (I would also like to see current breakdowns of group composition as to members/nonmembers, as Bill Landis and others have mentioned.)

Simple numbers don't seem like an effective way to measure group "worthiness." I would rather see some other way to determine this; for example, activity or the "productivity" that Frank Boles invokes. Moreover, the removal on the limit of affinity groups one can join does not make for more engagement. There are only so many things one can realistically follow, much less participate in. If I'm joining a group mainly to do them a favor to keep their numbers up, how meaningful is that?

Suggestions made in previous comments to look at other ways to solve the meeting space and Council liaison problems -- and these are problems; I sympathize there! -- strike a chord with me as well, as do some of the proposed solutions. Having groups petition for meeting space; sharing meeting space or even collaborating, at least in part, during meetings; not to mention more efficient, effective use of Council liaisons are all reasonable ideas to look at fleshing out into alternative solutions.

I appreciate much of the intent of the proposal, but in its current form, it is not something I would like to see put into practice.

STARTER GROUPS, NON-MEMBERS, GROUP LIAISONS

jderidder - 09/15/2015 - 1:28pm

While this proposal addresses how to identify which groups to disband, it fails to address how a new group could form and gain 4% of the population. And what happens when an active "virtual community group" grows to include a decent percentage of the population, and its focus becomes critical to archives? How does that transition to an affinity group, and what becomes of the non-member participants?

Closing access to the affinity groups is a good way to lose a lot of interest and potential members, as well as to lose the cross-pollination from which great ideas and solutions emerge. I agree with others that this is a mistake. Limiting access to affinity groups to non-members (can only join 2, and of course cannot be on a steering committee) might be a potential solution.

This proposal fails to address the issue in the recommendations about there being so much overlap between existing affinity groups. I think it would be helpful for the council to create liaisons between similar groups to help them address how to coordinate and collaborate: or how to delineate between the two groups. We have a lot of duplication of effort here, and competition where we need to be on the same page as we have the same mission and concerns.

Also, I agree that such an impactful change as what is being proposed should be voted on by the full membership -- electronic voting, not the limited voting that can occur at an annual meeting.

I applaud the suggested support at annual meetings and the equalization and flattening of the hierarchical structure!

Thank you for asking for feedback, and for hearing our concerns.

CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC

Sbennett - 09/15/2015 - 12:33pm

I think the proposed changes make sense in seeking a more flexible community structure, given previous observations about and criticisms of roundtables and sections in the past (confusion, overlap, lack of activity). This will provide some clarity around how the groups work, which would allow people to join and participate in AGs with greater ease.

First, I think it's acceptable to try this experiment, knowing that in the future another iteration of Council may revise it. Since the current system is a bit of an albatross, trying out a revised structure makes sense.

Second, I hope SAA would encourage and provide ways for the AGs and VCGs to overlap and provide means of discussion and knowledge-sharing with non-SAA members, including our international colleagues, without the AG having to duplicate content. At a minimum, keeping AG listservs open to nonmembers enriches all archivists' work. I appreciate the desire to demonstrate SAA's value, but for some, an SAA membership will remain out of reach no matter how attractive we make it.

I also agree that activity and engagement with its members are an important aspect of AGs. An annual report would not be overly burdensome and would provide transparency into the work of each AG, which in turn might pique peoples' interest in a group and increase its membership.

AGREEMENT ON MEASURING YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY

eiratansy - 09/10/2015 - 3:47pm

I agree with Bill Landis, Frank Boles, and Brad Houston re: making determinations for support of groups based not on member numbers, but on between-meeting activity.

I believe that currently, there are groups that are well above the 4% threshold that are virtually dead except for putting together an annual meeting agenda and slate of candidates. On the other hand, there are groups that may not consistently have 4% of members, but which are very active year-round.

I completely support requiring affinity groups to file reports with their council liaison on a periodic basis showing what activities they are undertaking to engage their members. Failure to do this consistently for 2 years could result in decertification of a group. I think this would meet SAA's goals of ensuring that resources are not being expanded on inactive groups, while also allowing small and lively groups to flourish.

CONCURRENCE

acschi - 09/14/2015 - 4:17pm

I concur with Eira's concurrence on the importance of including the evaluation of affinity group reports as part of the evaluation. We would want both numbers and examples to evaluate the need for and effectiveness of groups. I presume that if the proposal had not included the 4% as a baseline number that members would be asking for such a number. ;)

Am I the only one who recalls lamentations only a few years ago about what poor value folks felt their SAA membership was? This proposal is to me the beginning of a move to make it clearer what my membership benefits are including active, organized affinity groups. Yet it is also offering a home (away from Facebook and other online communities that have come & gone) for online discussions,

announcements, etc. around specific topics of mutual interest to archivists. I don't want to sift through the detritus of the A&A or other general listservs for the nuggets of gold and so virtual communities are a development I would welcome.

THOUGHTS...

levittma - 09/09/2015 - 10:29am

With such a requirement and the specificity of some of the groups, some may not be able to reach the necessary threshold. This may result in one of two scenarios:

1. The group will become virtual and lose some of the great benefits of in-person meetings (and may just find a place to meet on their own at the meeting anyhow).
2. Somewhat related groups may merge to meet the number of members required, thus watering down their mission/vision as they incorporate a more disparate set of interests.

I'm not sure either of these are desirable, but understand the limited space available at our meeting venues.

/Marc

SECTIONS AND ROUNDTABLES

swoodland - 09/07/2015 - 6:47pm

I was pulled into 2 remarkable communities in the first few years after joining SAA as I began to attend the conference every year. Without the Women's Collection Roundtable and the Visual Materials Section I would have been lost in the hugeness of SAA. Now SAA is much, much larger and confusing, and it is more important than ever to have a group of real live colleagues with similar interests to reconnect with every year. The virtual connection during the year is good, but it doesn't replace a physical meeting.

it is important to me that there not be a size limitation on a group in order to have this physical meeting. Especially for members who feel their SAA connection mostly via these groups, and who belong to groups with fewer members.

As SAA continues to grow it becomes increasingly difficult to navigate; the conference changes from year to year with experiments in session formats and different venues. Something needs to remain constant and manageably small. Please don't eliminate in person meetings of sections/Roundtables/affinity groups. (The name isn't important to me, but the underlying concept is).

PROPOSED CHANGES

walstr - 09/03/2015 - 10:49pm

I agree with many of my colleagues below that the proposed changes are unwise.

1. As many have already stated, precluding non-members from joining Affinity Groups is unnecessary and will shut out the very important voices of records creators, members of allied professions, international archivists, and archivists who are unable to afford SAA dues. This move toward insularity seems deeply at odds with SAA's focus on professional advocacy and the notions of early appraisal or lifecycle management of records, and would be a step in a profoundly wrong direction for the organization.
2. Meeting space at the annual conference is crucial for small sub-communities within SAA. Only allowing larger, established groups to meet in person at the annual conference is likely to nullify an important

member benefit for many SAA members and stifle the creation of new groups within the SAA umbrella. Similarly, while I understand the motivation for creating virtual community groups, I question the necessity of having SAA sponsor these. Any group passionate enough about a topic to communicate online about it regularly is likely to do so whether or not the conversation is SAA-sponsored (see ProjectARCC and various digital preservation communities), particularly if SAA is not offering the group additional perks like meeting space at the annual conference.

I agree that a change this dramatic should be voted on by the SAA membership.

Given the number of different issues that have come up in this conversation, I would also suggest that SAA gather feedback on a more granular level through the use of a survey or voting mechanism that evaluates the membership's response to each component of the proposed changes (e.g. changing all Sections and Roundtables to Affinity Groups, excluding non-members from Affinity Groups, instituting membership requirements for Affinity Groups, creating a new category of Virtual Community Groups, and so on).

AFFINITY GROUPS

Perro2053 - 09/03/2015 - 5:28pm

I am concerned about removing the distinction between Sections and Roundtables. The roundtables are valuable as more informal, smaller groups, which are less intimidating for new members. Joining a Roundtable is an easy way to get involved when you are new to the profession. They are also importing networking tools that bring together archivists from across the country with similar interests. Sections are much larger, more formal, and less targeted to particular interests.

NON-MEMBER PARTICIPATION IS VALUABLE

hadley n - 09/03/2015 - 8:17am

Restricting Affinity Group participation to SAA members will lessen the group's value to me as a member, instead of enhancing it. One of the important functions of SAA groups is to provide a space where non-members in related fields, or in other countries, or in positions that do not receive employer support, to interact with the core archival community. I want to see our views and influence as professional archivists be spread through a wider community, in a dialog with others--not just an insular conversation only with ourselves. I'm a member of the Architectural Records Roundtable. Part of its value is bringing together the whole spectrum of people who deal with architectural records: experienced archivists from major repositories, archivists who are new to this type of record, people responsible for the drawings of their organization's facilities, and archivists/records managers in architectural firms. As archivists, we need to hear what people who are closer in the chain to the creators and users of these records have to say. And non-members who want the archivist's perspective about these records need a place to engage with archival experts.

Reading over other comments, I see that my roundtable isn't the only one that values its non-member participation. There are many ways in which non-member voices are important for what we do. Groups who talk with their international colleagues about standards development is another excellent example of the importance of non-member dialog.

The current proposal says that if our group wants to hear these other voices, we must give up support from SAA (become a Virtual Community instead of an Affinity Group). I believe that SAA should be trying to encourage, not prohibit, dialog between member archivists and the larger community.

I understand that SAA is concerned about the value it offers us for our membership. I've been an SAA member for more than two decades, and have participated in a variety of sections and roundtables as my employment changed. They're an important part of my SAA membership. But I've never felt that I was

cheated of value because others could participate in a group without paying SAA dues. I don't believe that any non-member I've met whose sole engagement was with a roundtable or section would suddenly run out and pay SAA dues if they're cut off from participation. They'll just stop talking with archivists because there's no longer a place to make that connection.

If SAA is concerned about costs of supporting its groups, or is worried that people who really should be paying members are getting all the benefits for free, there are ways to address these concerns while still allowing non-member participation. As others have suggested, perhaps there's a nominal fee for non-members to belong to an Affinity Group. Perhaps there's a cap on the percentage of group members who are not SAA members. Perhaps non-members may join only one Affinity Group. I'm sure there are many possibilities.

Advocacy and interaction with the broader community is one of the values I receive from AIA membership. I want to continue to receive that value within my Affinity Group, by continuing to allow non-members to interact with me and my colleagues in SAA groups.

Nancy Hadley, CA, DAS, Senior Manager, Archives & Records, The American Institute of Architects

WHY NARROW PARTICIPATION?

ginnydaley - 09/02/2015 - 12:47pm

This proposal would mean a huge disconnect for me. I've been an archivist for over 30 years and now am working part time and cannot afford SAA membership. Because I work as an archivist in a non-traditional setting, my employer is not supportive of membership fees or conference attendance. I have to maintain my archival connections on my own time and via my own unsupported initiatives.

If passed, this new proposal would knock me out of Affinity Group participation. And it seems like my Roundtable (Architectural Records Roundtable) might not even make Affinity Group status. If relegated to a Virtual Community Group, with no support from SAA, that means further fragmentation for our specialty field. Yet the ARR members are taking the lead in developing preservation standards for records in complicated digital formats (CAD/BIM) - something the architectural profession or construction industry is not even looking at.

I hate to sound so negative, but this small-minded, closed-door thinking makes me not want to be an SAA member even if I could get the funding. The only one putting the chill on my passion for architectural records is the very agency that you would expect to encourage folks to care more about historical records. What a shame.

SAA SHOULD CONTINUE SUPPORTING NICHE COMMUNITIES

leventha - 09/01/2015 - 3:42pm

This proposal seems like a slippery slope for membership benefits and niche community voices. SAA's mission statement does not indicate that certain topics deserve greater investment of time and resources, but rather that it is an organization to support the diverse archival community. The opportunity to meet in person, once a year, is a critical service that roundtables rely upon to have important conversations.

A shift this large deserves a vote by the membership.

PROPOSED CHANGES

cross58 - 09/01/2015 - 1:02pm

I agree with those who dislike the proposed changes. I also agree that this proposal needs to be voted on by the membership. Finally, I agree with those who point out that this will not necessarily solve the

problems that seem to be driving this issue--meeting space and Council liaising. The former will probably take a bit of creative scheduling, prioritizing, and incentivizing for some groups to meet offsite. As for council liaisons, it is terribly inefficient for them (and the OCLC folks as well) to be traipsing from one group to another to give the same spiel and it is painful to those who have to listen to that spiel over and over again. The liaisons should be a conduit for information flows going in both directions for issues germane to that *specific* group, not for general announcements.

ANOTHER SOLUTION?

kwmorse - 09/01/2015 - 10:43am

Like so many of the others who've already posted, I find these suggested changes concerning on a number of different levels, especially since I'm part of a number of groups that would be negatively impacted by these changes.

It seems to me that it might be better to keep things as they are now (or, fine, call all the sections and RTs affinity groups), but remove that promise of meeting space and council liaison, since those seem to be the expenses SAA is trying to reduce by these proposed changes. Groups could petition for meeting space as needed and maybe a new committee for affinity groups could bridge the gap to council. Members of that new committee could be assigned as liaisons to the individual affinity groups and there could be one super liaison between the committee and council. That person could be a member of council appointed to the position, who would serve as an ex officio member of the committee. Alternatively, someone from the committee could be an ex officio, non-voting member of council.

YES, LET'S KEEP AFFINITY GROUPS OPEN TO NON-MEMBERS

kherring - 08/31/2015 - 7:28pm

I agree with what many other colleagues have already stated here – sections and roundtables can be called affinity groups, but there shouldn't be a membership requirement to join the groups and listservs, and there shouldn't be a 4% or indeed any other threshold. As others have written, the membership requirement discriminates against archivists who can't afford to pay the membership fees, and hinders international cooperation initiated by roundtables, including work on international standards. I am not convinced by the concept of virtual groups -- they could end up duplicating efforts and could be hard to administer.

There are so many archivists who are active, care about the profession, and have fantastic ideas – so, as others have suggested, I am sure we can collectively find ways to save \$ during annual meetings and/or raise funds – joint meetings (we have had a successful one between the IAART and LACCHA at the last meeting), pop-up sessions in various locations that don't charge anything, other ideas.

I also agree that the proposal should be put up for a vote – it will be probably best to break it up into its various parts to allow for a more nuanced vote.

NON-INCLUSION OF NON-MEMBERS IS A NON-STARTER

stevenmg - 08/31/2015 - 10:10am

I am extremely concerned about the proposed exclusion of non-members in the affinity groups. The EAD community, for example, is a multinational community where much of the work is done by non-members to advance a global professional effort. If the SAA intends to make itself irrelevant as a global player in defining international archival standards, excluding those non-U.S. participants simply because they are not SAA members is a good first step. This portion of the proposal is short-sighted, has terrible

unintended consequences, and would serve to curtail critical and essential dialogue between the SAA and its aligned professional colleagues within and beyond the United States border. I strongly oppose this portion of the proposed changes to the member affinity groups.

I'M WITH YOU ... THAT'S TRUE

DAVELLA - 08/31/2015 - 7:33pm

It's absolutely true what you say, Could be great to know who is the genius behind this exclusive proposal....promotes just division, excludes the interdisciplinarity

AFINITY GROUPS PROPOSAL

weissel - 08/27/2015 - 1:09pm

I would like to add my voice to what the majority of the comments seem to be saying:

1. This proposal needs to be voted on by the SAA membership.
2. The 4% minimum for number of members for an Affinity Group will hamper existing and new groups that could never reach that number.

The larger sections and roundtables don't really lend themselves well to networking or addressing problems their members might be encountering, for the same reason SAA as a whole cannot. It becomes a matter of the top few controlling the discussion for the many.

Has anyone given thought to a tiered level of Affinity Group membership? Allowing larger groups to break into subgroups at their will and still having only the larger group liaison with Council?

3. Meeting space at Annual Conferences: this is one of the few times people can actually meet face to face. Either allow multiple groups to share large ballroom space, allow multiple half days for Affinity Group meetings, or cut the time of the meetings down, so more groups can rotate through the same space.
4. Non-members should be allowed to join Affinity Groups. Perhaps a nominal fee could be charged, something like a non-voting member type of category. It allows them to join Affinity Groups but not vote on membership issues. Could Affinity Groups on their own charge a nominal fee to non-members?
5. Virtual Affinity Groups: I think the support offered for these is great but it should be offered to all Affinity Groups. Virtual groups can work well for smaller "branches" of larger Affinity Groups, perhaps.

Just my two cents!

I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE

jsteytler - 08/27/2015 - 11:12am

I would like to have the proposal allow for non-members to participate in affinity groups.

If space is a concern for the annual meeting, one option might be to use the larger ballroom spaces and allow for the groups to meet at the same time... although it might get cacophonous, and not so great if you are attending multiple groups.

I do like the idea of allowing for more group interaction within the membership during meeting times, as we spend so much of the conference sitting and listening. I'd like the chance to talk on topics with people also within that group. So says the Kinesthetic Learner.

I DIDN'T REALIZE THAT IN THE

jordan - 08/27/2015 - 9:09am

I didn't realize that in the current proposal non-members would not be able to join the listservs of affinity groups. I disagree with this provision for reasons that have been presented below.

AFFINITY GROUPS

cburns - 08/26/2015 - 5:26pm

While I appreciate the work of Council to address some concerns about affinity groups, I do have reservations that this proposal will not successfully address what it is intending to address. Much of what I would say has been posted already, so I'll keep my comments fairly brief.

- The minimum membership threshold may cut out worthy groups with a smaller natural constituency.
- The ability to sign up for as many affinity groups as one wants could actually lead to more affinity groups, in part in reaction to the danger of the first scenario occurring.
- I don't support the piece of the proposal that excludes non-members. I don't see access to affinity group microsites, listserves, etc. as a key membership benefit. As a dues-paying member, I would actually prefer to have these groups include the voices of non-members where possible. I see it as enriching my membership.

If space at meetings and council liaison responsibilities are at the core of this proposal, perhaps there are other alternatives.

- Do all groups need to meet at SAA every year? Do the group meetings need to last as long as they do, or could they be shorter and more focused? Do Council liaisons, OCLC, and other groups need to give the same update at every group meeting or can we find another way of delivering this important information? Can some of the business aspects of the meeting be shortened? Do we need program-like content at every group meeting? As another commenter noted, there could be a proposal process for these group meetings, especially if they want a larger meeting room. Have we collectively thought through what the best use of these meeting times is?
- Could we rethink the way Council interacts with these groups so it is more efficient, continues to provide access to leadership and resources, and maybe even improves their relationship to Council and with each other? Could some current liaison responsibilities be handled by SAA staff or an appointed position? Could Council cluster some of their work with these groups, meeting with group leaders as a whole at SAA and in virtual meetings during the year? Could we improve communication between groups and encourage collaboration?

NON-MEMBER PARTICIPATION

michelle - 08/26/2015 - 10:47am

Being able to join as many groups as possible is great, but I am concerned about how this will effect listserv members who are not SAA members. There are a number of roundtables that have considerable non-SAA membership, their participation is often greatly appreciated on both sides. It's also a way for non-members to decide if membership is worth the cost.

I am concerned that the new system will alienate a lot of current users. The open nature of the lists is a big attraction for me.

MEMBER AFFINITY GROUPS

Ruwel263 - 08/25/2015 - 1:16pm

I support the return to affinity groups, but I am definitely against the 4% membership requirement. Having been involved with setting up the Museum Archives Roundtable (when we only had about a dozen people at the start) and the Military Archives Roundtable (who had 28 when they decided to try for a Roundtable), the two year grace period is helpful, but not sufficient. The advantage of Roundtables is that they allow members to network and see each other face to face at meetings. The smaller groups encourage people to talk to each other. The virtual groups would not have space at annual meetings and would effectively eliminate the personal interaction.

The groups also have interesting, specialized presentations. The Preservation Section seems to have attracted fewer attendees this year, but the speakers giving examples of specialized boxes was most helpful. Size is not always a positive. Some sections are so large that their meeting is just like a regular program session and I do not attend.

If Council is looking for "flexible, agile governance structures that are responsive to members' needs" I think the smaller groups are much more likely to provide them. I understand the administrative and financial considerations, but the proposed changes are not a good solution.

CHANGES TO AFFINITY GROUPS

sapullen - 08/25/2015 - 12:07pm

I have been a member of SAA for somewhere around 17 years, less the lapses when my employer's payment procedures did not keep up with due dates. I have attended a few days of one meeting in that time. The most useful membership benefits for me have been the website, the listserv, the discounted prices at the bookstore, and the Section and Round Table listservs. I am also a member of ACA.

This debate seems to me to be mainly an economic one that fails to recognize some points of reality. Virtual Community Groups with no representation to council and no space at annual meetings are just Google Groups or Facebook pages with another name.

Most importantly, this is not the kind of thing that makes SAA seem to me to be headed toward irrelevancy. My interest is not in what happens to affinity groups, but in what happens to a professional association that fails to advocate in any tangible way for the profession it represents. The only new project started in recent years has been the Digital Archives Specialist Certificate Program. To be perfectly blunt - SAA does not provide a very good return on the dues paid to it. In the United States, there is only one degree program, and that is an online one, specifically for archives. It is all very well to post recommendations for a graduate program in archives on the website, but how long can a profession be considered as such when its members come from diverse educational backgrounds and their ranks are frequently joined by amateurs who assume the title based on a few workshops?

I will retire in a few years and as a civil servant I have not been subject to the pressures of academia and tenure or the deadlines of the corporate world, so feel free to discount my opinion. I think though that we are missing the forest while counting the trees.

YES, PLEASE EXTEND DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING COMMENTS

khering - 08/24/2015 - 12:01pm

Hello:

I wholeheartedly agree with Lucy Barber's suggestion to extend the deadline for submitting comments -- I have also not heard about this proposal before the meeting, and we need to take the proposal back to our

roundtables for discussion and the September 1st deadline doesn't leave us sufficient time. Thanks, Katja (IAART)

AFFINITY GROUPS

belovari - 08/24/2015 - 11:37am

Hello,

1. I agree with previous comments, that this proposed change to affinity groups should/needs to be voted on by members, being a major change.

2. I personally am against this change:

- with a required membership of 4% of all SAA Members, new groups will be very difficult to set up (think of the future versions of the *Archivists & Archives of Color Roundtable*, *the Architecture Roundtable*, *Lesbian and Gay Archives Roundtable* etc). I doubt that any of them either initially had and/or ever achieved such a large membership.
- international round tables have members of the RT who are not SAA members, and this might also be true for other RT. These members are essential to the work of the groups and that kind of membership carries weight in the countries of the respective RT members
- a virtual community is no solution to needed personal interaction, to the lack of space to meet e.g. for 30 people, etc. All of us who have been involved in organizing and running organizations and committees know that virtual meeting spaces do not work (or barely).

Even if unintended, these changes will have political consequences.

3. SAA should accept the current reality of our section/RT structure and figure out how to solve the issue involved.

- If the sole reason for this change is a financial one, i.e. that meetings rooms are expensive, then SAA can encourage joint meetings, raise the conference fee by for instance \$5 (e.g. 1,800 participants = \$9,000) which might be enough to fund the meeting rooms.

Regards.

IF THE MAIN "COSTS" TO SAA

jordon - 08/24/2015 - 11:16am

If the main "costs" to SAA for having an infinite number of affinity groups come when allocating a finite amount of meeting space, I wonder if instead of the proposal on the table, SAA could forego guaranteeing that every group have meeting space at the annual meeting and instead adopt an evaluation process where each year groups request meeting space and priority is given to the best proposals. In this scenario, a "major" group would be competing with a "minor" group purely on the merits of the type of meeting they wish to have. Put another way, every group would be a virtual community group and would materialize as a real live group each SAA only if they have a good meeting proposal.

One benefit to this arrangement is that it would shelve the idea of different statuses; every group, at a minimum, would have a listserv and a web presence, but depending on the strength of the proposal a given year, all groups would not be guaranteed meeting space. One drawback is that these proposals would need to be reviewed, which would take time, and there's the Council liaison implication (although truth be told I'm not sure Council liaisons to groups add a ton of value anyway).

I support the idea of doing away with the roundtable/section distinction.

WHY COUNCIL MIGHT BE CONSIDERING THIS

blandis - 08/23/2015 - 6:41pm

Responding to Lucy's speculations, as someone who was on Council recently but did not participate in drafting the current proposal under comment I'll toss in my \$0.02 about why I think something is necessary along these lines. In my 3 years on Council we approved 4 new RTs (there hasn't been a new Section in a decade or so, I think since Electronic Records in the 1990s). The last member affinity group that I recall disappearing of its own accord was the MicroMARC RT (there may've been others, but it doesn't happen very often). Increasing numbers of RTs (because as Lucy points out, they're the easy groups to propose in terms of #s needed), with the current guarantee of face-to-face meeting space at the annual meeting and a liaison relationship to Council, is frankly unsustainable in an organization of our size, so I think kudos to Council for proposing something and getting this conversation started.

Lucy's post suggests that these proposed changes will somehow stifle new groups, but I don't see that at all. The new Virtual Community Groups plan seems to me to give archivists (not just members) the opportunity to come together around many facets of what we do, but without face-to-face meeting space and a Council liaison, and without necessarily having to formalize a governance structure and a program of action (i.e., doing something constructive and productive, and reporting to Council and the membership annually about it). There is absolutely nothing wrong, in my mind, with raising the bar a bit for doling out meeting space and liaisons. We have several moribund (in the "lacking vigor and vitality" sense) current groups that do little to nothing for their members except hold elections and a meeting at the annual meeting each year, but we don't have an easy process to end them without making Council do it, which is an insane thing to ask our elected governing body to spend its time on IMHO. We need to raise the standard for these groups and encourage them to engage in the types of advocacy and education activities that SAA members seem to want more of from their professional organization.

I don't think this proposal is perfect by any stretch of the imagination, but I do completely agree that the status quo is unsustainable and that Council would be irresponsible to let it continue. So let's be creative about improving the transition plan for existing Sections and RTs, and not just assume that they all need to continue in existence. I'd encourage Lucy and others who don't like some or all of the current proposal to suggest alternatives that 1) give SAA members a more flexible way to come together to get important (to them) things discussed and done, 2) don't rely solely on substance-less "body count" metrics, 3) are nimble enough to change over time as our profession inevitably changes, 4) doesn't create a need to support an open-ended number of formal group meetings at the already ridiculously over-scheduled annual meeting, and 5) doesn't give members of Council a set of liaison responsibilities that they can't--as unpaid, elected volunteers--reasonably fulfill. I'll be eager to see some counter-proposals in this discussion.

NEED MORE TIME FOR CONSIDERATION

lgbarber - 08/21/2015 - 10:21pm

I suspect that council members may feel like this has been discussed thoroughly already, but I had not heard of the idea until this meeting. Sections and roundtables are the way that many people gain a sense of indentity in SAA and get valuable leadership experience. Though this renaming exercise in theory doesn't change that, the longer discussion paper makes clear that there are financial drivers and meeting support issues of concern to council where a hoped for outcome is less sections and roundtables. I don't know why leadership hopes for that. New groups such as SNAP have made SAA more welcoming to students and new professionals. We may need new groups focused on particular professional skills in the future such as social media archivists or instruction archivists. Do we collectively think this would be bad for the Society? I know I want more information, more time to consider. I also echo comments that this consideration of this change should go the vote of the members but not until more information is available.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY GROUPS AS "AFFILIATES" OF AFFINITY GROUPS

ktheimer - 08/21/2015 - 1:58pm

To mitigate the issue of non-members not being allowed to participate in affinity groups, I see nothing in the proposal that would prevent the creation of virtual community groups that are affiliated with affinity groups. So, for example, SNAP has an affinity group for members, and then just shares its information with its associated virtual community group to support the needs of non-members. Would this be against the rules? I would see this as a easy mitigation strategy for a group like SNAP and others which want to continue to reach out to and serve non-members.

And I agree with the comments posted above (or below) about adding measurements of activity to the "body count" factor.

AGREED

acschi - 09/14/2015 - 3:48pm

I agree. This sounds like a completely reasonable set-up to me and what I expected several groups might do when I first read the proposal. I'm quite surprised by the number of comments here in opposition to establishing an associated virtual community group to an affinity group.

Frankly, I'm only a "member" of most of my current affinity groups because I want to be on the listserv in case of related news or announcements. I frequently attend SAA, but I have no plans to ever attend a meeting of several of the groups that claim me as a member because it is not a group or topic that I have needed to prioritize in my professional activities. Further, I have a list of suggested current affinity groups that I would encourage the leadership to ask to transition from an affinity group to a virtual community group. I recall sitting in a RT meeting about 8 years ago and after listening to an officer read a 20 minute summary of news stories from the past year related to the RTs topic thinking I was wasting my membership dollars (and my time) in that meeting and group.

Amy Schindler

LEGACY SECTIONS - WHAT'S IN IT FOR THEM?

MyNameIs - 08/20/2015 - 11:31am

I don't see how this setup is to the advantage of the legacy sections? Roundtables were comparatively easy to establish and run. Sections required a much more robust structure. For this there was, at a time, a bit of independence in affiliate non-SAA membership, operations outside of the annual meeting, guaranteed space at the meeting for business and education, and proposing educational sections for the annual meeting. Where has the bit about guaranteed or heavily weighted approval of section proposals gone to anyway? I would expect laying the legacy sections low in this way may not go over too well. Could you be creating the next AMIA or NAGARA?

KATE CROWE

kcrowe - 08/19/2015 - 10:17pm

This was announced at the Performing Arts Roundtable, and a question came up that I think would be helpful for everyone to be able to see - will these proposed changes, once comment has been received and taken into account, be voted on by the SAA membership? This is an organizational change of significance, so I feel strongly that it should be not only commented on by the membership, but voted on by membership.

I also echo the concern that groups that may be focused on compositional diversity in the archival profession (the poster above mentioned LACCHA, which I think is a good example) may be in danger of being (or ending up) below this 4% threshold for the very reason that they represent groups that are

underrepresented in SAA. Since this is such a huge issue, especially when looking at the A*CENSUS data, I would be hesitant to use the amount of people as a benchmark, and instead would suggest some level of activity beyond what happens at the annual meeting as a more appropriate measuring tool. It didn't look like it made its way into the final set of changes, but also determining who gets space and who doesn't at the annual meeting, should there "not be enough space" based on total "full" membership numbers for the affinity seems problematic for the same reason. There is a mention in the May 2015 document that provisions for "sunsetting" affinity and virtual groups should be consistent and based on participation and activity, so this idea is there in the recommendations.

I really liked the recommendations document's focus on incentivizing affinity groups to collaborate by providing additional resources to those who decided to have joint meetings and presentations at the annual meeting, and the notes about which sections and roundtables have similar charges and might consider mergers.

Also, I liked the recommendation of a New Leader Orientation - while I felt the forum was helpful, it didn't cover many of the specifics and "how-tos" that new chairs/co-chairs would find helpful - for example, examples of annual reports and how to structure them, considerations when updating your bylaws, how to plan out your tenure in either a leadership or a supporting/steering role, how to do succession planning to ensure continuity, etc. This doesn't have to be exhaustive, but even a half an hour overview would be super helpful. I also liked the May 2015 document's call for there to be more (or at least one) loosely structured opportunities (a coffee hour, etc.) for those in leadership roles (new and more seasoned) to get to know one another, as this would facilitate collaboration among and across affinity groups.

My two cents. Thanks for the request for feedback!

MEMBER AFFINITY GROUP CHANGES PROPOSAL

blandis - 08/17/2015 - 12:04pm

I agree with Frank Boles's great suggestion that Council consider productivity-based metrics in addition to body counts as a means of assessing whether newly monikered Affinity Groups should continue in existence. I don't know that this has to be in place right from the start, but Council should have a plan to introduce some productivity measures into the assessment of whether Affinity Groups should continue within the first year or two after Affinity Groups are officially introduced, be completely transparent about that plan, and involve some current Section/RT leadership in determining what some useful productivity-based metrics might be.

I'd also like to see all Affinity Groups, since they'll continue to hold annual elections, have on their ballots a check box asking Affinity Group members to reaffirm annually that they're satisfied with the Affinity Group each year. Groups that drop below some specified % of their membership reaffirming that group's continued existence could have a year or two for their leadership and members to explore if/how that Affinity Group could continue in existence and better meet the needs of its members. Having this member reaffirmation in place, in addition to some productivity metrics, would help all SAA members because it would help to make more transparent what SAA members expect from their affinity groups on an on-going basis.

Finally, I have no idea how many current Roundtables have significant numbers of SAA non-members participating. Have those figures ever been produced, or do we have a sense of whether or not this would be an issue in no longer allowing SAA non-members to participate in Roundtables after they become Affinity Groups? Presumably, if there are such Roundtables, they could spin off an affiliated Virtual Community Group through which they could still engage with SAA non-members if that's considered important within the context of that Roundtable-turned-Affinity-Group?

All in all, especially if Council and current Section/RT leadership can rise to the occasion of exploring some productivity-based metrics for assessing Affinity Group performance from the perspective of those groups' members, I think this will be a beneficial and much-needed change for the membership of SAA.

MEMBER AFFINITY GROUPS

Frank Boles - 08/14/2015 - 2:47pm

Although I think I understand why this change is being proposed, to be honest I doubt it will accomplish the goals it hopes to achieve. A four percent threshold, approximately 250 members, would seem to be a reasonable number. However, small interest groups do have a place within SAA's structure and to simply make space at the annual meeting and council representation a question of size seems to rather miss the point. The question is what do affinity groups contribute to the profession, not how many people will sign up as a member.

Indeed the "unlimited" number of affinity groups that members may sign up for suggests to me that with a little cajoling most existing small round tables will be able to find the 250 or so names they need. Why put everyone through such an exercise?

I would suggest a metric for continuing existence based on output, not a body count. What has a particular affinity group done, lately? If groups grow inactive, disband them. But groups that are regularly producing "product" (defined in some measurable way) should continue to exist. If a group truly just wants to chat, then a virtual community is a fine way to help them do so. But small, productive groups, should not be penalized at the annual meeting or by the lack of a council representative simply because they are small.

HMM. MY INITIAL RESPONSE TO

bhouston - 08/14/2015 - 9:51am

Hmm. My initial response to this is that it doesn't change much-- it replaces the current Section-Roundtable stratification with the Affinity Group/Virtual Community Group (both of which are mouthfuls!) stratification, with the change that the "New Roundtables" don't have rights to Annual Meeting space. But I'll bite-- here is a (partial) list of specific comments on this:

- To the extent that Sections/Roundtables are being merged into one entity, it's a good move. There were a lot of arbitrary differences between the two affinity groups and simplifying the structure is going to make it easier for people to get involved in leadership.
- I appreciate that the primary goal of this is to cut down on moribund/inactive affinity groups. I think that's a reasonable goal! By giving members the ability to choose from only *active* groups you increase the probability that they find groups they can actually get involved in, which helps them feel more connected to SAA as a whole. That said:
- The 4% threshold seems arbitrary. Moreover, I have serious doubts that it will have any appreciable winnowing effect, especially since this proposal would remove the limit on number of affinity groups members can join. If members *can* join any number of affinity groups, why wouldn't they? Particularly if there's no commitment required on their part.
- On the other side of that-- raw numbers don't seem like the best way to gauge a group's activity. For example, RMRT has over 1100 members officially listed as members of the group, but I would estimate MAYBE a fifth of that number are actively involved. (As it happens the RT's steering committee puts in a lot of effort to provide value to its members-- but on the raw threshold criteria, it wouldn't have to.) Conversely, a group like LACCHA might be extremely active, but its numbers might be naturally capped by its nature as a minority interest group, which would mean that it would fall below the 4% threshold and lose its right to meeting space. I think in a profession that already has problems with diversity, discouraging minority participation in SAA like this is a dangerous thing to do.

- I think a better measure of Affinity Group activity would be between-meeting activities: What is their social media presence like? How many seminars have they facilitated? Do they have a blog or newsletter, and is it updated frequently? Basically, showing value-add for the group's members. This wouldn't be hard to monitor because groups should be including this kind of information in their annual report anyway. I do realize that this requires Council/SAA staff to make subjective evaluations vs. the cold hard numbers of the threshold model-- but I think decommissioning or downgrading affinity groups is something that SHOULD be done consciously. It shows that SAA is serious about cutting out chaff.
- Why are non-member participants being excluded from the affinity groups? This seems like it will have major repercussions on the viability of a number of existing sections/roundtables, particularly SNAP and the "cross-professional" groups (RMRT, PLASC, Museum Archives, etc.). These groups benefit from having external perspectives added to their conversations, and excluding non-members from said conversations will make them more insular and subject to echo-chamber thinking. I realize that all of these groups can take their lists elsewhere if they need to continue conversations with non-members-- but why should they have to? (Moreover, I suspect that there are more than a few affinity groups without the technical expertise to set up fora elsewhere-- so if SAA went down this road I would hope they would provide advice for doing this.)
- Eliminating Council Liaisons for VCGs seems short-sighted-- in many cases the council reports (and maaaaaybe the plenary) are members' main connection to the goings-on of SAA leadership, and taking that away removes a key avenue for VCG members to communicate with Council. (Yes, members can email council members directly if needed-- but it's psychologically easier to do, I think, if those people are in specific roles to answer questions and receive feedback.) RMRT's Council Liaison(s) helped me a lot with questions of SAA policy and procedure during my time as chair of that roundtable, and I think depriving future group coordinators of that direct connection is unwise.
- Would VCGs be subject to the same branding requirements on external sites as affinity groups are currently? If so, I think the final policy should be a lot clearer on what VCGs get from affiliation with SAA in addition to their responsibilities to represent themselves as under the SAA umbrella. Otherwise, I think you run the risk of VCG leaders saying "this isn't worth it" and either deaffiliating or not putting the work in to fully follow the policy, which further feeds the disconnect between VCG members and SAA the organization.

Overall, I respect what this proposal is trying to do (encourage more activity from affinity groups, weed out the inactive ones, give members more flexibility to join affinity groups of interest), but as it is I think the mechanism to do so paints with too broad a brush. I would be more than a little dismayed if these changes went into effect without significant changes to more accurately assess Affinity Group activity and delineate the rights and responsibilities of both AG and VCG members and leadership.

**Member Affinity Groups Proposal:
Member Comments Received Via SAA Leader List and HQ Inbox
And By Individual Council Members
(As of September 15, 2015)**

VIA SAA LEADER LIST

Hello all,

I put together a Storify of Tweets and links around the various business meeting discussions for SNAP members. It is by no means official, but it should provide a snapshot of the conversations for folks who were unable to attend. The discussion on proposed affinity group changes is about halfway down (after the dues discussion).

https://storify.com/Sam_Winn/business-meeting-discussion-on-proposed-affinity-g

Samantha Winn, MLIS, Collections Archivist, Virginia Tech

Yes, that's a similar concern for SNAP. Although student rates are really very reasonable, excluding nonmembers from the formal Affinity Group structure seriously hinders our ability to serve or connect with non-traditional students, emerging professionals in transition, allied professionals (from public history, museums, libraries, RM, publishing, etc), and students/new pros outside the United States. I'm not concerned about our ability to meet the minimum threshold, but removing nonmember participation will diminish the value of SNAP to our constituents. On the other hand, we find it imperative for students and new professionals to have a dedicated voice in SAA governance, making it untenable for us transition to a Virtual Community Group.

I am not sure whether groups would be allowed to maintain an Affinity Group for members *and* a Virtual Community Group for nonmembers. This seems like an unnecessary duplication of SAA resources, and I find it difficult to reconcile under the "member benefit" argument. Assuming that such duplication would not be allowed by SAA, it would be possible for groups to maintain a Google list to communicate with members and nonmember affiliates. However, this creates a significant burden for individuals and group leaders, while further isolating their constituents from SAA. We currently have a shared space for members and nonmembers to engage around issues related to students and new professionals, with the primary aim of demonstrating the value of SAA membership and promoting multi-stakeholder collaboration. I hate to lose that.

While I understand the desire to marshal resources for the benefit of SAA members, I am interested in seeing the Council reconsider the original proposal by the task force to allow limited participation from nonmembers. I believe the 2014 task force proposal recommended allowing members to join 4 Affinity Groups, and affiliate nonmembers to join 2. If members are allowed to join an unlimited number of

Member Groups, allowing nonmembers to join only 1-2 should not significantly diminish the benefit of Affinity Group participation. Returning to this idea would eliminate the need for the Council to consider exceptions to the policy.

Overall, there are many aspects of the proposal that I agree with; Brad Houston captured many of these in his public comment (although I do not think it will be necessary for Virtual Community Groups to have a dedicated Council liaison). I request that the Council remain transparent in the decision making process and extend the comment period by at least one week to allow sections and roundtables to gather more feedback from their members.

Samantha Winn, MLIS, Collections Archivist, Virginia Tech

Thanks, Michele. I think that you make an excellent point, although there's a bit of difference between working group and listserv that concerns me. If an everyday archivist in Germany has questions about EAC-CPF, she would traditionally have joined the EAD Roundtable (soon to be more inclusively renamed) and asked her question. The barrier for petitioning or invitation could be a problem and I don't know if we could ask our international experts to commit to supporting only US archivists while excluding their compatriots.

Again, perhaps an exception could be made for this group. But then I find myself asking just how many exceptions would need to be written into the proposal.

[Ruth Tillman]

I think this is one example of where we could wind up with duplication of effort. Someone brought that up at the business meeting and it seems like EAD is one area where, if international non-members aren't allowed to participate, a "virtual" group would need to be created to include them. Having conversations in two places doesn't seem practical at all.

Sarah Quigley, Manuscript Archivist, Manuscript, Archives, & Rare Book Library Emory University

Great points, Ruth, and I agree with you 100%. International cooperation and representation is critical for sound standards development and it's important that we make it as easy as possible for that to happen. The International Digital Publishing Forum (IDPF) allows for what it calls "invited experts" on its working groups -- non-IDPF members whose contributions, perspective, and/or participation are desired or needed. That might be one option.

Michele Combs, Lead Archivist, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Libraries

Reading through the initial comments posted on the webpage announcing these proposed changes, two important points are brought up that relate directly to LACCHA and other affinity groups that deserve careful consideration. To quote user bhouston:

Re: the 4% threshold:

"Conversely, a group like LACCHA might be extremely active, but its numbers might be naturally capped by its nature as a minority interest group, which would mean that it would fall below the 4% threshold and lose its right to meeting space. I think in a profession that already has problems with diversity, discouraging minority participation in SAA like this is a dangerous thing to do."

and Re: the non-Member participants:

"Why are non-member participants being excluded from the affinity groups? This seems like it will have major repercussions on the viability of a number of existing sections/roundtables, particularly SNAP and the "cross-professional" groups (RMRT, PLASC, Museum Archives, etc.). These groups benefit from having external perspectives added to their conversations, and excluding non-members from said conversations will make them more insular and subject to echo-chamber thinking.

Both issues resound just as loud with LACCHA because we are a "minority interest group" and many of our non-Member participants live in Latin American countries where the burden of a membership may be too much to bear. Additionally, many of our initiatives as of late have been aimed at gleaning information from our colleagues abroad. It seems the proposed changes would be detrimental to the continuation of this practice.

George Apodaca

On Mon, Aug 24, 2015 at 9:59 AM, Carole Prietto <carole.prietto@doc.org>
<saaleaders@forums.archivists.org> wrote:

I, too, hope that students and new professionals will not be cut off from membership in SNAP. A related concern I have is that right now students can claim student membership for only two years. This hurts students who may be working and going to school part time, thus taking longer than two years to finish their degrees. I hope that can be addressed both in the new affinity group structure and in the discussion about the new dues structure.

Carole Prietto, Daughters of Charity

I have concerns regarding the EAD Roundtable, which I co-chair. The roundtable supports discussion and collaboration around the implementation and use of the EAD and EAC-CPF standards. These standards are developed in partnership with international archivists.

They're international standards but the EAD Roundtable has always been the primary place for discussion and support. If we were to remove non-SAA members, we'd be severely hampering international cooperation.

Not all members of the Technical Subcommittees who developed these standards are members of SAA because they come from France, the UK, Sweden, etc. This includes Technical Subcommittee co-chairs, whose expertise in answering questions we'd then lose. Membership in one nation's archival society shouldn't be necessary for access to the primary point of discussion about international standards.

I understand the overall rationale and I think it may apply to some roundtables like government archives (SNAP being another major exception I see), but I believe it would be very destructive to efforts for collaboration international standards and a setback for the work that's been done to get us all on roughly the same page. Last week, Council approved having only a simple majority of SAA members on the proposed Technical Subcommittee for Encoded Archival Standards, so clearly Council understands the importance of this international collaboration. And yet, we'd cut those same people out of the discussions around actual implementation and use. If an alternative forum had to be created because of this action, it would diminish the utility of the EAD Roundtable, not bring new people into SAA.

And to follow on to Carole, I took a total of 4 calendar years (7 semesters) to complete my MLS because I was working and attending part-time. I don't think that's unusual and I'm glad I was able to sign up for SNAP without having joined yet.

Ruth Kitchin Tillman, Senior co-chair, EAD Roundtable

On Mon, Aug 24, 2015 at 9:44 AM, Matthew J Gorzalski <m.gorzalski@gmail.com> <saaleaders@forums.archivists.org> wrote:

I am the chair of the Collection Management Tools Roundtable. I had to leave the business meeting early just as comments on the Council proposals began. I support the proposed changes, especially requiring that group members are paying SAA members. But I understand how SNAP might be concerned because students may not yet be dues paying members, and new professionals searching for their first job might not be able to afford SAA membership. I hope an exception can be made for SNAP.

Matt Gorzalski, University Archivist, SIU Carbondale

On Sun, Aug 23, 2015 at 6:45 PM, Samantha Winn <samw@vt.edu> <saaleaders@forums.archivists.org> wrote:

As the incoming chair of the SNAP Roundtable, I am interested in hearing perspectives from other section and roundtable leaders about the proposed changes to the member affinity group structures. Our roundtable leadership has some specific questions about the proposal as it relates to our constituents, which we are fleshing out right now to share with the Council.

In the meantime, this forum would be an ideal venue for joint discussions on areas of common concern. If you are interested in discussing concerns privately, please contact me off list.

Samantha Winn, MLIS, Collections Archivist, Virginia Tech

VIA SAA HQ INBOX

9/12/15 EAD Roundtable

Dear Council,

On behalf of the EAD Roundtable Steering Committee, I am attaching our response to the proposal for affinity groups. While many aspects of the proposal, such as bringing sections and roundtables under a single title and the new virtual community groups, seem like wise choices, we are deeply concerned over the exclusion of non-SAA members. Encoded archival standards are an international effort with international partners. Membership in one nation's archival society should not be required to participate in the primary forum for discussions about these international standards. Any action which cuts out our international partners will greatly diminish the utility and reputation of the roundtable and of the SAA itself.

I have also attached a collection of feedback from the roundtable's listserv, including the thoughts of SAA15 honoree and SAA fellow Daniel Pitti, a longstanding part of the encoded archival community.

Thank you for extending the deadline for comment and thank you for listening to the concerns attached.

Sincerely, Ruth Kitchin Tillman - EAD Roundtable senior co-chair
on behalf of Elizabeth Dunham (EAD Roundtable junior co-chair) and Steering Committee Members
Monish Singh, Laura Staratt, and Adrian Turner

EAD Steering Committee

From their creation to their implementation and use, the international encoded archival standards are an international effort. Since 2002, the teams creating the EAD and EAC standards have included international partners, including co-chairs, to ensure they address the needs and practices of more than one country. These international partners and their institutions have contributed hours, funding, and hosting for the creation, enhancement, and use of the standards. At the SAA's 2015 meeting, its Council recognized the importance of such collaboration when requiring only a simple majority of SAA members on an internationally-diverse Technical Subcommittee on Encoded Archival Standards. The Encoded Archival Description Roundtable supports the implementation and use of these standards, both in the United States and around the world.

The Steering Committee of the EAD Roundtable, therefore, wishes to express profound concern over the proposal to exclude non-SAA members from this community. While we recognize the desire of the SAA to focus its resources on its own members, we believe the proposal to limit Roundtable membership, particularly participation in the Roundtable listserv, will be highly-detrimental to international cooperation in the implementation of current and development of future standards. Membership in one nation's archival association should not be necessary to participate in the primary forum for discussions about international standards. As archives around the world begin to implement EAD3, we should not close off an avenue for international archivists to share their expertise and request the support that ensures adoption. As TS-EAC begins development of a new standard for encoding the description of functions, an endeavor which has strong European support and inspiration, limiting

roundtable conversations to Americans and those few international partners with sufficient reasons to purchase an SAA membership will ensure that such conversations take place elsewhere, possibly with less SAA member input and certainly with less SAA member awareness.

Given the existence of a second listserv for EAD hosted by the Library of Congress, if this proposal is ratified in its current form it seems likely that all truly collaborative discussion must move there, and away from the roundtable and the SAA. This would damage the roundtable's utility and the SAA's overall standing in this area.

The Steering Committee requests that the SAA Council reconsider aspects of the affinity group proposal and the losses that the community responsible for implementing archival standards would suffer if the proposal were implemented and non-SAA members cut out.

Ruth Kitchin Tillman and Elizabeth Dunham (EAD Roundtable co-chairs) and Steering Committee Members Monish Singh, Laura Staratt, and Adrian Turner
EAD Roundtable Member Feedback

EAD Roundtable Member Responses to the Proposal:

From: Daniel Pitti, SNAC, SAA Fellow

I adamantly oppose this change, as it fails to recognize that both EAD and EAC-CPF are international standards. Both, in fact, were developed outside of the Society, and were placed in the Society to give them a home, with the understanding that the standards were, in fact international, and that the Society would administer the standards on behalf of the global community. To date the Society has honored the trust placed in it by the archives and archivists around the world that have major investments in the use of the two standards, and thereby rightfully have an interest in their ongoing maintenance and development. The international interest and use of the standards has been good for the Society. It has given the Society global visibility and relevance. It has attracted international attendance at the annual meeting, with many of the international attendees participating in both the standards' maintenance and development groups, Roundtables, and Sections, as well as speaking in multiple sessions. The international participation enriches the intellectual and professional discourse. While I think that the issue of international participation is more important with respect to the maintenance and development of EAD and EAC-CPF, it is also important in the Roundtables and Sections related to the standards.

In an age that we describe as "global," it is more than a little ironic that the Society would want to become less welcoming to the global community. Protectionist, it seems. Building walls seems to have become an American theme!

I think your following suggestion is quite reasonable: that non-SAA member archivists can be non-voting members of the Roundtables/Sections (however these are merged).

From: Glenn Gardner, Library of Congress
Kudos to Ruth and Dan - well said!

From: Gavan John McCarthy
Yep, nicely put Daniel . . . Gavan

From: William J Shepard

Yes, I don't see how removing non SAA members helps anybody, least of all we archivists who use EAD in our work to create finding aids. W. J. Shepherd.

From: Steve Mandeville-Gamble

I agree with the concerns expressed here regarding excluding non-members from the conversation. I have gone ahead and put my 2 cents in on the SAA webpage seeking comments and urge others to do the same. Not surprisingly, all of the comments are critical about the exclusion clause.

Ultimately, it really does come down to this: does SAA intend to become a parochial organization separated from the larger global professional conversations, in which case I can no longer personally or professionally support it, or is it going to continue to be - and increasingly become - an organization that is relevant as a global player in the archival arena. Excluding non-members from the conversation can only hurt our efforts to stay relevant.

I think there is a good aphorism that Ben Franklin coined about pennies, pounds, and foolishness that may apply in this situation.

From: Karen Lisbeth Schurr

Well put!! I concur. Hear! Hear!

From: Jackie Dooley, former SAA president

One of SAA's chief justifications for the non-member exclusion piece of the proposal is to strengthen the benefits of membership, which have gradually lessened as changes such as open access to *Outlook* and free e-pubs have made more SAA content openly available. I'm aware of specific former members who have left SAA because they felt they could get the things they want the most without having to pay dues. I completely understand the concerns about excluding nonmembers (more so for some SAA groups than others, and EAD is certainly among the former) but am interested in hearing EADers feelings about the strength of member benefits. Are they adequate? Thin?

From: William J Shepard

'Benefits of membership' were eclipsed by the prohibitive cost of individual membership for me many years ago, though I do remain covered by my institution's membership. Of course, the high cost of individual membership, and the fact that they are talking about jacking it up again, is an issue for another posting.

9/14/15 Robin Pike

I am glad that this proposal acknowledges that growth and formalized structure of many of the roundtables, through their equal representation in SAA as sections have received. This proposal is very similar to how roundtables were formed in the first place—through informal interest groups. It does make sense that group membership should be one of the added benefits of membership in SAA, especially as other membership benefits, like the publications, are not freely accessible online, or are freely accessible after an embargo period. I do think that some of the proposed changes may marginalize niche interest groups, and will decrease the impact and importance SAA has in the international professional sphere.

I am concerned that the proposed changes may increasingly marginalize specific but important niche groups like the Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives Roundtable because their membership does not achieve the mandatory 4% of SAA's total membership. In particular, this group is incredibly active in creating resources for their membership, and has a proportionally more active membership than other sections and roundtables, which extends to international partners, something that most other groups cannot claim. Though SAA's focus may be on the US archival community, other professionals in countries outside of the US have found SAA because their countries lack a similar national organization for professional guidance. SAA should take this opportunity to provide more exclusive guidance to these underserved communities.

It would also be useful to see which groups would be impacted by SAA's 4% membership rule; I do agree that these groups should be given two years, which may be enough time, to achieve the required amount of membership.

Additionally, I am also concerned that the groups that are involved in international standards, such as EAD, Metadata, and may have their membership impacted because international members who are currently involved in the group may find that they are unable to maintain their membership in the group because they cannot afford SAA membership, especially if they are expected to be members of the archival organization in their own country. If the membership is split, it would increase the work of the affinity group to reach out to these international partners. Based on discussions at the Leadership Forum, many sections and roundtables currently have issues finding the best ways to communicate information to their members; if they are forced to separate communication between the formal SAA listserv and microsite and into other informal methods like social media platforms, their constituency will experience increased confusion on where to get information, and the group leaders will have increased work to do to maintain the information.

Under the proposed Amendment to Section IX of the Governance Manual, Section A, point 3, will SAA provide measurements as to what work the group is expected to perform, such as projects, and how frequently they will perform them? Under Section C, it sounds like all Sections and Roundtables are required to apply as an Affinity Group and meet the standards numerated in Section C, but does not detail how the Council and President will analyze the signs of activity listed in point 4.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Robin C. Pike, Manager, Digital Conversion and Media Reformatting, Digital Systems and Stewardship, University of Maryland Libraries, B0225 McKeldin Library, 7649 Library Ln, College Park, MD 20742; 301-314-0184

Please forgive that I may have commented once already. I have thought about the topic much more and discussed it with others. I have attached my fuller comment.

There is not nearly enough weight in this proposal given to promoting and supporting participation by archivists and stakeholders (as opposed to only members) in groups, to improve the archival profession as a whole.

If the main problems are competition for meeting space at the annual meeting, and burden on staff time, then that is where the solutions lie, not in proposals that potentially limit participation. Otherwise debate gets caught up in the minutiae of fixes that create some groups who are more chosen and some who are less chosen. Instead, focus should be on the ideal of inclusion and what benefits archives in general. From what I remember of the task force survey from two years ago, it asked about preferences re: meeting at the conference. It did not state the problems at hand and ask for ideas about how to fix them.

Focusing on what privileges to bestow on members versus non-members of SAA is the most wrongheaded way of looking at these problems possible, and misses the point. The ideals and priorities mentioned in the above paragraph (participation, inclusion) should be driving all ideas about how to form and determine groups.

Whether or not diversity is still one of the three major foci of SAA, a proposal that diminishes groups functioning or membership is not in the interest of diversity.

To put it bluntly, there will be a problem attracting minorities, new members and students who have limited economic resources if SAA membership (even at the student level) is a requirement to participate in the 'highest' or most privileged level of SAA groups. The SNAP roundtable already needs to include those who are not yet in the profession – it is one of the purposes of the roundtable. Potential members (whether part of a minority or group not well represented in archives, or not) will hardly feel welcome to SAA or the archives profession if they are shut out of SNAP due to their own personal lack of funds.

Other roundtables will suffer in fulfilling their missions if non-members are not allowed to participate. The diversity roundtables will have fewer participants and less diversity. EAD is an INTERNATIONAL standard that requires input from individuals of other nations to fully realize its potential. The International Council of Archives is another group which benefits from participation by archivists and others who are not Americans. The Issues and Advocacy Roundtable considers issues that are often not limited to archivists, but include allied professionals from the library and museum fields and other information professionals. Requiring membership in SAA before participation in these affinity groups (and others I have not mentioned) would be cutting off one's nose to spite one's face. Maximizing participation for the good of the archives profession should just be not just the goal, but the overriding and guiding principle for this entire discussion.

- ➔ Proposed fix: allowing any and all who want to join the e-discussion lists and meet in person at the annual meeting. Restrictions can be made on voting and serving as group officers, but no one should be turned away from participation in meeting the crucial issues facing archivists

because their institution or personal finances limit membership in SAA. Remember, it is all about participation.

Allowing more people to participate digitally cannot cost more than a pittance.

There is lack of meeting space at annual meetings due to there being so many competing groups.

- ➔ Proposed fix: Now is the time to roll out the virtual / visual meeting component for SAA groups, not in the future. Getting groups accustomed to a virtual meeting component can go a long way to ease congestion at the annual conference. In addition, SAA should offer an additional virtual / visual meeting in March on the six month anniversary of the usual conference, as well as offering the same component DURING the annual meeting—two teleconferences per year along with the face to face meeting at the conference. This will provide a chance to work out some of the bugs and procedures for this meeting format. It also can only increase participation in the groups and their productivity as well as moving toward some solution to complaints about the high cost and exclusivity of the annual meeting. Remember, it is all about participation.

This idea will obviously have a cost, but it would need to be faced sooner or later. Teleconferencing and even video conferencing has come down significantly in price. The benefits are that it would not impinge at all on the working or participation in groups, instead increasing the benefits outlined above. The proposal as it stands already envisions virtual groups. Instead of reducing the meetings for groups, increase it by adding this method of interaction, instead of substituting it for the status quo ante. Was not technology one of SAA's three major strategic goals recently?

Meeting face to face at the annual conference may not be an all or none concept.

- ➔ Proposed fix: Meetings of smaller groups can be alternated by year. I know if I were in one, and it was not our year to meet, we would find a way to meet in our hotel rooms or other spaces in the hotel (or outside it). Hotel rules designed to maximize their exclusive capacity to charge for space is not going to stop people from meeting.

The proposal as it stands already outlines a threshold for meeting size. Instead of reducing the meeting experience for groups entirely, dilute it for the smallest groups so they are less likely to suffer a death spiral from not meeting. Alternating years can allow a foundering group to rebound from year to year as the profession and importance of issues changes.

SAA staff are overburdened by conference requirements on their time and energy (not just at the conference).

- ➔ Proposed fix: Can paraprofessional volunteers take any pressure off the SAA staff for duties related to the annual meeting?
Offering a break on cost of registration or membership should bring volunteers aplenty. Hire someone to coordinate these volunteers (and perhaps non-conference arrangements for such volunteers as council members, task forces) to take some of the burden off staff. Remember, it is all about participation.

Would current staff be willing to train volunteers or supervise them? Could that take the edge off staff's burden? Would that suit them better than the current situation?

Perhaps the proposal as it stands suffers most from a poor sales pitch. The more I learn about these

problems, the more I understand they are structural and have solutions that are either radical or disagreeable. Unless one reads the whole report on this proposal the problems are not outlined, and thus not matched with the proposed solutions. When SAA does not make itself vulnerable by stating its challenges, proposed solutions seem like draconian and authoritarian impositions. Membership is already expensive, and dues increases need to be balanced not only with expenses but also surveyed and researched after the fact to see if they are leading to reduced membership. Everything comes with a price. Is the selling of the proposed dues increase linked to greater expenses for such quality services as maintaining groups' privilege to meet at the conference or the organizational efforts of staff? Is so, why not? And if these value-added conference services are becoming increasingly expensive, should not the costs be borne by conference registration fees?

I agree wholeheartedly with those that have stated that any value judgement re: the value or activity of a group would end up being counterproductive, or worse. Enforcing the demotion of an affinity group to a virtual group or enforcing the SAA membership requirement can only create bad feelings in members and allies, the people we most want to support and attract.

If SAA truly believes in diversity, it will suspend all the ideas about which privileges to confer on SAA members and what can be withheld from non-members. Such in-group vs. out-group discussion and thinking is a disservice to all archivists and is hardly keeping "the good of the archival profession" in mind.

The fixes I have outlined above are just off the top of one archivists' head, but there must be others out there that council has not considered. Maybe there are many other ideas out there. Proposed solutions to such complex problems should be CROWD SOURCED, in other words entire fixes should be openly sought from the membership (via lists, and groups including the non-members) after stating the problems. Archivists, who often seek creative solutions to problems as part of their jobs, may prove a great untapped resource for input and thinking about these seemingly intractable problems, and as a group of individuals with their own ideas, archivists should not be sold short. Archivists' imaginations are much more fertile than the ideas presented in this proposal. This is too big a change to leave to the limitations of comments on a mostly settled proposal. Remember, it is all about participation.

9/14/15 Bonita Weddle

I am writing to convey my opposition to most of the proposed changes to the structure of SAA's affinity groups. I recognize that keeping every member of an organization representing the interests of a profession that is growing, shifting, and dealing with an ever-evolving array of challenges is virtually impossible, and I commend the three Council members who developed the slate of proposed changes for taking on a task that was both extraordinarily difficult and virtually guaranteed to result in a large-scale venting of spleen. However, I am convinced that some of the changes being contemplated will ultimately damage an organization to which I am deeply committed, and I feel compelled to speak out.

I have no particular objection to flattening SAA's organizational structure by eliminating the distinctions between sections and roundtables and treating all of them as affinity groups. However, I find the prospect of relegating smaller affinity groups to virtual status and barring non-SAA members from participating in affinity groups to be deeply troubling.

SAA's roundtables and sections play a pivotal role in drawing new members into the organization and enabling them to take on leadership roles. I joined SAA in 2005 and was a bit overwhelmed by the

masses of people I encountered in the conference hotel that year. I knew a few people from my own repository and several other archives, but I felt quite lost in the crowd. However, I attended the meeting of a roundtable focused on a topic of interest to me and was pleasantly surprised to find myself among roughly thirty people who went out of their way to introduce themselves to me. At the end of the meeting, the co-chair briefly outlined the responsibilities associated with serving on the roundtable's steering committee and asked if anyone would be interested in becoming a member. I volunteered, and the experience was deeply rewarding: I learned about SAA's organizational structure, formally commented on multiple policies proposed by Council, and forged a number of enduring personal and professional relationships. The following year, I became the roundtable's co-chair. I went on to become a faithful Annual Meeting attendee -- almost invariably at my own expense -- and a section steering committee member, a section chair, and a Program Committee member.

Judging from conversations I've had with other SAA members and the comments many other members have left on SAA's website re: the proposed changes to affinity group structure, I know that finding one's place within SAA via an affinity group is a common experience. It also seems that smaller groups do a better job of pulling in new members than larger ones. Requiring an existing affinity group to maintain a membership of four percent of SAA's membership may be a death knell for groups that are small but have active, dedicated members -- and make it much more difficult for new affinity groups seeking to address emerging professional challenges to get out of "virtual" status. Giving members fewer opportunities to interact in small group settings and to making it harder for them to organize in response to new problems and opportunities will not serve SAA's interests in the long run.

Moreover, some of SAA's smaller roundtables represent constituencies that have historically been underrepresented within SAA or focus on topics that have traditionally been under-documented within our repositories. If one of these groups falls below the membership threshold, will Council really wish to force it into virtual status? How will such an action square with SAA's much-vaunted commitment to diversifying its membership and ensuring a comprehensive, equitable historical record?

SAA's proposed limiting of affinity group participation to SAA members will also strike many members and non-members alike as tone-deaf and exclusionary. Several of SAA's current affinity groups have longstanding ties to community-based archives and archivists who have long -- and often with good reason -- regarded professional archivists and university- and government-based archives with a degree of suspicion. Many of these individuals and organizations began documenting their own history long before professional archivists and collecting repositories took an interest in their communities, and many of them are not opposed to working with and learning from professional archivists -- and teaching professional archivists what they know about working within their communities and running archival programs on a shoestring. How will severing ties with these individuals and groups -- who should probably be the focus of a gentle yet sustained membership drive -- contribute to SAA's efforts to ensure that our society is documented appropriately?

Active, engaged affinity groups -- regardless of size -- are an integral part of SAA, and I urge Council to develop an affinity group plan that emphasizes the role of affinity groups in integrating new members into the organization, furthering SAA's commitment to diversity and a comprehensive, equitable historical record, responding to emerging professional problems and possibilities, and enhancing SAA's organizational reach.

9/15/15 Melinda McMartin Isler

As a longstanding member of the Lone Arrangers Roundtable, I have a problem with the structure of the affinity groups. This group, in particular, has no problems meeting the 4% membership threshold and is an active group. We have a small group which does attend the annual meeting (and are grateful for the opportunity to do so and put a face with email comments). As a member who can make the meeting, I find the conversation and presentations invaluable. Technically, we could be a section. However, we also pride ourselves on our value to our non-SAA members (who by virtue of being lone arrangers and generally on the lower pay scale range) who truly need our assistance and support. So the virtual community would make sense- but we would lose our ability to have a meeting at the annual meeting space. Either way, the group would be forced to lose some of our ability to be active and engage our members.

Thank you for your consideration. Melinda McMartin Isler

9/15/15 Allison Clemens / Archival History Roundtable

While the Steering Committee of the Archival History Roundtable supports the SAA Council in its goal of managing the growth and needs of roundtables and sections, the Archival History Roundtable is concerned about the negative impact of the Council's Affinity Group Proposal on non-member participants.

For many years, the Archival History Roundtable has drawn energy and participation from 53 individuals who are not also members of SAA. The inclusion in the Archival History Roundtable of SAA nonmembers contributes to this roundtable in particular because of the interdisciplinary and inter-professional nature of archival history, which brings together historians, researchers, and others whose main employment lies outside of the archival profession.

Therefore, the Steering Committee of the Archival History Roundtable urges the SAA Council to consider options to accommodate the continued participation of nonmembers within SAA roundtables and sections. The Steering Committee recommends that the SAA Council consider "associate memberships" for nonmembers of SAA. Associate members could participate in affinity groups of their choosing at a nominal cost (for example, \$30 annually) for each affinity group that they wished to join. This new revenue stream would aid the SAA Council in continuing to provide the high level of IT support and meeting space for affinity groups that SAA already does through its current levels of membership.

Moreover, "associate memberships" would allow students and new members of the archival profession to continue to participate in affinity groups that allow them to grow into full-time professionals. The Steering Committee of the Archival History Roundtable thanks the SAA Council for the opportunity to comment on the proposed changes to roundtables and sections.

Sincerely, The Archival History Roundtable Steering Committee

9/15/15 Megan Courtney / Labor Archives Roundtable

On behalf of the Labor Archives Roundtable, I would like to express deep concerns with the proposed changes to affinity group status proposed by SAA Council. While financial concerns are real, we hope

that the proposal can be modified to support diversity in the field and the unique relationships formed through SAA Roundtable membership.

Because labor archives are a smaller subset of the archival field, the Society of American Archivists' Labor Archives Roundtable serves a unique role in professional organizations. Regional groups simply do not have the density of labor archivists necessary to support a group dedicated to our concerns. However, given the amount vital cultural and economic material in labor collections, the archival profession has a responsibility to support labor archivists in stewarding these records.

Smaller roundtable membership numbers does not signal inactivity. In our case, the smaller size of the group allows for a more open exchange of ideas and provides valuable opportunities for participants to become meaningfully involved in the roundtable's core functions. This leads to a greater diversity of projects well-suited to members' strengths. In the recent past, the Labor Archives Roundtable has created and maintained a detailed directory of labor archives in the United States, crafted a labor archives repository map, published a 2010 edition of the book *Keeping Union Records*, spearheaded a national Wikipedia editing event, sponsored labor archives retreats to share ideas, and coordinated with the Labor and Working Class History Association's Labor Online blog to promote archival material. The roundtable consistently endorses or proposes conference sessions and participates in parallel organizations like the Labor and Working Class History Association. The group is also undertaking a national-scale Historypin display and has formed a working group to address the unique challenges of keeping electronic labor records for active donors. As we work, we see more interest from international labor archivists who may not be SAA members but who find great value in working with the roundtable.

We ask that Council revisit the proposal, possibly lowering the cutoff to 2% and creating a means for groups to prove their worth to the broader organization. We believe these measures will minimize the risk of eliminating functional and valuable subgroups within SAA.

Meghan Courtney, LAR Co-Chair 2015-2017

Outreach Archivist, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

Conor Casey, LAR Co-Chair 2013-2015

Labor Archivist, Director, Labor Archives of Washington, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections

James P. Quigel

Curator, Historical Collections and Labor Archives, Archivist for United Steelworkers of America and United Mine Workers of America

Rebecca Bizonet

Oral History Description Archivist, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University

9/15/15 Margaret Kruesi

I am a SAA member with a quick comment on the proposal for changing governance of roundtables and sections (I belong to several of these and find them extremely useful). I think that requiring 4% of the total SAA membership for any group is too high a percentage, and that an affinity group that size

doesn't necessarily function as well as a smaller group might. I'm on the Executive Board of a scholarly organization that has a larger membership than SAA, and I also co-chair a section that has around 80 members, which is a good size group in that organization. The organization also has a number of smaller interest sections, of 20-40 members that do very good work. In general, I support the SAA proposal, but I think the requirement for numbers of members constituting an affinity group should be 1% to 2% of the total membership and no more, if you have to have this criteria at all. This is especially crucial for groups like the SAA Native American Archives Roundtable, which I currently belong to. It deserves the full support of SAA, even if its size is relatively small.

Margaret Kruesi, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

9/15/15 Ruth Kitchin Tillman

I can see why SAA would think this was a way to go. You need the money and you want more people to become members. I think your idea of the Virtual Community Group is a good one to keep this idea from throwing people out in the cold. However I see a number of cases where not-yet-professionals (SNAP), underpaid professionals (SNAP), split professionals (public archivists who may also be public librarians), foreign professionals (encoded archival standards and description) may be thrown out of the groups which are either meant to help them or benefit from their participation.

On a more personal note than was shared in the official EAD response, I think that it will cause a significant sense of offense on the international front. Since building bridges across our differences is already at times a difficult endeavor, I think this would be real setback.

I personally like the idea recommended by the original taskforce, which was not so draconian and so bridge-smashing--to allow a limited number of affinity group memberships for outsiders and unlimited for insiders. Two, say, would allow international archivists who presented at both EAD and Description groups during this past SAA to remain/become members of those groups. It would allow students who can't afford the student rate to join SNAP and one roundtable in their area of focus (yes, I think the student rate is good but it's only for 2 years and it still keeps out the most economically-disadvantaged students, who really need snap). I think even limiting voting to members would make sense. It would reinforce that membership benefits are for members, but not deprive us or others of valuable collegiality.

If you're really focused on the idea of making sure there are enforced participatory differences between the two, I'd say limits are the way to go. It keeps the community alive while providing members attractive benefits. It also doesn't sour people on the SAA.

Ruth Kitchin Tillman, Member SAA 2011 – present, Senior co-chair TS-EAD

9/15/15 Kate Stratton / Web Archiving Roundtable

The Web Archiving Roundtable conducted an informal poll of our membership to gather feedback on the proposed affinity group changes. We had 41 respondents in the 2 weeks the poll was open, expressing a diversity of opinions.

We'd like to share with you our findings (attached) and hope that you will consider the perspectives therein as you make your deliberations.

Please contact me or the Web Archiving Steering Committee with any questions.

Kate Stratton, Chair, Web Archiving Roundtable

[SEE PDF ATTACHMENT A.]

9/15/15 Wendy Hagenmaier / Issues and Advocacy Roundtable

The Issues and Advocacy Roundtable Steering Committee would like to provide the attached feedback about the proposed changes in affinity groups, gathered from our members via the listserv and a survey.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information.

Thank you so much for requesting our feedback and for your thoughtful consideration of the members' comments.

Wendy Hagenmaier, Digital Collections Archivist, Georgia Tech
Issues and Advocacy Roundtable Chair

[SEE PDF ATTACHMENT B.]

VIA EMAIL COMMUNICATION TO INDIVIDUAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

9/16/15 Performing Arts Roundtable (via Rachel Vagts)

The Performing Arts Roundtable conducted a survey of members regarding the Affinity Groups proposal and these are their results. I did ask for a clarification how many responses they received—there were 10 total.

Rachel

From: Kate Crowe [<mailto:katherine.crowe@du.edu>]

Sent: Tuesday, September 15, 2015 9:36 PM

To: Rachel S. Vagts <Rachel_Vagts@berea.edu>

Cc: SAA Performing Arts Roundtable Steering Committee List (par-cmte@forums.archivists.org) <par-cmte@forums.archivists.org>

Subject: PAR Response to Survey on Affinity Groups

Rachel:

Here is the full set of responses to the survey on affinity groups that we sent to the full PAR listserv – we received a small response rate, but the responses were thoughtful and provided a sample of folks who

are paying SAA members, participating nonmembers, and people who participated previously as nonmembers and have become members. I plan to send a summary of the responses to the full list as well sometime tomorrow or the day after, and I hope that they will spur some dialogue among the roundtable about our mutual vision for the group going forward. Please let me know if you or anyone else on Council has any other questions.

Have you ever participated in PAR as a nonmember?

- No, I have always participated in PAR as a paying SAA member: 60%
- No, I have never participated in PAR 20%
- Yes, I currently participate in PAR as a nonmember: 10%
- Yes, I previously participated in PAR as a nonmember (but currently participate as an SAA member): 10%

If PAR became a Virtual Community Group with all of the proposed changes (i.e. no meeting space at annual meeting, no Council liaison, nonmember participation allowed) would it negatively affect your participation?

- Yes 40%
- I don't know 40%
- No 40%

If PAR became an Affinity Group, with all of the proposed changes (i.e. no nonmember participation, requirement to meet 4% of total SAA membership) would it negatively affect your participation?

- Yes 20%
- I don't know 30%
- No 50%

What are the benefits, if any, to the proposed changes?

- The only benefit I can discern is that SAA will save money.
- Streamlines processes of Roundtable and Sections. The ability [for SAA members] to associate with an unlimited number of groups.
- No limitation on the number affinity groups in which SAA members can participate.
- Not everyone can make it to meetings in person. Like me. I don't have the opportunity or means to travel.
- I think the SAA system was pushed to the absolute limit and now they need to focus scarce resources on where they would be better utilized. I think PAR is strong enough to survive the cut, and we should fight to keep the numbers up. It is the only venue within the archival community where I can have a meaningful exchange with people dealing with the same issues I deal with. It is also a good place to learn new things and brainstorm solutions to our common issues.
- The only benefit seems to be the bottom line of SAA: fewer groups that need meeting space means less money spent at the annual meeting. SAA could consider other ways to reduce expenses, such as not meeting in major cities with larger hotel bills.

- I'm not sure of the benefits, other than making it easier to schedule meetings at the Annual Meeting.

What are the negatives, if any, to the proposed changes?

- My biggest concern would be that minority interest groups that don't meet the 4% threshold will be negatively impacted. A virtual meeting group does not offer the equivalent experience to in-person meetings, networking, presentations, and problem solving sessions. SAA should not disenfranchise groups of archivists just because they don't represent an arbitrary threshold of members. Also, discussion in the EAD roundtable regarding international participation is very relevant. I'd like to see SAA be more inclusive than exclusive. I'm not sure this change accomplishes that goal.
- I am operating under the assumption that PAR will be able to meet the 4%. However, I am concerned other roundtables (diversity minded groups and SNAP) will not meet that threshold and therefore exclude member and non-members from active and important participation.
- Not sure.
- If we were to become a VCG we are doomed. The support provided by SAA is important to keep the conversations and initiatives alive.
- On the largest scale, it will likely mean a reduction in the amount of space devoted to meeting spaces for the various Virtual Community groups, some of whom could be quite sizable but not big enough to qualify as Affinity groups. It is turning away somewhat from the diversity of SAA. I fear that PAR will lose meeting space at the annual meeting, because it may not be able to reach the minimum membership to become an Affinity group. Lack of meeting space would also be a tacit admission by SAA that it does not value archivists who tend to performing arts collections.
For myself, I am no longer a member of SAA because the dues became too expensive, and my employer is an institutional member, giving me partial discounts on some services. If PAR becomes an Affinity Group, I would no longer be able to participate in it.
- These changes may affect SAA's ability and the ability of SAA roundtables to reach out to colleagues in other fields or in other countries.

Please enter any additional feedback you have on the proposed changes to affinity groups.

- I would prefer that SAA not make the changes. I don't see how the existing system needs to be changed.
- Affinity groups should be determined by achieving goals that fall into the mission. Affinity groups that do not have any goals or activity should become virtual communities.
- PAR needs to make something large-ish in the next year or two in order to revitalize itself and attract new members. I'm sorry to say it but it's a numbers game. I am absolutely positive that we can get the numbers, it's just going to take some work from the steering committee and chair.
- I have no major objections to the proposed changes.

If you participate or have participated in PAR as a nonmember, please add a brief statement on how you participate and why.

- I'm a paying member, I just haven't taken the opportunity to participate yet.

- I am on the PAR listserv, have contributed content to the PAR newsletter, have volunteered to serve on a proposed conference program, and volunteered to serve as a PAR "subject expert." I participate because I am an archivist who specializes in music collections, and PAR is the only organ in SAA which addresses that specialty.

Katherine Crowe, Performing Arts Roundtable Chair 2015-2016
Curator of Special Collections and Archives, University of Denver, Anderson Academic Commons;
office: 303-871-7944; cell: 303-981-2274

9/16/15 Paul Conway (via Amy Cooper Cary)

To add to the Affinity Group discussion, I also wanted to share this exchange that I had with Paul Conway, who offered his comments directly to me.

From: Paul Conway [<mailto:pconway@umich.edu>]

Sent: Friday, September 11, 2015 2:00 PM

To: Cary, Amy <amy.cary@marquette.edu>

Subject: Re: Affinity Groups in SAA

Amy,

In terms of side groups, I am thinking of the OCLC and LYRASIS meetings, which aren't officially SAA groups, but they both did attract huge interest in part because they have active agendas and are working toward reports and other deliverables. I have not heard, yet, of any SAA sanctioned groups that are operating outside the conference, but given the increasing distributed nature of the meeting, I see it as a potential issue, especially if active groups that do not meet the 4% threshold may want to continue meeting informally.

I also mentioned "concrete ideas" for SAA, but did not mention any. What I have in mind is SAA Council and other critical committees, such as the pubs board, charging SAA groups with tasks that in part are tied to the priorities of the strategic plan. There is much need for research, loosely defined, community building, outreach to allied professions, work on education, etc. that would happen more broadly if affinity groups saw them not simply as affiliated like minded people but also as "task forces" doing work for SAA and the profession. Lots of other professional associations are much more aggressive than SAA in mobilizing the talents of the members through affinity groups....

Given that the sections and round tables not only take space (resources) but also are given center billing in the program schedule, however, I just think we can do better to get more work out of most if not all the affinity groups. I would worry less about how many groups there are and how large they are and concentrate more on what the affinity groups will do for themselves and for the Society.

Best to you. Thanks for listening and for feedback.

On Fri, Sep 11, 2015 at 2:30 PM, Cary, Amy <amy.cary@marquette.edu> wrote:

Thanks, Paul, for your thoughtful comments. As always, you have some really good points, and if you don't mind I'm going to share this as is with Council. The one thing that I would like clarification on, if

you can give it, are a couple of examples of side groups that migrated away from the SAA meeting site? We've seen this in years past as well, based on competing needs for space, but it would help if you could give me a good example of a meeting that "traveled" but might have been better placed in the convention center....

From: Paul Conway [mailto:pconway@umich.edu]

Sent: Thursday, September 10, 2015 8:55 PM

To: Cary, Amy <amy.cary@marquette.edu>

Subject: Affinity Groups in SAA

Just wanted to write you directly on the Affinity Group issue, which seems to be getting some buzz on various lists. Here are some general comments.

1. I understand and support the resource issue that results from the sprawl of various groups of various sizes. Something needs to be done; I get that what is happening is a grace period where all existing groups have a couple of years to get their act together. The idea of a phased change is a good one and two years seems like a good idea overall.
2. My first concern has to do with the fact that the size of the groups after the grace period is the only meaningful criteria. Making size the only criteria will achieve the goal of reducing the number of groups that expect and receive SAA support, particularly meeting space at the annual meeting.
3. I do not mind the overall thrust to align member benefits with the allocation of SAA resources. This makes sense to a point. But if SAA goes down the path of the hotel(s)/convention center model of meetings, I think that SAA will find that all sorts of side groups will migrate away from the central SAA meeting and set up camp elsewhere. We saw some of this happen this year. SAA needs to balance support for group meetings with its overall resources. But there may be some alternatives, such as tapping the exhibit space prior to the exhibit opening for on the fly meetings etc.
4. Here is my biggest issue: the problem in my mind is not the sprawl of groups (and the associated drain of SAA resources) but rather the lightweight, directionless, ineffectual nature of so many of the groups. This year, I dropped in on about 12 groups. I found attendance at most of them to be a huge waste of time. So little content; relatively meaningless agendas; hardly any interaction among the people in the rooms. It's like a giant "birds of a feather" event with little sense of purpose or continuity.
5. If a critical mass of the affinity groups had agendas that had to do with the priority needs of SAA and the profession (including the entire educational endeavor), and if the work of the affinity groups had continuity from year to year, then the cost to SAA to host these groups would be well worth it to members.

I think the issues I raise are big ones that go well beyond the central issue of SAA resources for support for affinity groups. What I think should happen is that SAA should take some concrete steps to energize the work plans of various groups; even having work plans would be a start. Unlike many issues at SAA, this one seems to be a top down challenge. SAA Council needs to decide the extent to which collaborative work by affinity groups should somehow be fostered versus leaving the groups to chart their own paths and levels of activity. I hope this is helpful. Just wanted you to know that I've been thinking about this since the SAA annual meeting.

Paul Conway, Associate Professor of Information, University of Michigan School of Information

9/15/15 Samantha Winn / Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable (via Lisa Mangiafico)

The SNAP RT steering committee has compiled an official response to the council's proposed affinity group changes on behalf of the roundtable. I have attached the document here. We hope the Council will find SNAP member responses (attached in the index) particularly valuable. Please let me know if you have any further questions. We look forward to hearing more about the changes in the coming months. Thank you for your time, Sam

[SEE PDF ATTACHMENT C.]

Comments Received After the 9/15/15 Deadline

9/24/15 Cultural Heritage Working Group

The members of the Cultural Heritage Working Group are submitting this official statement in response to the proposed change to the Affinity Groups. We strongly disagree with the proposed change to the Roundtables. Many of these groups work with or on cultural heritage issues and collections, namely the Archivists and Archives of Color, Human Rights Archives, Native American Archives, International Archival Affairs, and Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives. These groups may be unable to sustain the required 4% total SAA membership quota (approx. 250 members) and will thus be required to become a Virtual Group instead. These groups were created to be in-person Roundtables that also enjoy all the benefits SAA offers all the Roundtables. The current proposal favors the larger groups who have strength in numbers and who already have a strong turnout. However, many of these other above noted Roundtables are often already marginalized or are representing marginalized communities that greatly need the support of SAA. In addition, Roundtables were created to support and advocate for these major issues that were not being supported or represented in these other Sections or Roundtables. If this option is taken away from smaller Roundtables the specific issues they address will continue to be marginalized within the larger profession. Although there may be some overlap with some of these groups, these Roundtables were created with specific purposes and charges in mind that makes each unique in their advocacy efforts. Thus, the CHWG members do not support this proposed change to SAA Affinity Groups.

Sincerely, Jennifer O'Neal, CHWG Chair