

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Member Affinity Groups: Transition Work Plan
(Prepared by Pam Hackbart-Dean, Erin Lawrimore, Rachel Vagts,
Nancy Beaumont, and Felicia Owens)

BACKGROUND

Since May 2013, the SAA Council has considered possible changes in member affinity groups “to encourage flexible, inclusive, and participatory opportunities for the membership.” Following review of several proposals and two rounds of member comments, the Council approved moving forward with a proposal considered at its August 1, 2016, meeting. See: [0816-1-III-A-MembAffGroups](#). At that time, Council working group members Pam Hackbart-Dean, Erin Lawrimore, and Rachel Vagts were assigned to oversee the work of the SAA staff in implementing the changes called for in the proposal.

Members and leaders have been notified of the impending member affinity group changes via several mediums: Talking points delivered by Council members to their assigned liaison groups at the Joint Annual Meeting (at which they were also asked to solicit feedback on a common name for all groups) and announcements via the SAA [website](#), *In The Loop*, and the Leader List.

Multiple messages have been sent to the SAA Leader List to notify all leaders of the impending member affinity group changes. Staff will continue to communicate about timelines for changes, completed tasks, and the new deadlines schedules as necessary.

A staff group made up of Beaumont, Owens, Matt Black, Peter Carlson, and Carlos Salgado have met several times since the Joint Annual Meeting to outline implementation steps, identify and prioritize tasks, and set preliminary deadlines for the first “wave” of changes—all with the goal of completing the transition by the time of the 2017 Annual Meeting. Following is a list of implementation steps, in priority order:

- Change all roundtable names to “section,”¹ including on microsites, listserv handles, and across the SAA website.

¹ This step was based on staff members’ understanding that the Council favored use of this moniker. Because no final decision was reached at the August Council meetings, we pose Question 2 on page 5 of this document.

- Set a standard timetable for all group requirements (e.g., reporting, elections, annual meeting requests).
- Reconfigure our systems to allow SAA members to join an unlimited number of sections, including updating membership forms and member benefits pages.
- Reconfigure the Annual Meeting schedule to remove the distinction between sections and roundtables.
- Revise the Governance Manual and update all roundtable bylaws.

WORK PLAN

Name Changes

At its August 1 meeting the Council tentatively decided that all member affinity groups would be called “sections.” Council liaisons were asked to discuss the matter with their groups and report back on reactions. Unfortunately the Council did not explicitly discuss feedback on this issue at its August 6 meeting because there was a more urgent matter to discuss. In the “Questions for Discussion” below, we propose discussing and finalizing the name change so that we may continue to move forward.

Given concerns communicated by some leaders about the name change, staff plan to send individual email messages to all roundtable chairs and vice chairs, with a copy to the Council liaison, asking them to discuss with their steering committees the group’s acronym, email discussion list handle, and logo. The draft email message follows:

Subject:

[Roundtable Chair and VC]:

As mentioned in my message to the Leader List on [specify day and date], a number of changes must be made to implement the [member affinity group proposal](#) approved by the Council in August.

The first step that affects your group directly is to change the names of all roundtables to “section.” For some groups, this will affect the acronym, logo, and/or discussion list email handle.

To ease this transition, we would like to suggest the following for your group:

Name:

Acronym:

Listserv Handle:

Please discuss these suggestions with your steering committee to determine how the group would like to proceed. And then please respond back to me with your final decision by Friday, December 9. Staff will then handle making all necessary changes to the microsite, listserv, etc.

We have begun work with our designer to create a “standard” logo for SAA sections. You’re welcome to implement the standard, or to redesign your logo either on your own or with our assistance. We’ll distribute the “standard” as soon as it’s available.

Please note that you are responsible for changing your section’s name, acronym, and logo on all platforms outside the group’s microsite, including external blogs and social media sites. These changes must be made by January 1, 2017.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to call me at 866-722-7858, ext. 19. Or I can be reached at fowens@archivists.org.

The SAA Council and staff thank you for your patience as we navigate these very positive changes!

Best, Felicia

Per this email message, leaders will be given the option of asking for SAA assistance in redesigning their logos. Staff have reached out to a graphic designer to develop a standardized logo for all sections. This standardized logo is optional, but the hope is to create recognizable branding that will help link our component groups to SAA going forward. The final design should be implemented in early 2017.

As noted in the message, leaders are given until Friday, December 9, to discuss these changes with their steering committees and confirm their new names to help make the transition as smooth as possible for all. Once these details are confirmed, the staff can move forward with changing all roundtable names on microsites, discussion lists, membership forms, and across the SAA website, as well as reconfiguring our association management software (AMS) to consolidate all groups. The goal is to have all names publicly changed by January 1, 2017.

Standard Requirements

The following five standard requirements were approved by the Council in August:

- Standardized bylaws based on the SAA template. All current bylaws that are not in this format (primarily current Section bylaws) will be simplified based on the template.
- Submission of a proposal for the group’s annual meeting (including agenda, description, preference for onsite/offsite location, AV needs, duration, and indication of whether it is a solo or joint meeting) by March 1 each year.
- Conduct of an online election for group leader(s) using SAA’s process, with submission of the slate due by June 1 each year. Inclusion in each election and/or referendum conducted at this time a simple questionnaire asking for member feedback on the effectiveness of the group or posing a question such as, “If you have suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the group, note them here.”
- Submission of an annual report and a complete leader roster by September 1 each year. The report will be prepared by the outgoing chair. SAA will create an online form to make it easier to provide the required information – including an indication of how the group addressed SAA’s strategic priorities in the past year.

- Responsiveness to SAA Council requests for assistance in conducting research, drafting expert comments, or undertaking other activities related to the group's area of special interest.

We were able to begin implementation of the new schedule with a September 1, 2016, deadline for all 2015-2016 section and roundtable annual reports. To accomplish this, the staff developed a Survey Monkey form to simplify the process for group leaders and to help standardize the report submissions. Outgoing chairs were encouraged to submit the reports so that the details were as complete as possible. We achieved 100% compliance! (See the compiled reports at 1116-VI-P.) A few leaders asked that the questions be shared in a document so that they could compile their reports before going through the web form, but overall the response to the new deadline and the web form were very positive.

Staff will continue to communicate via the Leader List regarding the requirements and deadlines. They plan to create a Survey Monkey form through which group leaders can submit their annual meeting information (due by March 1), both to streamline the process (by limiting email churn) and to keep a record of all requests in one place. We will continue to conduct elections via Survey Monkey (slates due by June 1), with results sent to group leaders prior to the Annual Meeting.

Reconfiguring Systems

Preliminary changes have been made to membership forms and the website to allow members to subscribe to an unlimited number of sections. Once name changes have been finalized, Black will work on combining those sections of the membership form and adding a join/leave link on the website so that members can easily manage all of their group subscriptions.

As noted above, once name changes have been confirmed, staff will work to reconfigure the AMS, microsites, listservs, and other areas of the SAA website to consolidate all groups and change names where appropriate.

Annual Meeting Schedule

The Council has discussed via email the member affinity group meeting "blocks" for the Annual Meeting. With 45 groups, it appears that we will be able to consolidate into four 90-minute time slots (11 rooms times four slots), provided that at least one group meets offsite or at least two groups hold a joint meeting. Consolidation into four slots will be especially important at the 2017 Annual Meeting, given the compressed schedule to allow for the full-day forum on "The Liberated Archive" on Saturday. Because of the heightened chance of overlap in groups' areas of special interest, the staff will make every effort to communicate early and often with group leaders and to accommodate their ideas for groupings in the four time slots.

Governance Revisions

One of the later-stage tasks will be to update the Governance Manual and roundtables' bylaws to reflect the new names and structure. Sections IX and X of the Governance Manual must be consolidated and the subsequent sections renumbered.

The staff proposes a change in the way in which group bylaws are reviewed and approved as a means of streamlining the work of the groups, the Council, and the staff. They propose that:

1. The revised section of the Governance Manual would serve as the standard governing document (“bylaws”) for all member affinity groups approved by the Council. Modification of the standard bylaws that apply to all groups would require Council approval.
2. Member affinity groups would then have their own “governing procedures” (perhaps still called “bylaws”) which would fill in the gaps of any specific rules or procedures that a group prefers to supplement the Governance Manual. (For example, some groups prefer to have a blog editor or secretary.) Going forward, these individual governing procedures would be reviewed by the Executive Director and Council liaison to ensure that they align with SAA policy and then would be voted on by group members in a summer referendum held in conjunction with the election cycle. They would not require approval by the SAA Council.

The staff proposes to have a clean draft of the Governance Manual as well as a template for group bylaws available for Council review by March 2017 so that all groups can vote on their revised bylaws in conjunction with their 2017 elections.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The Council previously had agreed that all groups should have the same moniker (e.g., “special interest group” or “interest group” or “section” or “forum” or “roundtable”). Does the Council still wish to proceed with one standard name?
2. The Council previously had agreed that it preferred “section.” Council members sought feedback on this name at the Joint Annual Meeting. Should “section” be used to refer to all member affinity groups?
3. Do Council members have thoughts about the timeline and priorities set out by the staff?
4. Does the Governance Manual + group bylaws system (under “Governance Revisions”) seem reasonable and practical?
5. Do Council members see the need for other changes that were not identified by the working group and staff?