

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 14–16, 2016
Chicago, Illinois**

**Final Report: 2016 CoSA/SAA Joint
Annual Meeting Program Committee
(Prepared by 2016 Program Committee Co-chairs
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The 2016 Program Committee experimented with new processes and procedures to better serve both members and committee members. Overall, there was positive feedback from members about the extended deadline, the online submission system, and the sessions. At the time of this report, specific feedback about pop-up sessions was anecdotal and in general positive.

Program Proposal Extended Deadline

The 2016 proposal deadline was November 13, approximately 5 weeks later than previous years. This was very beneficial to members and others submitting proposals, but required extraordinary efforts from Matt Black in managing the ERSpeaker software by Event Rebels and helping the Program Committee prepare for reviews. Through conversations, feedback from members was enthusiastic about a later deadline. This allows members more time post-meeting to regroup and be more thoughtful about proposals.

Additionally, the Committee published a Google spreadsheet to allow members to post ideas and find panelists and speakers. Approximately 35 topics were posted, although no analysis was completed to see how many were actually submitted. Provision of the spreadsheet also received positive feedback and was implemented for the 2017 Call for Proposals.

Suggestions:

- Update and publish the FAQs with the Call for Proposals. Answers to many questions that came through the conference@archivists.org email were available through the FAQs.
- Provide documented outline/timeline for members, especially if it is again over the holidays.

Program Proposal Review

The Program Committee had a little over 6 weeks to review proposals, extended from the roughly 10 days from previous years. This was an adequate amount of time for review and allowed Committee members to better manage their time for reviewing. Prior to the actual review process, there were concerns about this process being over the holiday season. However, post-review the Committee members thought it went well. The in-person Committee meeting

was held January 14-16, 2016. A member suggested that proposals be split up among members so that not all sessions were reviewed by all Committee members, but the consensus was that all members review all proposals for better review at the in-person meeting and to help maintain diversity of content. It also worked well to have each member lead the program committee's discussion for several proposals, assigned prior to the program committee meeting.

Online Submission and Review System

This was the first year that SAA utilized the online ERSpeaker system rather than Excel spreadsheets and workbook. There were occasional glitches with the system, but Matt made updates and improvements very quickly so reviewing time was not impeded. The new system also made it easy for Matt to quickly produce reports throughout the review process showing how presentations were ranked and the categories covered. This helped streamline the review process and ensure a more balanced program. Overall the system worked extremely well in its first use and there are only minor suggestions for improvement.

Suggestions:

Speaker Form:

- Have system send speakers a confirmation that their information was received. Or maybe both a confirmation page AND an email. Many proposers were confused, as there was no indication or confirmation that the information was successfully submitted.
- Find a way for Program Committee members to recuse themselves from a proposal as appropriate, without impacting the score for the proposal. (Per one Committee member: "As for the default low score for the ones you recused yourself from, I had that problem initially. I had made a note in the comments that I was recusing myself because the proposer/presenter was on my staff, and the program defaulted to the score of one, even though I did not select a score. I deleted the comment, and the score reverted to a blank, and now shows up on my individualized spreadsheet with no score.")
- Allow the session proposer to be different from session chair, if necessary. There were a few issues with the proposer not being the chair.
- Suggestions from proposers:
 - "Last year, I would send it to my co-panelists for review... this year, I'm not sharing it but usually, I'd want everyone to go through it to verify. I could give everyone my e-mail address and code to log in, but I'm wondering if I'm missing a more obvious way." The system only allows one proposer, and SAA should consider whether it is viable to allow multiple people to access the same proposal. If not, perhaps adding information to the FAQ to clarify proposers should review with co-presenters prior to submission.
 - "I think it would be useful if the 'other' option opened a one line space to elaborate, rather than just leaving it at 'other.' And since I'm proposing my own 'alternate' format, there's very little space (just the one line) for a description...I think even a 25-50 words or less would be useful. Or it might be my being literal...since it says 'please describe' rather than 'type of session,' but I would think the PC would want

- an explanation of how the session should work, unless the name/type is really descriptive.”
- “A button to mail a copy of the proposal to yourself at the time it is submitted, or a way to get access, with your name or some other control, to your proposal after the fact.”

Suggestions for Program Committee Members as They Review:

- Add a field for reviewers to note a judgment about each proposal based on how it is being presented to you for review (i.e., is the content really good AND will it work with the people who are listed AND in the proposed format).
- We were able to make proposed adjustments to the session topics that people had submitted via the new app. Might want to see if that option would be available for the session format as well as there were a number that seemed to fit other formats better than the one submitted.
- You might then make a note to yourself that if the proposal receives an overall rating that is low and you think the content is good and it might work as a poster, for example, you can bring that up 1) when the group discusses the proposal or 2) when the group goes back to look at proposals that fall below a certain rating level and that might be “salvaged” (if the proposer agrees to changes).
- The new app worked really well for inputting scores and comments, but there was no “global view” of all the presentations and their details. It was really helpful to have the additional “cheat sheet” (Excel doc) with all the information on it to track reviewers own notes and comments as well as being able to look at all of the presentations in one place.
- When reviewing presentations, be cognizant of the style / length of presentation + number people presenting since there are so many options. (One person is NOT a lightning round option any more than eight people in a 60 minute time slot is).

Pop-Up Sessions

This was the second year providing pop-up sessions. Instead of the Committee voting and choosing proposals and having on-site voting, the Committee chose to have online voting from members prior to the meeting. This process worked smoothly, with the voting conducted in May and June through Survey Monkey and tabulations managed by SAA. At the time voting ended, there were more votes than conference registrants, so we consider this a success. This earlier voting allowed for the pop-up sessions to be included in the online program. Pop-ups were held during 5 of the 7 session blocks and designated as such in the final program.

Originally, pop-ups were intended to allow for sessions on timely topics that might have occurred since the time the proposals were due, but this year many of the pop-ups seemed to function as a “last minute” chance to propose a session.

Speaker Communications

The Program Committee seemed to receive an inordinate number of questions and changes from speakers. Although information about AV equipment, sessions, etc., is available on the proposal form and [on the website](#), there were still many questions about this. A possible fix is to send a

regular monthly communication to all speakers with speaking tips, reminders about AV, and a deadline to make changes. Another idea is to have the Program Committee chair(s) set up call-in information sessions for speakers with questions or concerns. This should help speakers be more self-reliant and responsible in preparing for the conference. SAA staff fielded change requests up through the Monday of conference week, so it would be nice if we could have fewer last-minute changes.

To the presenter resources on the website, we added "[Tips for Speakers](#)." It is unclear how many presenters utilized these resources, but this information should be maintained for future annual meetings. It will be helpful to presenters to receive the link to these resources upon acceptance as well as periodic communication (see above).

At the January meeting, Committee members indicated which sessions they would like to monitor as liaisons. SAA staff did the initial assignments and the Committee chairs finalized the liaisons. Members received 4-5 of their top choices and all had at least one session off. A few weeks prior to the meeting, liaisons sent an email (composed by the chairs) to each session chair. This was helpful, as it facilitated some changes ahead of the meeting.

During the meeting, liaisons counted attendees and made helpful notes about individual sessions. Sessions went well, and most complaints were about sound or temperature.

Schedule

Generally no issue with the schedule, although at times the 15 minutes between sessions was tight for the Program Committee members to get from one session to the next and touch base with presenters. Non-educational sessions and groups need to be reminded that the schedule is tight, as well, so that meetings do not exceed the time allotted and make it difficult to start the next session.

Joint Meeting

CoSA and SAA joint annual meetings are successful for both groups, and are held in the spirit of cooperation.