

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
November 5-7, 2017  
Chicago, Illinois**

**Create Task Force to Revise Best Practices  
on Accessibility in Archives  
(Prepared by Tanya Zanish-Belcher)**

**BACKGROUND**

SAA's Archives Management and Records Management roundtables formed a Joint Working Group on Accessibility in Archives and Records Management in 2008. Its mission was "To contact and network with persons with physical impairments in the archives and records management profession (archivists, records managers, and researchers/patrons), identify and study the challenges for them in same, and develop tools to assist them in overcoming these challenges."

In July 2008, the working group distributed an online survey concerning working with people with disabilities in archives to participants in the Archives & Archivists Discussion List. The results of this survey are summarized in the following article: Ganz, Michelle. "Survey Conducted on 'Accessibility in Archives.'" *Archival Outlook* (Nov/Dec 2008): 8, 24.  
[http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/ao\\_backissues/AO-NovDec08.pdf](http://www.archivists.org/periodicals/ao_backissues/AO-NovDec08.pdf)

In August 2009, the working group created two sets of recommendations based on the survey results: Best Practices for Working with Archives Employees with Physical Disabilities and Best Practices for Working with Archives Researchers with Physical Disabilities. Because the group charge explicitly stated that this group should consider "physical impairments," the best practices in this document are limited to mobility, sight, and hearing impairments. These Best Practices were approved by the SAA Council in 2010.

The original working group members also conducted surveys, gave presentations, and created a number of resources on the topic, including A Quick Guide to Accessibility:  
<https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/AWG%20Pamphlet%20Rev%209-8-2011.pdf>.

Also available in Spanish: <https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/AWG-A%20Quick%20Guide%20to%20Accessibility%20and%20Archives-Spanish.pdf>.

## **DISCUSSION**

Several SAA members as well as the SAA Diversity Committee have discussed and been interested in revising these Best Practices to expand and represent current practice beyond physical disabilities.

The SAA Committee on Education is developing two courses to correspond with each of these best practices. Thus this would seem to be an opportune time to undertake the work of revising the Best Practices document.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT a Working Group to Revise the Best Practices on Accessibility be charged per the following description, with a final report due not later than November 2018.**

### **SAA Working Group to Revise Best Practices on Accessibility**

#### **I. Purpose**

The Working Group to Revise Best Practices for Working with Archives Employees and Archives Researchers with Physical Disabilities is responsible for reviewing both of the current Best Practices documents and exploring expansion of the Best Practices to include neuro-disability, temporary physical disabilities, and any other topics that should be considered within the scope of the document.

#### **II. Selection, Size, and Length of Term**

The Working Group is charged for a 12-month period that begins in November 2017 and continues through the Council's November 2018 meeting. The Working Group will comprise six SAA members, one of whom will serve as chair. The Working Group members will be appointed by the current President and a Council member will be appointed as a liaison/*ex-officio* member.

#### **III. Reporting Procedures**

Update reports will be provided to the SAA Council at its May and August 2018 meetings, with a final report due in November 2018.

#### **IV. Duties and Responsibilities**

To fulfill its purpose as described above, the Working Group is specifically charged to:

- Share draft Best Practices with selected individuals for comment and review;
- Share draft Best Practices with appropriate Sections, such as Archives Management and Records Management; and
- Seek member comment on a draft and revise accordingly prior to submitting a final draft to the Council.

## V. Meetings

The Working Group will carry out its charge primarily via electronic mail, conference calls, online meetings, and face-to-face meetings held in conjunction with the SAA Annual Meeting.

**Support Statement:** As articulated in the SAA Statement on Diversity and Inclusion, the Society of American Archivists is a professional association that benefits from the participation of people from all backgrounds, and strives to ensure that its membership, the holdings that archivists acquire and manage, and the users whom archivists serve reflect the evolving diversity of society. SAA identifies inclusion as our commitment to ongoing and cumulative efforts (e.g., policies, principles, practices, and activities) that engage an increasingly diverse community in a welcoming, equitable, and responsive manner. Reaffirming and revising these Best Practices focusing on accessibility will demonstrate our continued commitment to a diverse and welcoming profession and provide appropriate guidelines for archival institutions and their employees.

**Impact on Strategic Priorities:** The work of the proposed Working Group will meet the following components of SAA's Strategic Plan: Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists, and Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs.

**Fiscal Impact:** None.