

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

**Social Justice Toolkit**

**(Prepared by the Council Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion)**

**BACKGROUND**

After the release of the Council's "[Statement on White Supremacists' Actions in Charlottesville, Virginia](#)" on August 15, 2017, the work of the Council Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion was redirected to creating a toolkit "that will offer specific information and resources on how our profession can work with communities to identify, combat, and dismantle acts and symbols of white supremacy while retaining the history, context, and cultural understanding of these acts and symbols."

**DISCUSSION**

The Working Group recommends the creation of a permanent space on the SAA website for a social justice toolkit. Although materials specifically related to Confederate monuments will be a starting point, the site should be expanded to include resources related to any social justice issues and archives. "Resources" should not be limited to published, video or workshop formats, but can include more creative opportunities like user personas. By providing these collated resources, we hope to encourage intensive grassroots work by archivists, rather than relying on broad statements from SAA.

For the purposes of discussion, we are thinking of "social justice" specifically as a responsibility of archivists. To quote from Rand Jimerson, "Archives can and should be an important source for promoting accountability and social justice. Archivists should ensure that their selection and preservation policies include the records and stories of those who have been marginalized, thus balancing and rectifying our cultural memory."<sup>1</sup>

We are also framing our work using SAA's Core Values of Archivists, specifically on the value of social responsibility, which reads, "Underlying all the professional activities of archivists is their responsibility to a variety of groups in society and to the public good. Most immediately, archivists serve the needs and interests of their employers and institutions. Yet the archival record is part of the cultural heritage of all members of society. Archivists with a clearly defined societal mission strive to meet these broader social responsibilities in their policies and procedures for selection, preservation, access, and use of the archival record. Archivists with a

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1013&context=lib-facpubs>

narrower mandate still contribute to individual and community memory for their specific constituencies, and in so doing improve the overall knowledge and appreciation of the past within society.”

The development of such a resource is an opportunity to invite members to contribute resources and give feedback on the toolkit. We will recruit involvement as broadly as possible, both by asking for suggestions from specific groups and by publishing an open call for volunteers and suggestions.

A permanent space on the SAA website will demonstrate the commitment of resources to the continued development of archivists in social justice work. The toolkit should also be designed with submission capabilities (for an example, see the Dictionary Working Group’s [“Suggest a Term...” form](#)) so that members can contribute important works for addition.

The working group suggests the following statement of purpose:

Issues of social justice affect archivists in our workspaces, in the collections we care for, and in the communities we serve.

This toolkit was created by the SAA Council Working Group on Diversity and Inclusion to assist archivists in their work. These resources are meant to educate us on the context of social justice movements and help us better understand how these movements play out in everyday archival work.

Next steps for the working group will be:

- Set up a structure for regular communications with the SAA membership about our work;
- Identify additional volunteers/avenues of input;
- Invite volunteers to contribute resources or act as reviewers;
- Collaborate with SAA staff on the creation of/editing access to a webpage; and
- Compile content and submit to volunteers for review.

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- What is the benefit of a permanent web presence on the SAA site? Where might such a site reside in relationship to other pages?
- What is the best method of communication to the membership? “Off the Record”?
- Should the working group be given similar status to other, non-Council, SAA working groups?