Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Chicago, Illinois

Status Report: Metadata and Digital Practice Environmental Scan
(Prepared by Mark Matienzo)

BACKGROUND

The Metadata and Digital Practice environmental scan, as proposed by Immediate Past President Nancy McGovern, has a broad-based topical mission concerning metadata management, digital practice (including digital preservation and digital curation), and general technology use, adoption, and development within the archives profession. It is intended to investigate the activities of both sections as well as appointed groups and positions like working groups, committees, and representatives to external bodies, with an intent to help evaluate the organizational maturity and effectiveness of SAA and to evaluate new potential models to support member and component group collaboration.

WORK COMPLETED

In the revised work plan (see *Attachment 1*), the following steps were identified:

1. Reaching out to leaders of relevant SAA groups to identify liaisons;
2. Coordinating with designated liaisons to collect information (e.g., group charges, roles, activities, priorities), get suggestions, and provide feedback;
3. Considering examples from relevant initiatives in allied professional associations and domains, e.g. ICA, regional archives groups, ALA, ARMA, AAM; and
4. Identifying examples from any source that enable a community to monitor, investigate, inform, advise, and provide feedback as SAA's groups do.

While specific methods were also outlined in this work plan, the understanding was that additional work was likely to be identified or change in direction may be possible. To date, significant progress has only been made on activities 3 and 4 (see *Attachment 2* below).

TIMELINE AND SCOPE

As the person tasked with the environmental scan, I made limited progress thus far because of personal transitions (a new job at Stanford University in fall 2016 and a subsequent move across the country in March 2017) and a lack of clarity around the scope of this project. Given that significant time has passed since this project was envisioned, and in consultation with current SAA President Tanya Zanish-Belcher, I believe it is worthwhile to reconsider the project's scope and direction.

While the project was envisioned to provide a comprehensive understanding of gaps, overlaps, and potential opportunities for collaboration around metadata and digital practice within SAA, it has become clear upon further reflection and conversation that its scope is unclear. In some senses, the project may too broad as defined. The project's plan to review recent activities of component and appointed groups, as well as engagement with current group leadership and designated liaisons, is an admirable undertaking and considerably ambitious. At the same time, the selection of the predefined list of sections, working groups, and representatives to external groups may be worth reconsidering as well. While this subset of SAA component groups was chosen given the environmental scan's focus on metadata and digital practice, some of the findings identified in activities 3 and 4 noted that areas of potential convergence or overlap may include sections not included in this list (namely the example described at the end of *Attachment 2*). These tensions in scope have made the definition of the potential outcomes of this work less clear as well, and I have become increasingly less confident that I understand the form that subsequent work should take to ensure that the Council gets the type of input and feedback it needs and the type of member engagement needed to fulfill that need.

QUESTIONS FOR THE COUNCIL

To that end, I would appreciate in-depth feedback from Council on the best way to proceed. I believe that the spirit of this activity will still be of great importance and value to both SAA as an organization and its membership. There are many potential strategies and types of findings that might provide important insights, but given the potential for scope to expand further, I am looking for feedback that will allow us to limit scope and restructure this work, perhaps into multiple phases. I address the following questions to Council as a means to start the conversation to determine this scope and which activities may be the most impactful.

1. What does the Council believe is the most productive direction to proceed with this scan?

2. Are there areas that require special emphasis as a possible Phase 1 from your viewpoint as SAA leadership? Have you heard of specific areas from SAA membership or component group leadership that require special emphasis?

3. What is the most effective way to engage the SAA membership in this area?

4. Are there additional groups that should be included in the original proposed list, such as RAO? Is this the right list?
5. Does the Council have a preference for how this information is collected from the targeted groups--surveys/questionnaires, interviews, conversations, focus groups?

6. How does this work align with the Task Force on Research/Data and Evaluation?

7. Are there specific areas or activities that you think should be out of scope entirely for this phase? Alternately, are there future phases that you believe would be beneficial?

8. What other organizations or initiatives should we investigate to inform potential models?

9. When do we consider effort or scope to be duplicative across component groups, and why is that an issue? What are we trying to optimize through proposed collaboration?

SAA Council Project: Metadata and Digital Practice Environmental Scan
Last revised: February 3, 2017

Recommendation: Appoint Mark Matienzo to coordinate a one-year project to complete an environmental scan and provide a summary report on observations and suggestions regarding SAA's current approach to addressing metadata and digital practice.

Need and *Scope*: There are potential gaps and overlaps as well as increased opportunities to coordinate and collaborate in the areas of metadata and digital practice across SAA and beyond, and specifically in the scope of some groups, such as the Metadata and Digital Object Roundtable, the Electronic Records Section, the Standards Committee and its technical subcommittees, the Web Archiving roundtable, the Encoded Archival Standards Roundtable, and the International Council on Archives (ICA) Expert Group on Archival Description (EGAD).

Approach: Steps to complete the project will include:
- Reaching out to leaders of designated members of relevant SAA groups to identify liaisons
- Coordinating with designated liaisons to collect information (e.g., group charges, roles, activities, priorities), get suggestions, and provide feedback;
- Considering examples from relevant initiatives in allied professional associations and domains, e.g. ICA, regional archives groups, ALA, ARMA, AAM; and
- Identifying examples from any source that enable a community to monitor, investigate, inform, advise, and provide feedback as SAA's groups do.

Roles: During and after the consultation period, the role of Council will include:
- Council members have identified groups that may be in scope based on their charge and/or activities and Council liaisons to those groups will reach out to leaders to designate a liaison for the environmental scan;
- Mark will coordinate with the relevant groups' liaisons, the President (primary Council contact), the Executive Director (and staff members), and relevant Council liaisons;
- Designated SAA Group liaisons to the scan will coordinate with their group's leaderships and members to gather information, suggestions, and feedback;
- The Council will review the summary report, provide feedback, and accept the final report; and
- The Council will review and approve actions based on the summary report as appropriate.

Results: Provide suggestions and observations to the Council, including:
- Areas in metadata and digital practice that currently are not being addressed or where there is possible duplication or opportunities for coordination and cooperation;
- Possible adjustments to the scope of existing groups or the establishment of new or consolidated groups to address the suggestions; and
- Activities and opportunities for SAA and the broader profession to address suggestions.

Deliverable: The project will provide a summary report with relevant supporting documentation

to the SAA Council with suggestions and observations for SAA to be able to respond more flexibly and sustainably to evolving needs and emerging opportunities in the areas of metadata and digital practice. The report will identify participating groups, contributors, and resources.

Timeline (revised):
- Draft work plan to SAA Council for November 2016 meeting.
- Project start date: November 14, 2016.
- **November 2016-March 2017** *(was November-December 2016)*:
  - Initial outreach to designated members or leaders of SAA groups, or representatives to external groups, to identify liaisons and gather initial feedback about the environmental scan.
  - Establish initial contacts with group liaisons/representatives once selected.
  - Begin external scan to identify similar structures in allied professional associations and domains, and additional external data sources and examples.
  - Provide informal monthly updates to the President.
- **April-June 2017** *(was January-March 2017)*:
  - Focused outreach to group liaisons to collect information.
  - Compile information gathered in external scan.
  - Provide informal monthly updates to the President.
  - Formal update to the Council for May 2017 meetings.
- **July-August 2017** *(was April-June 2017)*:
  - Provide early summarization of external research regarding models or patterns for group engagement.
  - Formal update to the Council for **July 2017** *(was May 2017)* meetings.
- **September-November 2017** *(was July-August 2017):*
  - Produce review draft of report for the **November 2017** *(was July 2017)* Council meetings.
  - Feedback from Council within two weeks after the **November 2017 Council meetings** *(was 2017 Annual Meeting)*.
  - Final version of report by **November 30, 2017** *(was August 31, 2017)*.

Methods of analysis
- Review of governance-related documentation (bylaws, charges, reports) from within the last 5 years of SAA groups, and any current documentation from external groups
- Review of other information gathering organized by groups, especially related to decision-making (surveys, ballot results, etc.)
- Questionnaires or focus groups (depending on availability of liaisons)

Provisional areas of inquiry
- Definition of group interests and role within SAA
- Internal perception of group by leadership
- Internal perception of group by membership
- External perception of group by members of other identified groups
- Inquiry about known gaps between or overlaps across groups
- Formal and informal relationships with groups internal to SAA and external, including collaboration with, change in scope in response to, or potential mergers with other groups

- Recommendations of scope for new groups

Proposed list of SAA groups recommended for engagement

- Committees/Working Groups
  - Standards Committee: Schema Development Team, TS-DACS, TS-EAS
  - Intellectual Property Working Group
- Sections
  - Description Section
  - Electronic Records Section
- Representatives
  - Rep(s) to ALA CC:DA and MARC Advisory Committee
  - Rep(s) to ARMA International Standards Development Committee
  - Rep(s) to ICA-EGAD
  - Rep(s) to NISO
- Roundtables
  - Collection Management Tools Roundtable
  - Encoded Archival Description (EAD) Roundtable
  - Metadata and Digital Object Roundtable
  - Web Archiving Roundtable

Analysis of Allied Professional Associations and Domains

As part of the Metadata and Digital Practice environmental scan, I have reviewed other allied professional organizations and initiatives to determine how their component groups or participant-driven initiatives are established and encouraged to collaborate with one another. The analysis below was informed through the review of the web pages on governance or organization (including component group descriptions, bylaws, etc.) for the associations or initiatives described below.

ARMA: As far as I can tell, ARMA does not have component groups in the same sense that SAA does; instead, regional chapters exist in lieu of ways to organize around topics of shared interest. It has been difficult about how to get in depth information since I'm not a member. However, ARMA has active engagement about standards and task forces to focus on specific knowledge areas. Without more in-depth understanding of the organization, it does not appear that ARMA provides a model for SAA to follow.

American Library Association: Obviously, ALA is a much larger organization than SAA; accordingly, both the organization's interests are much broader than we might think for our own organization. ALA divisions, focus on specific functional areas of profession, and sections within a division refine those further. Interest groups serve an important purpose as a means to support member-driven activity, and the logistical requirements to create an interest group depend on the section within which it is affiliated. Interest groups can also be a "joint" interest group affiliated across sections or divisions (such as the Library Linked Data Interest Group, which spans across two divisions). In terms of this specific environmental scan, the two divisions that are the most relevant are probably the Library Information Technology Association (LITA) and the Association for Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS), as divisions; in a cross-profession sense, the Rare Book and Manuscript Section (RBMS) of the Association for College and Research Libraries (ACRL) also requires consideration. One notable difference between the structural "coverage" of SAA and ALA is that SAA does not have constituent group like LITA, whose explicit focus is technology across the profession.

Digital Library Federation: The Digital Library Federation is a membership organization for institutions. DLF has a history of groups created by individuals designed to work across institutional boundaries, and given its scope as an organization much of these activities relate to metadata and digital practice. Of particular interest based on the scope of this project is the DLF Metadata Support Group and the DLF Assessment Interest Group and its subordinate groups. The process to create a formally recognized group is very lightweight, and is supported by the DLF Organizers' Toolkit, introduced in November 2016. DLF provides an early-stage consultative role with any new group to help determine the amount of support that the group needs. An individual does not need to be affiliated with a DLF member institution to start or join a working group, since a demonstrated commitment to the area of work is more important than affiliation. The value of the DLF Organizers' Toolkit cannot be understated. In addition to a set of background information regarding the process requirements and types of resources that DLF can provide to affiliated working groups, the Organizers' Toolkit also contains a wealth of

information and recommendations on facilitation techniques, supporting diversity and inclusion, preventing and managing burnout, outreach, planning conference calls and in-person meetings, and how to organize and share outputs of the group.

Museum professional communities: The museum community seems to have varying structures depending on the organizations. An initial review of the American Alliance of Museums identified a set of "professional communities", but few tend to operate in the area of metadata and digital practice. There is a Media and Technology Professional Community, but its focus seems to be very broad and primarily on the use and production of audiovisual content. In addition, it is not entirely clear how these professional communities work together. However, the Museum Computer Network (MCN) seemed to provide an interesting model. MCN has a set of evolving Special Interest Groups that have collaborated on occasion. In general, the model is somewhat similar to the existing section model, but with different requirements around oversight and governance. SIGs are expected to take on a wide range of projects such as, but not limited to: hosting "best of" or "best practices" awards in the SIG's area, proposing and hosting sessions at other professional conferences, participating in projects relevant to the SIG's area (similar to what current sections can do); creating an annual calendar of SIG events, developing a SIG Chairs' orientation and a Chair leadership track and mentoring program, creating such documentary resources as vendor listings, bibliographies, etc., developing training materials or programs in the SIG's area, and hosting "MCN Pro" sessions throughout the year. These sessions are an opportunity for SIGs to invite experts to discuss a particular issue and/or showcase projects relevant to the SIG's topic. Creation of a new SIG requires the identification of two co-chairs and a mission, which is expected to have "durable value" to the MCN community by choosing broad and long-lasting topic (e.g., Digital Media rather than a narrower topic such as JPEG 2000).

International Council on Archives: As an international professional organization, ICA is much more highly structured than SAA. ICA's component groups include professional sections, which based on their current definition, may not allow for the type of opportunities around collaboration envisioned. However, ICA's Professional Programme and Expert Groups (which include the Experts Group on Archival Description and the Expert Group on Managing Digital and Physical Records) may provide opportunities or ideas to follow. In particular, The Professional Programme provides an opportunity to support strategic collaborative work in the international archives sector, with digital recordkeeping identified as a primary strategic strand. The programme is designed and managed to generate as many relevant products as possible, in accordance with ICA's values in favor of professional solidarity and international co-operation, taking into account cultural diversity. The ICA Programme Committee, or PCOM sets broad directions and makes decisions about the funding and endorsement of projects. PCOM constructs themed programmes intended to modernize professional practice and attract the support of partner organizations and funding agencies.

Association of Moving Image Archivists: In terms of their focus areas, AMIA's committees of the membership are most like SAA's sections, as they focus on the principal activities of the profession and arise from AMIA's membership. In addition, AMIA provides an option for Working Groups, which are intended to be time-bound groups that focus on a specific, single output or project. Committees of the membership and working groups can be proposed at any

time, and are driven very clearly by AMIA members' interests and needs. While there is little direct overlap in terms of the areas identified for this environmental scan, the two most likely comparable areas of interest in terms of the scope of this project are the Cataloging and Metadata Committee and the Open Source Committee. It is also worth mentioning that AMIA supports the committees by providing access to an instance of Basecamp (a project management tool) and that there are small amounts of project funding available for committee initiatives - up to $500 each, with the option for larger projects to be proposed to the board.

Samvera (formerly Hydra community): The Samvera community (formerly known as Hydra), is primarily focused on the community around using building digital repository applications using a specific technology stack. Nonetheless, the community has a [framework for interest groups and working groups](#) focused on undertaking practical work to help the community move forward. Most groups are organized by motivated individuals around common needs or areas of focus. In the Samvera community framework, interest groups are primarily focused on discussion and are understood to be maintained over time, while working groups have specific deliverables and are thus of shorter duration. The difference in focus between these two types of groups leads to a difference in requirements for what they require to get off the ground, and for working groups, commitment to software or documentation licensing requirements. Several of the existing interest groups may be of interest, including the Metadata Interest Group and its subgroups, and most notably the Archivists Interest Group, which is broadly interested in technology and platform integration concerns well beyond the Samvera/Hydra framework itself, including Archivematica and ArchivesSpace integration, questions regarding archival discovery, and data modeling.

Independent or loosely-tied initiatives with SAA members: I also want to briefly touch on a few independent initiatives that have also been able to undertake some significant work. Of particular note, the Born-Digital Access Research Team conducted an [exploratory mixed methods study](#) in 2014-2015 to document current born-digital access practices in cultural heritage institutions, which then led into the planning for the Born Digital Access Hackfest, or #hackbdaccess, held at the 2015 SAA Annual Meeting. This hackfest then prompted the idea for a born-digital access bootcamp, which debuted at the 2017 annual meeting of New England Archivists. The organizers of the bootcamp chose to convene a DLF working group to continue the conversation. While all of this work was in many ways independent, all of these groups nonetheless leveraged the Electronic Records Section's blog as a key tool for outreach. It is also important to note that this set of initiatives was complementary to work undertaken by the Reference and Outreach Section's [Access to Electronic Records Working Group](#). Similarly, an independently-organized Archives and Linked Data interest group has been collaborating since February 2017 to establish use cases and undertake exploration to present archival description as linked data.