

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 20, 2020
Virtual Meeting**

**Annual Report: Committee on Public Awareness
(Prepared by Nick Pavlik, Chair)**

For the 2019-2020 term, COPA worked on the following:

- **2019-2020 work plan**

As chair of COPA for 2019-2020, Nick Pavlik developed a work plan to guide the committee's work throughout the year, which built upon the work outlined in the work plans developed for the 2017-2019 period by previous chairs Chris Burns and Caryn Radick. The full plan is attached to this report in Appendix A.

- **Early Career Member**

SAA launched a new initiative in 2019 to provide early career members with opportunities to serve on SAA appointed groups, which COPA was happy to participate in. Prior to the start of the 2019-2020 term, COPA Chair and Vice Chair/Chair-Elect Nick Pavlik and Vince Lee reviewed the early career member candidates and submitted their top three nominations to SAA Vice President Michelle Light. We were delighted that Michelle appointed our first choice, Lynn Cowles, an archivist at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, LA, as our early career member for the 2019-2020 period. Lynn proved to be an invaluable COPA member who contributed to several initiatives throughout the year, and it was an absolute pleasure working with her. In the spring of 2020, Nick Pavlik and Vince Lee also nominated Lynn to serve as a full COPA member for the 2020-2023, a nomination that was later confirmed by SAA Vice President Rachel Vagts.

- **ArchivesAware! blog**

ArchivesAWARE is a blog hosted by the [Society of American Archivists](#) and managed by its [Committee on Public Awareness \(COPA\)](#). It was established in January 2016 to create an online space where professionals and students engaged in all aspects of archival work could share their experiences of and ideas for raising public awareness of archives and the value that archives and archivists add to business, government, education, and society as a whole.

This year, COPA member Rachel Seale volunteered to serve as the blog's lead editor. She did a wonderful job continually refreshing the content of ArchivesAware, and COPA is highly appreciative of her efforts to engage both COPA members and archival colleagues outside COPA (and even outside the archives profession) to develop ideas and author posts for the blog. An additional debt of gratitude is owed to COPA member Rachael Woody, who,

through the posts she authored for the *Responses and Retrospectives* and *There's an Archivist for That!* series, and her recruitment of several guest authors, was among our most active contributors to the blog throughout the year. We are sincerely grateful to Rachel and Rachael for their dedication to maintaining ArchivesAWARE as a wonderful outreach resource for the archives profession!

Below are the blog statistics:

Year	Total Posts	Views	Visitors
2016	29	19,053	11,377
2017	24	12,838	7,545
2018	36	27,176	16,742
2019	36	28,647	17,531
2020 (to date)	28	29,143	17,852

- **#AskAnArchivist Day**

2019 was the fifth year of #AskAnArchivist Day on Twitter, which took place on October 2nd.

Year	Unique Users	Total Tweets
10/30/2014	1,949	6,065
10/01/2015	3,184	7,845
10/05/2016	3,742	10,005
10/04/2017	4,077	8,927
10/03/2018	2,909	6,758
10/02/2019	724	6,060

For the 2019 #AskAnArchivist Day, select COPA members volunteered for two-hour shifts sharing tweets and retweets from the SAA Twitter account. This helped provide a central SAA “anchor” to the day’s activities, and more clearly communicated the fact that #AskAnArchivist Day was a COPA-sponsored event. We thought this worked very well in comparison to previous years, in which COPA members had all been tweeting from their individual Twitter accounts. We will likely adopt this approach for #AskAnArchivist Day events going forward.

A recap of 2019's #AskAnArchivist Day can be found here - <https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2019/10/30/askanarchivist-day-2019-the-twitter-takeover/>.

- **Storytelling**

Following on COPA's 2019 Finding Aid to My Soul storytelling event at SAA's 2019 meeting in Austin, TX (our second such event), COPA pursued a third storytelling event for 2020. We originally planned for the event to take place at SAA's annual meeting in Chicago, IL; however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the annual meeting was instead held virtually, and we determined that it would be difficult to have this year's storytelling event coincide with the SAA annual meeting, given the structure of the virtual conference schedule. We instead decided to hold the event online on October 1st as a virtual kick-off to 2020's American Archives Month. As with last year's event, professional storyteller and Moth Grand Slam winner Micaela Blei will host this year's virtual event. The call for pitches for this year's event went out to the SAA membership in late August.

We were, however, able to hold a virtual storytelling workshop at this year's SAA conference. COPA member Chris Burns was the main facilitator for the workshop, which was hosted by Micaela Blei and was attended by 44 participants.

- **COPA microsite and Resources and Toolkits page**

COPA members Nick Pavlik, Rachel Seale, and Rachael Woody volunteered to enhance the COPA microsite and the Resources and Toolkits page on the SAA website. At the beginning of the 2019-2020 term, the microsite contained nothing but a general description of COPA, and the Resources and Toolkits page was in need of some updating and reorganization. Nick, Rachel, and Rachael worked throughout the fall of 2020 to populate the microsite with links to COPA documentation and associated webpages, and to overhaul and expand the Resources and Toolkits page.

The improved microsite can be viewed here: <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/committee-on-public-awareness>

The improved Resources and Toolkits page can be viewed here: <https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/publicawareness/resourcesandtoolkits>

- **#ILoveBeingAnArchivist**

In February 2020, COPA capitalized on the Valentine's Day theme to launch a new outreach initiative on Twitter, #ILoveBeingAnArchivist. For this initiative, COPA member Anna Trammel created digital archives-themed Valentine's Day cards containing quotes from ten archivists on why they love their work. SAA Production Coordinator Abigail Christian then shared the cards on Twitter via SAA's Twitter account. A recap of this initiative can be found here: <https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2020/02/25/ilovebeinganarchivist/>

- **Press Release**

COPA also created its first press release during the 2019-2020 term, which focused on the important work archivists undertook throughout the spring of 2020 to document the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their communities and institutions. COPA members Katherine Barbera, Lynn Cowles, Vince Lee, and Nick Pavlik drafted the initial press release, which was then revised and distributed to media outlets throughout the U.S. by SAA Director of Publishing Teresa Brinati via the service EIN-Presswire.

The press release can be viewed here: <https://www2.archivists.org/news/2020/archivists-rally-to-document-covid-19>

Based on the workflow established by this first press release, COPA plans to issue several more press releases going forward and has already identified a number of additional topics as the foci of future press releases.

- **Webinar**

COPA member Rachael Woody also took the lead on launching the first COPA-sponsored webinar during the 2019-2020 term. In early April 2020, Rachael moderated a webinar titled “Deriving Value from Collections in the Time of Corona” with fellow presenters Margot Note (Margot Note Consulting) and Chris Cummings (Pass It Down), focusing on how archives and museums can enhance their collection programs online through digital tools and demonstrate their continuing value to administrative stakeholders during (and beyond) the Covid-19 pandemic. The webinar was very well-attended and demonstrated the great potential of COPA-sponsored webinars as an educational resource for archivists. In May of 2020, COPA began discussing logistical requirements and practices for more regular webinar offerings beginning with the 2020-2021 term. In addition, Rachael Woody devised a survey to solicit potential future webinar topic ideas from the SAA membership, which was also sent out in May.

A recap of and link to the “Deriving Value from Collections in the Time of Corona” webinar can be found here: <https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2020/05/19/deriving-value-from-collections-in-the-time-of-corona-covid-19/>

The webinar idea survey circulated to SAA membership can be found here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdgk6zf9IX DrsZhpRg2X9x9MaS-D3DwpmWg7dttgSQdyXi2mg/viewform>

- **“SAA Speakers” program**

Another new initiative COPA undertook during the 2019-2020 term was a program tentatively titled “SAA Speakers.” The ultimate aim of the initiative is to better and more seamlessly connect local, regional, and national news media with professional archivists so that archivists can be more frequently featured and consulted in media coverage of archival stories and issues. COPA first discussed this prospect at its in-person meeting in Chicago during the fall of 2017, during which the committee identified several leaders within the archives profession who would be engaging and articulate media contacts. From 2017-2019, the idea of the speakers program was brainstormed further and eventually took the shape of an annual “speakers cohort,” members of which would participate in an SAA-sponsored,

weeklong media and public relations training workshop at SAA's Chicago headquarters. Following the workshop, cohort members would be included on a contact list of archival experts on the SAA website, which would serve as a resource for the news media to consult when covering archival stories. The contact list would include experts' names, professional contact information, and an overview of their areas of expertise. COPA's role in this program would be recommend cohort members to SAA Council, and to assist SAA in developing the media and publication relations training workshop as applicable.

In the spring of 2020, COPA members Vince Lee, Nick Pavlik, and Rachel Seale revisited the list of potential speakers COPA had devised in 2017 and narrowed it down to eleven nominees for the inaugural speakers cohort, from which approximately five individuals would ultimately be selected by SAA Council. Vince, Nick, and Rachel also contacted all eleven nominees to confirm their interest in participating in such a program. As of this writing, COPA has received responses from most nominees on the list, with about half of them being interested and able to commit to taking part in such a program.

The Covid-19 pandemic made it impossible for this program to be implemented during the 2020 calendar year, so the final nominee list has not yet been forwarded to SAA Council. It is currently unclear when SAA will again be in a position to formally undertake this program, but we're hopeful that further progress can be made during the 2020-2021 term.

The list of nominees for the inaugural speakers cohort can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rdytn4C_o-OvuNKAYxFs0gEd4vJyk0Tms7PwHFGodC0/edit

- ***Archives in Context* podcast**

COPA was also featured in Season 3, Episode 1 of SAA's *Archives in Context* podcast, which came out in March 2020. COPA members Chris Burns and Anna Trammell guest hosted the episode and provided audio clips of interviews they collected at SAA's annual meeting in 2019 in Austin, TX, in which they asked archivists to give their best off-the-cuff "elevator speech" describing what archivists do.

The episode is available at <https://archivesincontext.archivists.org/2020/03/03/season-3-episode-1-elevator-going-up/>

- **COPA and COPP**

COPA chair Nick Pavlik and COPP chair Sarah Quigley worked to strengthen ties between the two committees by attending each other's monthly conference calls and, together with COPA and COPP vice-chairs Vince Lee and Sam Winn, discussing possible areas for collaboration between the two committees.

Committee on Public Awareness 2019–2020 Work Plan

I. Goals

- A. Inform, excite, and engage SAA members about public awareness.
- B. Create content for ArchivesAWARE! Blog.
- C. Increase SAA capability to reach national media on issues concerning archives.
- D. Maintain COPA presence at 2020 SAA annual meeting.

II. Objectives

- A. Encourage and enable SAA members to undertake outreach and advocacy work.
- B. Collect and/or develop stories about archives and archivists.
- C. Plan for major press releases, media interviews, etc., on current events relating to archives.
- D. Create and/or coordinate outreach- and advocacy-related programs for the 2020 SAA annual meeting.

III. Strategies

- A. Encourage and enable outreach/advocacy participation in 2019–2020.
 - 1. Promote Ask An Archivist Day (October) and encourage archivists to participate.
 - 2. Review and enhance content on COPA webpage
 - a. Relaunch existing American Archives Month content to SAA website.
 - 3. Assess member needs for a proposed PR/advocacy toolkit.
 - 4. Share examples of outreach programs and draw attention to available outreach/advocacy resources on the ArchivesAWARE! Blog.
- B. Stories about archivists and archives.
 - 1. Continue to solicit and generate content for ArchivesAWARE! Blog that features archivists and their work. Develop and promote series (There's an Archivist for That, Asserting the Archivist, Archival Outreach Innovators).
 - 2. Review audio recordings from StoryCorps (2015 SAA conference), Kitchen Sisters (2017 SAA conference), and 2019 SAA conference and find clips that could be shared by SAA.
 - 3. Develop *Why Do You Love Being an Archivist?* content (short videos, website material, social media content).
- C. 2020 Annual Meeting.
 - 1. Organize and propose a COPA-sponsored session.
 - 2. Organize the third annual *A Finding Aid to My Soul* storytelling event (with Micaela Blei of The Moth).

3. Organize media training workshop for archivists (with Micaela Blei of The Moth).
4. Hold Exhibit Hall office hours.
5. Set up a listening booth to highlight clips from StoryCorps and Kitchen Sisters recordings.

D. Plan for national media outreach.

1. Anticipate 2019 and 2020 events (anniversaries, etc.) that will have significant archives connections and identify likely content experts.
2. Prepare information and talking points about these events.
3. Research appropriate media outlets/contacts for news releases, interviews, etc.
4. Draft press releases for these events.
5. Establish list of archives spokespeople with expertise in a variety of archives-related topics.