

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 10, 12, 2021
Virtual Meeting**

**Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group:
Crisis Collecting Assistance Team and
Potential Collaboration with the International Council on Archives
(Prepared by Kara McClurken and Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn)**

BACKGROUND

A goal of the CDTRWG's predecessor group, the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, was to "explore the feasibility of creating a standing body within SAA that would...serve as a volunteer tragedy response team." The task force concluded that such a response team was feasible, but ran out of time to map out what that might look like. The CDTRWG has been working since its creation to consider how SAA might create and sustain that volunteer response team. The Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) is the proposed solution.

In working with colleagues across the globe, one member of the CDTRWG found himself in contact with archival colleagues in China who experienced difficulties in making full use of "Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit" due to difficulties with translation. These colleagues and others for whom English-only resources are not accessible could benefit more fully from the resource kit, but language barriers have prevented their usefulness/access to the tool.

DISCUSSION

The CDTRWG seeks affirmation from the SAA Council regarding scope and responsibilities of the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team, a volunteer response group that the Council charged the CDTRWG with creating and implementing.

The CDTRWG also seeks permission to move forward with a potential collaboration with the International Council on Archives (ICA) to translate "[Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit](#)" into additional languages to ensure greater accessibility and awareness of this resource.

After much discussion and planning, the Working Group proposes the creation of a Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT). Composed initially of the nine members of the Working Group, all of whom have experience and passion for documenting in times of crisis, CCAT members will volunteer for two-week rotations with one primary and one secondary person on

call during each rotation. Depending on volume and need, the working group will seek additional volunteers to support CCAT response. In cases of significant regional or national events, the other members of the team will be notified if and when a larger number of requests for assistance are received. Individuals or organizations desiring assistance will complete a web form (see Appendix A) that includes preferred contact information and a brief description of the situation and the assistance they are seeking. Submissions will be sent to the entire volunteer team via email. Those submitting the form will receive an auto-response informing them that a member of the team will reply within two business days, along with links to “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit” and other existing SAA resources that can be referred to while awaiting a personal response from a CCAT member. The form will ask if the submitter prefers phone or email exchanges and the CCAT member on call will contact them and conduct a consultation interview. The Working Group has developed a boilerplate statement of scope (Appendix B) and a set of FAQs, template responses, and guidelines (Appendix C) that all CCAT members will use during their rotation. While two CCAT members will be on call during each rotation, all members of the team will be available to assist in areas where they have expertise.

At the time of its initial launch, CCAT will be available to archivists and allied professionals in the United States with consultations taking place in English. Over time, the working group hopes to expand service beyond the United States, offer consultations in additional languages, and increase the pool of experts to whom inquiries can be directed after better understanding the needs of the individual, community, or organization requesting assistance. This expanded pool will initially be composed of members of SAA, though it may be advisable to draw upon other allied organizations at the approval of SAA Council and legal counsel in order to prevent burnout among the volunteer experts while continuing to provide the best possible support to those requesting assistance. Any expansion in geographic, volunteer, or project scope would be based on the volume of requests and the degree to which SAA and the CDTRWG can sustainably run the CCAT program. Any such requests for expansion would be presented to the Council prior to implementation. Areas of desired expertise include but are not limited to: social media capture, trauma-informed management and donor/community relations, and oral history best practices involving narrators who have experienced crisis/trauma.

The working group’s charge states that one of its duties is to “(r)espond in a timely fashion to requests from SAA leadership or staff, archivists, and allied cultural heritage professionals.” Based on this charge, we propose that the CCAT not only serve SAA members, but the larger allied cultural heritage community. The initial launch of CCAT will be open to colleagues in the United States only, with services and resources offered in English.

Another of the duties and responsibilities of the CDTRWG is to “(b)ring to the Council’s attention possible areas of collaboration with other organizations that are interested in response efforts and, under the Council’s direction and with approval, cooperate with such organizations in furthering SAA’s core values and strategic goals.” The proposed collaboration with ICA’s Section for Education and Training - SAE, Section for International Organizations, and/or another section as ICA deems appropriate, for the purposes of translating elements of the resource kit is one such opportunity. Before moving forward, CDTRWG seeks the Council’s input/approval to ensure that such an action will align with SAA’s core values and strategic priorities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

THAT the SAA Council approve the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team program to provide remote guidance on documenting crises to English-speaking archivists and allied professionals within the United States.

THAT the Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG) pursue potential collaboration with the International Council on Archives (ICA) beginning in 2022 for the purposes of translating portions of “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit” from English to additional languages

Support Statement: In order to fulfill its charge, the CDTRWG seeks the approval of the Council to publicly launch the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT), initially staffed by members of the working group but with the potential for future expansion, that would be available to archivists and allied cultural heritage professionals based in the United States via a publicly-accessible webform. Further, the Working Group seeks approval of the Council to pursue a potential collaboration with ICA for the purposes of translating existing and future elements of the “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resources Kit” in order to better serve archivists and other cultural heritage professionals through working to eliminate language barriers.

Impact on Strategic Priorities: This supports Goals 1-4 of the strategic plan, and particularly Goal 3. The public launch of CCAT and potential collaboration with ICA address SAA’s strategic priorities by providing tangible resources and expertise (both online and through individual experts) to cultural institutions and cultural heritage professionals in need of support documenting crises in their communities in order to begin forming a community of practice around the needs and concerns of archives and archivists engaged in this work. The launch of CCAT and potential collaboration with ICA for translation of resource kit materials will expand CDTRWG’s ability to serve archives and archivists, while providing an opportunity to assess future needs of the profession in the area of crisis collecting and response. These initiatives have the potential to provide a direct benefit to members of SAA through providing an opportunity to engage in an emerging area within archival practice.



Fiscal Impact: The Working Group relies on SAA staff time to help with management/logistics of our meetings and the action items we pursue, such as communicating requests with the Council, creation and management of web forms and surveys, etc. It is likely that these two items will result in some additional fiscal impact on time, but within the expected amount based on the working group’s objectives.

Crisis Collecting Assistance Team Request Form

Coordinated by the Society of American Archivists' Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG), the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) serves as a resource for archives workers, archival and cultural heritage institutions, and community members documenting or experiencing a crisis, disaster, or tragedy in their community or the community they serve.

The CCAT Response Team offers remote assistance with identifying best practices or logistics for documentation, referrals to appropriate allied organizations, and general guidance on crisis collecting. CCAT volunteers include expert archivists who have all faced similar situations in leading and supporting their staff through processing and documenting tragedies great and small. A member will respond within 48 business hours to begin providing support.

In addition to direct support from CCAT, resources for individuals and organizations documenting a crisis in their communities are provided in Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit, <https://www2.archivists.org/advocacy/documenting-in-times-of-crisis-a-resource-kit>.

 saahq@archivists.org (not shared) [Switch account](#) 

* Required

Name *

Your answer

Affiliation / Institution / Organization

Your answer

Email Address *

Your answer

Phone Number *

Please indicate if home, work, or cell.

Your answer

Preferred Contact Method *

- Email
- Phone
- Either Email or Phone

Brief description of the situation and the assistance you're seeking. *

Your answer

Submit

Clear form

CCAT Information Page

Note: This language was drafted by the CDTRWG and reviewed by SAA staff and legal counsel.

Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT)

When facing a tragedy in one's own community, archivists carry the unique burden of suddenly and swiftly needing to process both their grief and the physical materials to document the event at the same time. The SAA Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) stands ready to help archives workers, archival and cultural heritage institutions, and community members documenting or experiencing a crisis, disaster, or tragedy in their community or the community they serve.

The CCAT Response Team offers remote assistance with identifying best practices or logistics for documentation, referrals to appropriate allied organizations, and general guidance on crisis collecting. CCAT volunteers include expert archivists who have all faced similar situations in leading and supporting their staff through processing and documenting tragedies great and small.

To connect with the CCAT Response Team, send a message via this [online form](#). A member will respond by phone or email within 72 business hours.

The Crisis Collecting Assistance Team is organized by the Society of American Archivists's [Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group \(CDTRWG\)](#).

In addition to direct support from CCAT, resources for individuals and organizations documenting a crisis in their communities are provided in [Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit](#). The templates are designed to be a starting point to customize for local use in consultation with communities, administrators, and legal counsel as necessary.

Resources and support related to disaster response and recovery pertaining to physical damage to collections or facilities are outside the scope of the Response Team and CDTRWG. For resources and recommendations regarding damage sustained as a result of floods, fires, natural disasters, or other emergencies, the Response Team and CDTRWG recommend consulting SAA's [Disaster Response and Recovery Resources](#), and/or contacting organizations such as the National Heritage Responders.

Please also note that members of CCAT are not mental health professionals. Any and all assistance is based on CCAT members' personal experience and/or network of professional assistance organizations.

Disclaimer: The Society of American Archivists and its Crisis Collecting Assistance Team will not be responsible for damage to your collection should damage result from the use of information provided by the Team, on the SAA website, or by other organizations to which SAA and CCAT refer. CCAT members are not mental health professionals and cannot provide mental health services.

Expectations for On-call Member Responding to Requests for Assistance

1. First of all, thanks for volunteering! This is a valuable service we provide and even if you don't have all the answers, don't worry. Just being a sounding board and an information sharer is often what the person trying to make a plan needs.
2. Expectations:
 - You do not need to know everything! If there is something that you don't feel knowledgeable enough to answer, just let the person you will be back in touch soon and consult with the rest of the group. We will also be compiling a list of outside experts who have volunteered their services.
 - The [Toolkit](#) is a great place to go--we will already have pointed to the Toolkit in our automated response, but get familiar with it and refer to it often.
 - An individual should receive an initial response within the first 72 business hours. If your schedule permits you for being available d at a minimum of two weeks during traditional working hours, please let the secondary person know so that they/he/she can take over as primary responder for the time period you are unavailable.
 - Depending on the topic, the [boilerplate language](#) may be used as a response. We will grow this section b populating it with frequently asked.
 - In cases of national/international events (such as a pandemic), there may be times where additional assistance is needed. PLEASE reach out to the rest of the group if you receive more than two requests during your two week term. We are always happy to help.
 - Please copy the working group on your response(s). This is helpful for tracking purposes as well as a way for us to learn from each other. The working group address is: ARCHIVISTS-cdtrwg@ConnectedCommunity.org.

Web form Auto-Response and Template Responses to Select Inquiries

1. **Web form Auto-Response:** Thank you for contacting the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) coordinated by the Society of American Archivists' Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG). A member of our team will be in touch with you via your preferred method of contact within 2-3 business days to begin discussing your needs. In the meantime, you may find useful resources in [Documenting in Times in Crisis: a Resource Kit](#).

If you are dealing with physical damage to collections or facilities, the Assistance Team recommends consulting [SAA's Disaster Planning and Response Resources](#), and/or contacting organizations such as the [National Heritage Responders](#).

2. **Template Response - Disaster Recovery/Preservation Concerns:** The Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) is not equipped to provide recovery support related to physical damage to collections or facilities from floods, fires, natural disasters, and other emergencies.

Please consult [SAA's Disaster Planning and Response Resources](#), and/or contact the [National Heritage Responders](#) for assistance.

3. **Template Response - Collecting Social Media:** To start, we recommend reviewing the tools available via the [Documenting the Now](#) project. If you are exploring capturing Twitter content, see our [Guidelines for Twitter Capture \(2018\)](#).

I am copying [TEAM MEMBER], who will be glad to talk with you further about your plans and help identify the strategies that will work best for you. [Sentence on TEAM MEMBER's background in social media archiving.]

4. **Template Response - Oral History Projects:** Our resource kit includes [a number of templates](#) that may be helpful as you develop your oral history project. We also recommend the resources provided by the [Oral History Association](#) and the [Southern Oral History Project](#).

I am copying [TEAM MEMBER], who will be glad to further discuss your plans and serve as a resource as needed. [Sentence on TEAM MEMBER's background in oral history.]