

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

**Annual Report: Awards Committee
(Prepared by Committee Co-Chairs Jenny Kinniff and Cara Bertram)**

COMPLETED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Annual awards cycle: This year, the Awards Committee completed its annual awards cycle in a very different environment due to the pandemic. After nominations increased each year since 2016 and reached an all-time high of 214 nominations in 2020, the 2021 awards cycle resulted in just 140 nominations. The Awards subcommittees continued the same pattern of outreach as in previous years, so we believe that this year was an exception and that the number of nominations will rebound in future years.

Notable changes to awards criteria and committee procedures: This year, the eligibility guidelines for the Brenda S. Banks Travel Award, Harold T. Pinkett Student of Color Award, Josephine Forman Scholarship, and Mosaic Scholarship expanded to include applicants of Middle Eastern/North African descent. We are grateful to SAA staff for facilitating this much-needed update.

In addition, the committee implemented a standardized timeline for notifying awardees. We now ask that committees all notify their winners on the same date. Previously, committees would notify winners as soon as they reached a decision. This change improves financial compliance for SAA and simplifies the co-chairs' tracking of more than 20 subcommittees.

Awardee recognition at the 2021 Annual Meeting: The co-chairs worked with SAA staff to find creative ways to acknowledge this year's awardees during the Annual Meeting in the absence of a live ceremony. Methods included:

- Slides before live virtual events highlighting award winners;
- An on-demand video where the co-chairs read the citations for each of the award winners; and
- A special Awards section of the conference website that included citations and photos of winners as well as a message forum where members could share their congratulations.

We appreciate the efforts of former SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont and Governance Program Manager Felicia Owens to help us highlight this year's awardees.

ONGOING PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Awards Committee looks forward to another awards cycle, and hopes that continued outreach will result in the number of nominations returning to typical levels. We also will prepare to acknowledge awardees in the 2022 Annual Meeting venue, be it in-person, virtual, or both.

INITIATIVES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

The mission of the Awards Committee to recognize leaders and achievers in the archives field via professional recognition and financial assistance supports the following goals of SAA's Strategic Plan:

GOAL 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

- 1.1 Provide leadership in promoting the value of archives and archivists to institutions, communities, and society.
- 1.2 Educate and influence decision makers in any setting about the importance of archives and archivists.

By publicly recognizing leaders and achievers in the archives profession and highlighting their work, SAA's Awards Committee promotes the work of archivists in our society.

GOAL 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

- 2.1 Mentor and support the career development of members to assist them in achieving their goals.

In giving financial awards such as scholarships, cash awards, and conference registration and travel reimbursement, the Awards Committee provides opportunities for members to participate in professional development and complete their educational goals.

GOAL 3: Meeting Members' Needs

- 4.2 Create opportunities for members to participate fully in the association.

As SAA's largest committee, the Awards Committee offers opportunities for participation and leadership to a large group of members. Serving on one of its subcommittees is a common first step into SAA leadership.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The Awards Committee has no questions for Council discussion.

**Annual Report: F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship
Award Subcommittee
(Prepared by Committee Chair Susan Davis)**

WINNER

We selected applicant aems emswiler, a doctoral student at the University of Arizona, as this year's winner. They began their graduate archival education at the University of Texas-Austin in their MSIS program and continue their research into the importance of archives and archivists to protect controversial resources and the rights of others. The Committee was impressed with aems emswiler's drive to explore both theory and practice as it related to ignored and under documented communities.

APPLICANTS

We had 26 applicants this year, one less than last year. We eliminated eight applicants as they had not completed an appropriate core archival knowledge course prior to the application deadline. Unfortunately, the academic schedule of some programs makes it nearly impossible for students in those programs to apply. For example, all four applicants from Pratt were disqualified. We had no applicants from institutions outside of the United States this year. As a result, the committee reviewed 18 applicants, two of whom were doctoral students.

The 26 applicants represented the following institutions:

Pratt (4)
LSU (4)
UCLA (3)
University of Wisconsin-Madison (3)
Simmons (2)
U Mass-Boston (2)
Long Island University (2)
Drexel (1)
San Jose State (1)
University of Arizona (1)
University of Missouri (1)
University of South Carolina (1)
University of Washington (1)

We sent emails to all students who did not win the award, and three students requested additional feedback. We sent an email to each of those students, generally explaining that the decision was based on all elements of the application, not just the essay, and that the essays which appeared to be slightly tweaked class papers, complete with footnotes, were not scored favorably.

PUBLICITY

The committee continued its customary pattern of sending announcements to all the graduate education programs listed in the SAA directory, with an initial announcement in early January and another in early February. We also sent announcements to all SAA student chapters listed with SAA. We also sent out notices to the Archival Educators Section and the SNAP Section in December, January, and February. We collaborated with the chairs of the Josephine Forman and Mosaic Scholarships to draft a joint notice for all three student scholarships. We reached out to the Awards Committee list seeking additional ideas for promoting awards, but did not get any responses. A post on the SAA Facebook page on February 10 advertised the Ham and the two other student scholarships. That notice also appeared several times in *In the Loop*. The Ham scholarship was included in the general awards announcement in *Archival Outlook*, but not as a separate announcement.

The Awards application database included a place for students to indicate where they learned of the award. Not everyone checked a box, and a couple of students checked more than one. Some of these categories overlap, but it is clear that as many students identify the scholarship directly from the SAA website as often as through committee efforts.

SAA website: 11

Professor/Advisor: 5

In the Loop: 3

Letter to department: 2

Email from institution: 2

Program blog or network: 2

Other or no box checked: 3

CHANGE TO AWARD APPLICATION DESCRIPTION

Last year the Committee came to the conclusion that students could use the award money to pay student loans, since many students had to apply during their second year to fulfill the requirement of the three credits of graduate archival education. We learned this year from Peter Carlson, SAA's Director of Finance and Administration, that the money had to be paid directly to the institution and not to the student. Any mention of paying student loans was removed from our communications, and the requirement the scholarship be paid to the institution was added to the award description on the SAA website. We contacted any applicant who appeared to be close to graduation to inquire about this issue, and all responded (often after checking with their institution) they were still eligible. We recommend continuing the practice of contacting such students to avoid choosing a student who could not comply with this requirement.

We also worked with Peter Carlson and the Ham family to adjust the language of the 1997 scholarship agreement to reflect better the current structure of archival education. The language now is more flexible. Students still must have completed the 3 credit graduate core archival knowledge course, but the funds are made available to support students in subsequent years, not necessarily the second year.

ISSUES TO ADDRESS

It is increasingly difficult to determine whether a program meets SAA Guidelines for graduate programs. Fortunately, the Committee on Education has developed a curriculum checklist which contains an immense amount of helpful information. In the past three years, at least, the student chosen for the award has come from an acceptable program. Occasionally students inquire about the eligibility of their program before submitting an application, and we do our best to respond. For the first time, we had PhD student applications with one of the two of those applicants winning. Programs are clearly in flux so we expect these questions to continue.

A major issue to address in terms of student eligibility is the academic schedule of several institutions, which make it very difficult for a student to complete the required course in the first year. We recommend that the Committee on Education reach out to the archival educators to alert them to this problem.

Also, we are not getting any applications from some of the top graduate education programs. This year we wrote personal emails to faculty at the University of Texas-Austin, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Michigan to encourage their students to apply. None did.

Last but certainly not least, we need to note that Jerry Ham passed away on June 5, 2021 so submitting this report is bittersweet. His family intends to make an additional gift to the fund, and others will certainly do so in Jerry's memory.

Respectfully submitted,

2021 SAA F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship Award Subcommittee
Susan E. Davis, Chair; Mary Jo Pugh, and Helen Wong Smith

28 June 2021