

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
November 1, 3, 2022  
Virtual Meeting**

**SAA Sections Health Assessment**

**(Prepared by: Joyce Gabiola, Jasmine Jones, Dominique Luster, and Lydia Tang)**

During the August 2022 SAA Council meeting, a verbal update was given on the work of the SAA Sections Health Assessment working group. Since then, Gabiola, Jones, Luster, and Tang met as a group and in pairs over September and October 2022 to review the plan approved by Council in May for the SAA Sections Health Assessment and establish actions, timeline, and communication moving forward.

**BACKGROUND**

The large number of affinity groups (specifically, [45] sections) in the Society presents a challenge to the SAA Council and staff in terms of responsiveness to elections, assistance with governance, fiscal oversight, and other support. This has been a recurring issue in the Society for many years, exacerbated by ongoing concerns about member involvement in section leadership, as well as active member participation in these sections.

A 2020 Working Group on Sections proposed recommendations for addressing the challenges proposed by sections. At the February 2022 SAA Council meeting, Council held a strategic planning session focused on the structure and expectations for SAA sections. Another Council working group formed in 2022 to resurface the previously reported recommendations and provided a plan for identifying Sections that potentially qualify for sunset, informed by the February 2022 SAA Council meeting. That plan was approved by Council in May 2022.

Between the May and August 2022 SAA Council meetings, the working group was focused on developing a survey to send out to membership about sections. A verbal update was given at the August 2022 SAA Council meeting about this work, and two new Council members – Gabiola and Tang – were welcomed to the group, as former SAA President Courtney Chartier cycled off of Council. The discussion at the August 2022 SAA Council meeting has informed the work of the working group to date.

## DISCUSSION

At the August Council meeting, Council members raised questions and asked for a more clearly defined timeline and plan to move forward with this work. Additionally, two new members were added to the group. This led to a revisiting of the Council-approved proposal in May, as well as an extensive discussion on fiduciary responsibilities, capacity (members who are volunteering their labor and staff who are supporting sections), and a care-focused approach.

We see this work as multi-phased, wherein the timeline and actions shared below are part of a first phase, and the next phase could be focused on more deeply addressing root and recurring pain points that have contributed to the challenges we are facing with section management, member engagement, etc. and other models that could effectively support “communities of practice.”

The group has a more fully defined timeline of actions in support of this work, which includes actions that allow for more communication and information to and from section leadership, members, and Council.

### Timeline

(Actions taken by Council Working Group, unless otherwise indicated.)

October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Revisit and refine the Council-approved proposal</li><li>● Redesign and finalize membership survey</li><li>● Finish defining evaluation criteria</li><li>● Establish a communication plan</li><li>● Begin initial review of section annual reports to help develop criteria and understanding of challenges/needs</li></ul>
November 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Share updated strategy, timeline, and communication plan at the November Council meeting</li><li>● Send out membership survey</li><li>● Send evaluation criteria and template of health assessment report to Council</li><li>● Council liaisons begin review of annual reports (past 3-5 years) for sections they liaise with</li></ul>
December 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Begin survey data analysis</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop improvement working plan template for sections that wish to continue as sections (which will include a section on how Council can support their improvement)</li> </ul>
January 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Call for focus group participants</li> <li>● Survey and quantitative data is packaged and shared with Council liaisons</li> <li>● Council liaisons pull together analysis into health assessment reports for each of their sections</li> </ul>
February 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Present update to Council at February meeting</li> <li>● Complete improvement working plan template</li> <li>● Convene focus group(s), if needed, to gather more information</li> <li>● Focus group data is shared with Council liaisons to update health assessment reports for individual sections, if any</li> <li>● Council liaisons finalize health assessment reports and make recommendations for retaining section status, transitioning to discussion group, and/or merging sections</li> <li>● Council liaisons share health assessment reports with section leadership</li> <li>● Section leadership makes decision on course of action</li> </ul>
March 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For sections that decide to take recommended action to transition to discussion group or merge, vote is taken to the section membership to vote on the action</li> <li>● For sections that are recommended to transition to discussion group or merge but do not agree, section leadership begins developing an improvement working plan to improve upon metrics identified in their health assessment report</li> </ul>
April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● If membership votes to maintain section in its current iteration, section leadership begins developing improvement working plan to improve upon metrics identified in their health assessment report</li> <li>● Sections put call for nominations for section elections, including those where the membership has voted to maintain section in its current iteration</li> <li>● Hold discussion sessions for section leadership to brainstorm ways to improve section health</li> </ul>

June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Section elections take place</li> </ul>
August 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For struggling sections, whose membership voted in March –if section leadership was unable to fill their election roster Council will take a vote to act on recommendation made in the health assessment report – transition to discussion group or merge.</li> <li>● Section leadership discusses improvement working plans with their Council liaisons</li> </ul>

### Communication Plan

#### SAA Membership

- Information about the Section Health Assessment work is shared with the membership survey in November 2022
- Call for volunteers for focus group(s) in January 2023
- Update on process provided at end of February 2023, in preparation for potential voting in March 2023
- Voting results shared with individual section members in April 2023
- Update on process provided after August 2023 Council meeting

#### Section Leadership

- Update on section health assessment process and timeline in November 2022 via SAA Leader list
- Call for volunteers for focus group(s) in January 2023
- Update on section health assessment process and status after February 2023 Council meeting via SAA Leader list and through Council liaisons
- Update on results of March 2023 vote in April 2023 via email
- Announcement of section leadership discussion sessions in March 2023 via email
- Update on process at section leadership discussion sessions in April 2023
- Update on results of June vote in July and, for sections that are under review, update on if Council will take a vote on their section in August based on June election
- Update on results of August Council meeting votes in August
- Meeting with Council liaisons on improvement working plans in August

#### Council

- Finalized evaluation criteria and template of health assessment report shared with Council in late November via email

- Survey, focus group, and quantitative data package shared with Council liaisons via direct emails in January 2023
- Update on process at February 2023 SAA Council meeting
- Council liaisons to share section health assessment reports with section leaders and discuss with them mid-to late February 2023
- Update on results of March vote in April 2023 via email
- Update on results of June vote in July via email
- Update and vote at August 2023 SAA Council meeting
- Council liaisons meeting with section leaders to discuss improvement working plans in August

### **QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION [for Discussion Items only]**

- What are your thoughts and concerns about the timeline and communication plan?
- What are we missing in this?
- Are there ways in which you, as Council members and section liaisons, would like to be more involved in the process?
- From a governance perspective, does this make sense?
- If a section that transitioned to discussion group wants to return to being a section, what governance process do we have to put in place?