

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

**Annual Report: Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response
Working Group (CDTRWG)
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PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG) continues to meet monthly and has maintained its three subgroups to fulfill its charge. In addition to monthly meetings, the CDTRWG hosted a virtual open business meeting and in-person program session during SAA's *ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2022*, presented to international allied organizations, and was interviewed by regional media outlets. The primary effort of the Working Group during the past year was the soft launch of the [Crisis Collecting Assistance Team \(CCAT\)](#), a webform-based assistance network staffed by Working Group members that provides support and guidance to archivists, other cultural heritage professionals, and organizations engaged in documenting crises in their communities.

On 27 April 2022, members of the CDTRWG were invited to present a webinar to the membership of the Australian Society of Archivists. This presentation, titled "[Supporting our Colleagues in Times of Crisis.](#)" provided information on the origins and work of the CDTRWG including the use and maintenance of "[Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit](#)" and the launch and use of the [Crisis Collecting Assistance Team](#).

The CDTRWG hosted their annual virtual open business meeting on 15 July 2022 where they welcomed guest speaker John Chambers, Chief Executive of the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland's Archives and Records Association. Chambers spoke about initiatives of that organization in the space of documenting tragedies, including emotional support workshops and guidance leaflets. See "2022 SAA Annual Business Meeting - Appointed Group Meeting" section, below, for further information.

On August 24, 2022, Radio Boston interviewed co-chair Kara McClurken about the activities of the Working Group as part of a segment on crisis collecting. The segment is available at [this link](#). (Content warning—there is audio in this segment from the Unite the Rally and Community

Response in Charlottesville Virginia in August 2017 and the Boston Marathon Bombing in April 2013.)

On 26 August 2022, members of the CDTRWG presented both in-person and virtually for the Archives * Records program session [“Documenting in Times of Crisis.”](#) About 80 participants attended the in-person only session, although we hope virtual attendees will access the slides and [notes](#) and participate in idea-sharing after the fact. This session provided attendees with information and updates about the work of the CDTRWG and included a substantial period of collaborative and open feedback that will be used by the Working Group in determining and achieving its goals for the upcoming term. We gathered names of organizations to collaborate with as well as advertise our services, discussed areas of potential expansion, including translation, and sought feedback on areas where participants would be most likely to reach out for assistance. Many attendees expressed gratitude to the Working Group for its services.

ONGOING

Resource Kit and Outreach subgroup:

This past year the sub-group (with the assistance of the entire Working Group) has continued to maintain [“Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit”](#) in several ways including:

1. a review and update of the resource kit for broken links and outdated information or resources;
2. a literature and resource review for the purpose of including new and updated resources and materials in the Resource Kit. This review is ongoing as new resources will be vetted for inclusion within each section of the Resource Kit and, possibly, new sections. Upon concluding this work, the Working Group will make recommendations to Council for inclusion of materials into the Resource Kit. And;
3. the creation of a [feedback form](#) for users of the Resource Kit regarding how they have or have not utilized the Resource Kit. The Working Group hopes to use this continuous feedback and collected data to improve and update the Resource Kit and to make it more relevant to the needs of current and future users.

Going forward, the subgroup will continue to maintain and update the Resource Kit, continue a literature review and vet materials for recommended inclusion in the Resource Kit, and monitor and analyze data and recommendations from the feedback form for possible improvements and updates to the Resource Kit.

Collaboration and Funding subgroup:

The subgroup’s scope includes Information gathering and sharing about organizations in the USA and abroad that support or fund related work; and networking with regional, national and international bodies in Archives, Museums and Libraries to support collaborative work. It is creating a vetted list of people and organizations that have expertise or experience in crisis recovery or collecting, rapid response guidance, crisis collecting policies and procedures, volunteer training, and support services for staff and volunteers. This list will eventually be

available online for archives and archivists in need. The subgroup is also working to establish the process for vetting the organizations and establishing how often the list should be reviewed and updated. Additionally, the subgroup is looking at creating a similar list of organizations that could provide funding to archives who need to document a crisis. No official contact will be made with an organization without SAA approval. Future work includes pursuing translation of the Resource Kit into different languages; launching a regular “Guest Talk” series at CDTRWG meetings with invitees that have done related work; reaching out to regional bodies to raise awareness about CDTRWG work and exploring ways of collaboration; and offering a relevant lecture/seminar to related university graduate programs.

Assistance and Training subgroup:

This year, the Working Group launched the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT), a program to support archival workers, cultural heritage institutions, and community members documenting or experiencing a crisis, disaster, or tragedy in their community or the community they serve. This fulfilled a recommendation by the predecessor to the Working Group, the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, to develop a response team. The CCAT, accessible via a [webform](#), launched in February 2022 and was promoted via a press release, SAA email lists, and a handout distributed at the SAA Annual meeting. The group intentionally limited promotion to allow time to resolve any issues that surfaced in the first months of the service. Working Group members signed up for two-week shifts (in pairs) responding to inquiries sent to CCAT and have fielded three inquiries since February 2022. We are maintaining a redacted record of inquiries received for our own reference.

Going forward, we will continue to promote the CCAT program, respond to inquiries, explore expanding the group to include additional areas of expertise, and refine our procedures as needed.

NEW

Resource Kit and Outreach subgroup:

The subgroup is interested in eventually hosting focus groups and/or pursuing other forms of feedback solicitation (such as surveys) relevant to specific areas of the Resource Kit and ongoing and/or emerging needs of archivists and allied professionals and organizations engaged in crisis documentation. Ideally, these conversations would include individuals who have used the Resource Kit in real-world applications. We are interested in pursuing translation of components of the Resource Kit as well. This likely would require funding and we will be exploring our options internally (via the SAA Foundation) as well as working with the Foundation to explore external options.

Collaboration and Funding subgroup:

The subgroup plans to place the vetted list of organizations that may be able to help on the CDTRWG microsite and in “Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit.” The subgroup

wants to pursue the translation of portions of the Resource Kit into selected languages to allow for improved access by a wider constituency of archivists and others conducting work documenting crises. We would also like to begin reaching out to regional archival groups and organizations about the work of the CDTRWG. In the future, we would like to start a series of guest presentations at the regular CDTRWG meetings with people who have done crisis archival work.

Assistance and Training subgroup:

We continue to consider how we might best support archival colleagues documenting crises. Participants in the interactive program at the SAA annual meeting asked if we might expand our contact mechanism to include a phone option for those times when the internet is not accessible or operational in the area of a crisis such as a natural disaster. There were also requests to support institutions *before* a crisis, so we will consider whether we (or another part of SAA) might be in the best position to support such requests. Future work may include a process to incorporate former group members or other volunteers with specific expertise into the response workflow.

SAA STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

The CDTRWG addresses Goal One of SAA's strategic plan by providing resources - both through "Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit" and the Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) to cultural institutions and workers in need of support during a crisis. These resources, expertise, and assistance ensure that archives and archivists are better prepared to advocate for the historical and cultural significance of documenting crises and traumatic events in an accurate and inclusive manner, as well as to advocate for the resources (financial, staff, and personnel support services) necessary to conduct this essential work.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

The CDTRWG addresses Goal Two of SAA's strategic plan by developing and providing access to resources, individual expertise, and professional networks of archivists and allied professionals in order to begin forming a community of practice around the needs and concerns of archives and archivists documenting crises. These resources are provided free of charge to both SAA members and the general public alike. The CDTRWG also aspires to continue developing resources and educational opportunities, particularly in the form of an expanded Resource Kit and response team. As of July 2022, the CDTRWG has welcomed an Early-Career Member, specifically addressing Goal 2.1 while providing the Working Group with insights from new and emerging archives professionals.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

The CDTRWG addresses all points of Goal Three of SAA's strategic plan by building on the efforts of its predecessor, the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, and marshaling the expertise and experience of SAA members, allied organizations, and individuals to create resources and shared understanding of how best to support archives and archivists faced with documenting a crisis. The CDTRWG will continue this work through the expansion and maintenance of "Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit," the development and continued growth of CCAT, and the fostering of collaborative partnerships with allied sections within SAA and external associations, organizations, institutions, practitioners, and scholars as demonstrated by this year's work presenting to allied organizations and inviting representatives from allied groups to speak at CDTRWG events.

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

This Working Group evolved from a request from the Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section to provide support for members' needs. The Working Group has responded to requests forwarded from SAA staff as well as reached out to communities affected by tragedy. This ability to meet members' needs has expanded since the creation and launch of CCAT. The CDTRWG is also committed to addressing Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan by providing mechanisms for feedback in the development of further resources and assistance in the area of crisis collecting, particularly as concerns trauma-informed collecting and management and cultural competency/sensitivity regarding diverse approaches to grief and trauma. Currently, the Working Group is soliciting such feedback through the ["Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit" Feedback Form](#) and by synthesizing feedback and suggestions from the Documenting in Times of Crisis program session at the 2022 SAA Annual Meeting.

2022 SAA Annual Meeting - Appointed Group Meeting

Number of Attendees

5 CDTRWG members, 1 guest speaker, 23 additional attendees.

CDTRWG's open meeting took place July 15, 2022 via Zoom.

Following a brief introduction to the work of the CDTRWG, invited guest speaker John Chambers, chief of Archives & Records Association, UK & Ireland, described his group's efforts to gather information about and assist archivists experiencing trauma in their work. He shared information related to their resulting survey and one-page [Emotional Support Guides](#) for those working with traumatic materials.

The Working Group was encouraged by the level of attendance and international engagement at its public meeting. Thanks to the efforts and networks of Working Group members, there were again several international attendees who brought valuable insights about the ways in which the CDTRWG can pursue relationships with international groups and organizations engaged in crisis collecting - from both practical and theoretical perspectives. It was further encouraging to engage with domestic attendees who expressed an interest in the ongoing work of the CDTRWG and continuing their use of resources developed by the Working Group, as well as potentially contributing to future work and calls for feedback from SAA membership.

The meeting [recording](#) can be found on the CDTRWG microsite.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

The Working Group is very engaged with its charge, with monthly meetings and communication on the email list-serv.

The launch of CCAT was our biggest accomplishment last year. This fall, we will take a look at how to better promote our current services, present updated Resource Kit materials to Council, and look for ways to address member feedback from our interactive program at the annual meeting. The initial Working Group was appointed by SAA leadership, but we have a new group of committee volunteers, including an early career member and are eager to see how we can improve/expand our services sustainably to support the archival community.