

**Society of American
Archivists Council Meeting
October 31 – Nov 1, 2023
Hybrid Meeting (Chicago, IL)**

Annual Report: 2023 Appointments Committee

(Prepared by Tomaro Taylor, Chair)

2023 Appointments Committee members: Steve Hausfeld, Ingi House, Nadia Nasr, Vin Novara, Sarah Polirer, and Tomaro Taylor (chair). Ingi House was unable to complete the term of service.

Committee Charge

The Appointments Committee assists the vice-president/president-elect with the appointment process by identifying a pool of potential candidates for appointed positions. The Committee uses the volunteer self-nomination form, for those members who wish to be considered for appointments and consults with current appointed group chairs for possible candidates. The Committee surveys the overall list of current and potential appointments to achieve quality, balance, and diversity of appointees both overall and within each unit. At the same time, the committee maintains an openness to appointing new people, especially through the early-career member program.

The Review Process

More than 100 volunteers self-nominated for 81 available positions on SAA committees, subcommittees, and working groups. Of the volunteers, it was determined that a select few were not current SAA members. Although those individuals were initially eliminated from consideration, SAA staff confirmed their willingness to connect with these individuals and asked them to join SAA if warranted as part of the appointment process. The volume of volunteers, the available leader recommendations, and the Committee's own considerations rendered that process mostly unnecessary.

Between February 3 – April 14, 2023, the Appointments Committee met biweekly to discuss appointment recommendations. At each meeting, the Committee reviewed applications and recommendations for specific SAA groups. The Committee's schedule, determined by SAA staff, was as follows:

- **February 3:** Host Committee; Program Committee
- **February 17:** *American Archivist* Board; Publications Board; Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct (CEPC); Membership Committee; Finance
- **March 3:** Committee on Education (COE); DAS Subcommittee; GAE Subcommittee

- **March 17:** Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment (CORDA); Standards Committee; TS-DACS; TS-EAS
- **March 31:** Committee on Public Awareness (COPA); Committee on Public Policy (COPP); Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG); Diversity Committee
- **April 14:** Awards Committee

The Appointments Committee completed initial placements on the dates scheduled for each review. To ensure balance and diversity across all committees and committee recommendations, the Appointments Committee closely monitored each committee’s projected composition. Before completing and submitting final recommendations, the Committee Chair produced a spreadsheet identifying each committee, the Appointments Committee’s recommended appointments, and the institutional affiliation [type], geographic distribution, and self-identified race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality markers submitted by volunteers. (An example is provided below.)

Appointments Committee members used this data to ensure alignment with SAA’s “Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.”

	Institutional Affiliation	Geographic Distribution	Race, Ethnicity, Gender, Sexuality
Program Committee (12)	Retired, Academic (5), Non-profit (3), Independent Consultant, Religious	Southwest (3), Northeast (3), West, Midwest (2), Southeast, Northwest	Biracial/Black, Chinese/Asian (2), White (4), / Woman/Female (4), Man/Male (4) / Heterosexual (4), Gay

In preparation for the Committee’s final meeting, members were asked to review all previous recommendations. The final meeting, on April 14, was then used to finalize all recommendations and complete placements for the award committees. During the Committee’s final meeting, it was determined that certain adjustments needed to be made. Namely, we mistakenly recommended one applicant to two committees, and our recommendations did not include appointments to selected groups. The Appointments Committee’s work continued asynchronously for three-business days; on the fourth day, the Chair compiled the finalized recommendations and submitted them to the Committee for review. During this time, a draft version of the Committee’s recommendations was submitted to SAA Vice President / President-Elect Helen Wong Smith. The Vice President and Committee Chair met on May 4, 2023, and identified and discussed additional issues. These items were resubmitted to the Appointments Committee on May 7 with a due date of May 9. The Vice President received the Committee’s cleaned-up and finalized recommendations on May 9, 2023.

Issues Encountered and Relevant Recommendations

The Appointments Committee encountered a small number of issues that were easily rectified by working with SAA staff members Felicia Owens and Astoria Edwards.

Firstly, there was some confusion about using the SAA Appointments Committee Workbook. Since neither the Chair nor the Members had previously served on the Appointments Committee, using the Workbook initially met with some headaches. Utilizing different tabs for each meeting in the series seemed onerous; but, once the Committee understood that this method made it easier to sort volunteer data and navigate the process per each committee's vacancies, the Committee found the Workbook practical and easy to use.

- Recommendation: SAA should supply written instructions for using the Workbook along with the verbal instructions provided during both the Chair's introductory meeting and the Committee's first meeting.

Secondly, as noted above in "The Review Process," a small number of self-nominations were submitted by individuals who were not current members of SAA. It has since been determined that international volunteers need not be members of SAA to join certain groups. This information would have been helpful at the start of the Committee's work.

Relatedly, some applications did not appear to be complete. The Committee questioned whether the English-language application form was a barrier for some volunteers.

- Recommendation: All applications should be vetted immediately prior to Committee distribution. Because there is a bit of time between the Committee's appointment and the first review meeting, that lull in activity could be used to conduct a quick read of all applications and flag for SAA any that need additional review or follow-up. This step will eliminate in-committee discussions about incomplete applicant materials or whether self-nominees are eligible to serve.

Thirdly, the Appointments Committee initially found it difficult to navigate between self-nominations posted in the Workbook and Leader recommendations provided in a separate Word document. There were even times when the Committee neglected to look at the recommendations altogether! We valued the Leader recommendations but found the constant back-and-forth between files a speed bump in a relatively smooth process, especially upon realizing that some self-nominating volunteers were continuing members of committees who had been recommended for Chair, Co-Chair or Vice-Chair positions.

- Recommendation 1: Revise the self-nomination application to include form logic for new appointments, re-appointments, and leadership roles. This will help streamline the review process.
- Recommendation 2: Move the Committee's initial review and discussion of Leader recommendations to the beginning of the review process. Moving these reviews to the forefront of the Committee's work will easily situate these applicants and remove them from further consideration.

Lastly, the Appointments Committee Chair and SAA Vice President agree that some minor changes to the appointments process will better streamline Committee activities:

- Recommendation 1: Early career (1 year) appointments should be managed via a separate process from the self-nomination form distributed to SAA members. Initial reviews of early career nominees should be conducted by group leaders.
- Recommendation 2: Create an Appointments Committee Vice Chair position. The Vice Chair would serve as a member of the Appointments Committee in the year prior to assuming leadership.

Final Comments

The committee acknowledges and thanks Felicia Owens, Astoria Edwards, Jacqueline Price Osafo, and Helen Wong Smith for their support, assistance, council, and hard work.