

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

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

Name of Appointed Group

Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group

Council Liaison

Rachel Winston (term ending September 2023)

Michelle Ganz (term beginning September 2023)

Co-Chair (Report Submitter) Information

Kara McClurken, kmm6ef@virginia.edu

Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn, vlstoegg@syr.edu

Roster Updates

Term ending September 2023

- Scott Grimwood

Term beginning July 2023

- Evelyn Davis (early-career member)
- Anne Deschaine (re-appointment)
- Kara McClurken, co-chair (re-appointment)
- Rebecca Tinker

Projects and Activities

The Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG) continues to meet monthly and has maintained its three subgroups to fulfill the areas of its charge. During the 2022-23 term, these subgroups were renamed to more accurately represent their responsibilities.

The subgroups are now: Collaboration and Outreach, Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT), and Resource Kit.

In addition to monthly meetings, the CDTRWG continued to staff [CCAT](#) (a webform-based assistance network that provides support and guidance to archivists, other cultural heritage professionals, and organizations engaged in documenting crises in their communities); provided invited public presentations on the work of CDTRWG to domestic and international affiliated organizations; published the article “There When You Need Us: The SAA Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group” in the March/April issue of [Archival Outlook](#); and hosted the inaugural round of a virtual speaker series on topics surrounding crisis collecting. Members have also included information about CDTRWG in individual presentations to other archival organizations of which they are members. Awareness of our work is spreading and it was encouraging to see our resources mentioned at the annual meeting this year in one of the sessions.

On 26 August 2022, members of the CDTRWG presented “Documenting in Times of Crisis” as part of the SAA Annual Meeting in Boston. This session 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 [CCAT](#).

On 2 May 2023, the CDTRWG co-chairs presented the invited talk [“There When You Need Us: Crisis Collecting Support”](#) as part of CORE: Leadership, Infrastructure, Futures’ ALA Preservation Week education series. This presentation provided information about CDTRWG’s work, services, and resources.

On 8 June 2023, the CDTRWG co-chairs presented a virtual invited talk about the work of the CDTRWG and disaster and crisis response planning as part of International Archives Week programming at Koç University Libraries in Istanbul, Turkey.

This past year, the CDTRWG also welcomed our first Early-Career Member, Rebecca Tinker. She has been instrumental in the launch of our speaker series and has now become a full appointed member of the Working Group.

Ongoing

Collaboration and Outreach subgroup:

This subgroup’s scope includes gathering and sharing information about and with allied organizations in the US and abroad engaged in crisis collecting work; and networking with regional, national, and international bodies in archives, museums and libraries to support collaborative work. In 2022-23, the subgroup launched a virtual speaker series with invited

guests working in archival crisis collecting and allied fields. The first slate of topics and speakers included:

- 1 March 2023 - Kostas Arvanitis (CDTRWG, University of Manchester), Anne Eyre (Centre for Collective Trauma), and Jen Kavanagh (independent curator and oral historian), "[Archiving Disaster Support Group Records](#)" - discussed a new guide for this work funded by the University of Manchester in the U.K. This session had XX attendees.
- 28 June 2023 - Nicole Laurent (Australian Society of Archivists, University of Melbourne) and Kirsten Wright (University of Melbourne), "[Understanding the Need for Trauma-Informed Practice in Archives](#)" - discussed the results of the survey *Understanding the International Landscape of Trauma and Archives*. This session had XX attendees.

Future installments of this series are scheduled with Pam Schwartz (Orange County Regional History Center) discussing oral histories following the Pulse nightclub shooting, and Jan Ramirez (9/11 Memorial and Museum) discussing incorporating trauma-based archives into anniversaries and commemorations. All recordings are made available on the [CDTRWG microsite](#) through consent of the speakers.

In addition to raising awareness of these topics and providing a space for archival and cultural heritage colleagues to learn and collaborate, the series has also served as a way for the CDTRWG to build relationships with allied professionals.

Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT) subgroup:

The CCAT subgroup is responsible for coordinating administrative aspects of the Assistance team, including any necessary creation of or updates to documentation (e.g. webform, staffing schedules, FAQs, inquiry tracking, etc.) and ensuring the service is providing meaningful and accessible assistance to archivists, allied professionals, and communities faced with documenting a crisis. Services are currently available via a [webform](#). Since its launch in February 2022, CCAT has provided support to organizations seeking advice and guidance on conducting oral histories following a mass shooting, capturing social media and born-digital materials in the aftermath of a catastrophic fire, and accessing resources for supporting colleagues experiencing vicarious trauma due to the nature of the collections they encounter. CCAT has also supported colleagues coping with the aftermath of devastating flooding, and archivists searching for ways to advocate for their collections. As of the date of this report, there have been just six requests to CCAT, though the CDTRWG expects this number to increase with greater awareness of the service. In addition to responding to inquiries, we added or updated templates for team members to use in response to common queries, including one related to oral histories.

Resource Kit 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. New resources were vetted and Council approved their addition into the Resource Kit. And;
3. exploring ways in which we might translate portions of the kit into Spanish. Via an SAA colleague, the group was put in touch with Claire Ziamandanis of CSU Long Beach, who will work with a class to translate prioritized resources into Spanish.

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 - including resources highlighted in our Speaker series - and monitor and analyze data and recommendations from the feedback form for possible improvements and updates to the Resource Kit.

New

General

The group is exploring ways in which it can best fulfill its multi-part charge through efficient structure and division of responsibilities amongst members. A key goal of the group for the coming year is to increase public awareness of the resources provided (Resource Kit and CCAT), and pursue further opportunities for collaboration with allied groups and individuals. Information about our services are now regularly included in the emails coming from SAA after weather related tragedies affect a region.

The group is also developing more structured onboarding and offboarding processes for incoming and outgoing members, particularly as the work of CDTRWG relies upon the shared expertise of colleagues. While appointed members will always conduct the ongoing work of developing and supporting CDTRWG’s functions and resources, building a wider community of practice through maintaining a network of interested working group “alumni” will likely prove pivotal to the long term success of this body.

Collaboration and Outreach subgroup:

The subgroup plans to continue hosting the speaker series, focusing on key themes relevant to crisis collecting. Topics under discussion include trauma-informed approaches to managing staff working with collections resulting from a crisis or tragedy, ethical archiving and publishing of social media content about traumatic events, and digital archives of disasters and tragedies.

CCAT subgroup:

The subgroup continues to explore how we might best support archival colleagues documenting crises, including options for providing support *before* a crisis and ensuring we are leveraging expertise among current and alumni members effectively. Exploring ways to track and document past interactions in a useful manner while preserving the privacy of those seeking assistance is also an area requiring additional work.

In order to incorporate former group members or other volunteers with specific expertise into the response workflow, we have created a spreadsheet that lists contact information and areas of expertise.

Resource Kit subgroup:

The subgroup is interested in exploring hosting focus groups and pursuing other forms of feedback solicitation relevant to specific areas of the Resource Kit and ongoing and 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. Collaborations established through colleagues who have participated in our speaker series have presented one possible avenue to securing further feedback. The subgroup will also continue to make progress on translating selected portions of the Resource Kit into Spanish, and maintain a regular review schedule for the Resource Kit.

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. The CDTRWG has found the inclusion of an Early-Career Member to be a positive experience for both the member and the committee as a whole, specifically addressing Goal 2.1 while providing the Working Group with insights from new and emerging archives professionals. Our Early Career member from last year enjoyed the experience so much that she applied to be a regular member of the committee this year.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

The CDTRWG addresses all points of Goal Three of SAA's strategic plan by 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 continued growth of CCAT, and fostering collaborative partnerships with allied sections within SAA and external organizations, as well as with scholars in relevant fields. The development and launch of our new Speaker Series has directly contributed to advancing conversations pertaining to crisis collecting and trauma-informed archival practice in both the domestic and international archival field and among colleagues in allied fields.

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

The Working Group has responded to requests for assistance forwarded from SAA staff and received through CCAT. The CDTRWG is also committed to addressing Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan by providing mechanisms for feedback from colleagues and communities. Currently, the Working Group is soliciting such feedback through the "[Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit](#)" [Feedback Form](#). Further development of the CCAT workflow may also incorporate opportunities to solicit feedback and input from the wider SAA and archival community.

Self-Assessment

The Working Group is very engaged with its charge, with monthly meetings and communication on the email list-serv. The launch of our speaker series was our biggest accomplishment this past year. It is a wonderful way to spread the word of our own work and learn more about the work being done across the globe. The inclusion of an active international member has been key to the success of this program.

One thing we learned this year was the need for new members to be better onboarded. We worked on creating a guide and are developing best practices for onboarding.

We also explored how we might properly offboard experienced members who were rotating off the committee and how they might, if desired, stay engaged. The feedback from our exit

interview suggests that of the committees our retiring members have served on, this has been well run, focused on the goals, and with tangible impact.

We will continue to explore the best ways to keep our new and past members engaged in the work that we all feel passionate about.