

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 18/19, 2024
Chicago, IL – Hybrid**

Crisis Disaster and Tragedy Response Working Group

Submitted by: Kara McClurken

Council Liaison: Michelle Ganz

Steering Committee Roster 2023-2024

Co-Chair (Report Submitter) Information Kara McClurken, kmm6ef@virginia.edu Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn, vlstoegg@syr.edu (outgoing co-chair) Rebecca Tinker, rebecca.tinker@yale.edu (incoming co-chair) Roster Updates Appointment ending Sept. 1, 2024 Evelyn Davis (early-career member) Appointment/re-appointment beginning Aug. 15, 2024 Kostas Arvanitis (re-appointment) Erik Bauer (new appointment) Jennifer Coggins (re-appointment) Catherine Howell (new appointment) Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn (re-appointment) Mackenzie Spahn (early-career member)

Activities

Completed:

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. 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 an affiliated organization; and hosted an installment of our virtual speaker series and an open virtual meeting during the Annual Meeting. Members have also included information about CDTRWG in individual presentations to other groups of which they are members or to which they were invited to present. Completed On 23 February 2024, the CDTRWG co-chairs presented the invited talk “Resources and Support for Crisis Collecting” for the Art Libraries Society of North America (ARLIS/NA) to over 60 registrants. This presentation provided information about CDTRWG’s work, services, and resources. On April 8, 2024, a member of the CDTRWG tabled at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Spring Symposium in Philadelphia, PA to share information on the work, services, and resources of the work group. The group has also developed structured onboarding and offboarding processes for incoming and outgoing members, particularly as the work of CDTRWG relies upon the shared expertise of colleagues.

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 2023-24, the subgroup continued a virtual speaker series with invited guests working in archival crisis collecting

and allied fields. The slate of topics and speakers for this year have included: 28 November 2023 - Pam Schwartz (Orange County Regional History Center), “Proximity and Oral History: Trauma-Informed Listening and Practice” - discussed the purpose, process, ethics, challenges, and use of oral history on topics including the Pulse nightclub shooting and Ocoee Massacre. This session was not recorded in accordance with the presenter’s request. The session had about 70 attendees. 14 May 2024 - Jan Seidler Ramirez (9/11 Memorial and Museum), “Cautious Balance: Collecting and Presenting the Experience(s) of 9/11 Survivors” - noted some of the challenges faced by the 9/11 Memorial Museum as it strives to readjust the narrative balance assigned to the stories of survivors. This session was not recorded in accordance with the presenter’s request. The session had 72 attendees. Following requests from the last two presenters that their talks not be recorded due to sensitive content, the Collaboration and Outreach subgroup has explored the option of providing written reflections of installments of the speaker series. The first of these reflections was completed for “Cautious Balance.” In the future, the subgroup may wish to explore options for a small stipend for both the presenters and reflection writers of the speaker series. 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. During the past year, CCAT has provided support to organizations and independent archivists seeking advice and guidance on recovering materials and religious artifacts in the aftermath of a catastrophic fire; and documenting events surrounded by significant political tensions, specifically campus protests and encampments in spring 2024 and the assassination attempt on Donald Trump. In the first scenario, CCAT made use of our extended community and allied resources to direct the inquiry to more appropriate resources for disaster recovery, and connect them with a colleague and former CDTRWG member with expertise in religious collections. In the latter instances, CCAT provided compilations of resources, recommendations, and advice from members’ own experiences in addition to directing the inquiries to the groups’ Resource Kit. Although there have been just three requests to CCAT this past year, each has been a valuable experience in developing the groups’ resources and response methodologies. In one instance, it was determined that a Zoom call would be most beneficial to an inquiring organization faced with a more immediate need. In responding to the request pertaining to campus protests, we were able to develop new and expanded response templates and lists of recommendations for future use when similar requests for support inevitably arrive. 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” through ensuring the continued functionality and relevance of existing resources. The group was primarily engaged in reviewing and updating several sections of the Resource Kit in preparation for a translation pilot project to be conducted by Claire Ziamandanis and her students at California State University Long Beach. This project

will provide Spanish language translations of key portions of the Resource Kit to provide greater accessibility to both cultural heritage workers and communities impacted by crises, disasters, and tragedies. The subgroup continues to review and discuss the creation of new resources for potential addition to the Resource Kit, with a particular focus on topics highlighted in our speaker series and requested through community feedback.

New:

General An ongoing key goal of the group is to continue increasing public awareness of the resources provided (Resource Kit and CCAT), and pursue further opportunities for collaboration with allied groups and individuals. 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. The subgroup is also interested in exploring compensation options for speaker series participants, and the addition of a community management system to provide more regular updates to those interested in the work of the CDTRWG. 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. Resource Kit subgroup: The subgroup is interested in hosting focus groups and soliciting other forms of feedback relevant to specific areas of the Resource Kit and the ongoing and emerging needs of archivists, 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.

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 Early-Career Members 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 first Early-Career Member was so engaged with the work that she has since become a full member of the group and is now cycling on as a Co-Chair of the Working Group. The CDTRWG has in turn benefited from her enthusiasm and skills in developing the virtual speaker series.

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, maintenance, and translation 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 continuation of our 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. The Working Group continues 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.

Annual Meeting 2024

Number of Attendees: 57

Summary of Meeting Activities:

On 12 June 2024, the CDTRWG hosted a virtual open meeting as part of SAA’s Annual Meeting, welcoming members and non-members to learn about current initiatives of the group. This open meeting had 57 attendees and solicited notable engagement from those who joined, including offers to assist with future resource development, translation, and interest in volunteering for service during future appointment cycles.

Link to Meeting Minutes:

Self Assessment

How would you describe the health or energy of your section? How engaged are your members?

The Working Group is very engaged with its charge, with monthly meetings and communication on the email list-serv. We are hopeful that the implementation of our new onboarding process, the appointment of additional members, and the new structure for co-chair will further encourage vibrant engagement and collaboration within the group. We will continue to explore the best ways to keep new and past members engaged in the work that we all feel passionately about, grow the community of practice we are establishing, and explore ways in which we can appropriately acknowledge the contributions of members of that community.

Questions for the SAA Council

No

