

**Society of American Archivists
Leadership Orientation and Forum
Wednesday, August 8, 2012, 10:30 am – 11:30 am
San Diego, California**

Remarks of SAA Diversity Committee Chair Bergis Jules

Good morning. My name is Bergis Jules and I just completed my first year serving as Chair of the Diversity Committee. I was asked to talk about some of the challenges and successes over the past year as a group leader. I will briefly touch on one challenge and one success, although there are many of each.

Challenges

Motivating Members to Volunteer

- This is an issue that many SAA groups are facing so it's not unique to the Diversity Committee. But as someone who is a new committee chair, motivating members to volunteer is one of the most challenging aspects of the position.
- That said we have some very enthusiastic members who volunteer when they are needed, but in reality active participation by committee members—meaning, volunteering for tasks, contributing to discussions and generating ideas—can be better.
- Most committee members do tend to make it to the annual meeting and those sessions are usually very productive, like the one we had at this year's meeting.
- There are several reasons for our participation levels, but those would have to be addressed in another conversation. Instead I'll mention five simple but, I think, effective actions I plan to take in the coming year to try and generate more participation. Hopefully you can take some of these ideas to your own groups.
 1. Assigning tasks to committee members rather than asking for volunteers. In some cases this can be done based committee members' interests.
 2. Creating sub-committees to work on assignments we receive from Council and ideas developed by the committee members.
 3. Encouraging committee members to follow through with their own ideas so we can try to implement them. Yesterday's Diversity Committee meeting generated lots of great ideas, so it will be important to follow up with those committee members after annual meeting to see how far they want to take them.

4. Setting up at least one hour-long conference call or something like a Google plus hangout during the year, preferably around January, to discuss ongoing and future projects. Sometimes getting everyone together for a discussion, even by phone, can get the group back on track.
 5. Being more consistent with communication to the group throughout the year. We all get busy and sometimes it is easy to forget that you haven't reached out to the group in a while. So I plan to make contact at least twice a month even if it's just to ask how things are going.
- These are simple tasks but they can help improve our productivity as a committee in the coming year.

Successes

Support from SAA Staff

- One really important area where we have succeeded in the past year is working with and getting support from the SAA staff.
- The Diversity Committee had a huge task over the past year and a half to come up with a plan to revamp the Mosaic Scholarship Program and we could not have gotten as far as we have without the help of SAA staff. We have worked closely with Nancy Beaumont over the past year and she has given us access to every resource we asked for. Because of her and other SAA staff members, we hope to submit a grant proposal to IMLS by the September 17th, 2012, deadline.
- Working with Nancy Beaumont, René Mueller, and Brian Doyle and with support from other SAA staff members throughout this process has proven to me that the SAA office is wholly invested in the success of the committees and other volunteer groups, so please ask them if you need help. They are always eager to lend a hand.
- I've found that the SAA office has been one of my most effective tools as chair of the Diversity Committee. The staff is knowledgeable on every aspect of SAA as an organization and its component groups and their functions.
- From explaining unknown or long forgotten SAA policies and procedures, to setting up conference calls and Mosaic Program sub-committee meetings in Chicago, the SAA staff support has been invaluable to our group and I encourage all SAA section, roundtable and committee chairs to seek out their support.