Meeting Minutes

Issues & Advocacy Roundtable Annual Meeting

New Orleans, Louisiana

August 14, 2013

The meeting was called to order by Jeremy Brett, Senior Co-Chair. Jeremy introduced the new Roundtable officers who were present: Sarah Quigley (new Junior Co-Chair, Emory University), and Steering Committee members Christine George (SUNY Buffalo), Erin Lawrimore (UNC-Greensboro), Jasmine Jones (UCLA), and Shawn San Roman (Credit Union National Association). [SC member Alison Stankrauff (Indiana University South Bend) and outgoing Senior Co-Chair Laura Starratt (Emory University) both arrived late to the meeting.]

We had 3 invited guests come to speak. First, on behalf of Council, we heard from Tanya Zanish-Belcher (Wake Forest University), who informed us that SAA’s Government Affairs Working Group (GAWG) will be replaced by a new Advocacy and Public Policy committee (APP). The details of APP are still very sketchy: the charge remains to be written, and Council will be calling for volunteers to help write the charge and to serve on and help shape APP. Tanya also spoke a little about the creation of ‘elevator speeches’ as an advocacy tool; she noted that she is asking for SAA members to submit examples of such speeches, which will be compiled into a useful set for use as advocacy instruments. She went on to mention that SAA is cooperating with both CoSA and NAGARA on what she called “warm and fuzzy advocacy”: the preparing of policy statements as well as stories drawn from life that illustrate those statements. Tanya also mentioned that Council had discussed the possibility of a second committee charged with overseeing public awareness campaigns such as Archives Month, but that discussion was tabled for a later date.

Next Frank Boles (Central Michigan University), a member of GAWG, spoke to the group about the advocacy situation in SAA at the present time. The committee will create ad hoc groups that work briefly on an issue, then disband. Ideally, the structure of the committee will allow for younger, less experienced members to participate, and should draw on a wide swatch of the SAA membership. Frank informed us that issue briefs are will be prepared on several archival issues, including the Presidential Records Act, the Freedom of Information Act, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA), the closing of archives, orphan works and copyright, and archival funding. Draft issue briefs are due to Council by January for initial discussion, but will not necessarily be adopted at that time. A template based on the issue briefs will be made available. He went on to delineate the philosophical and structural differences between APP and the Issues & Advocacy Roundtable (I&A). The former, he noted, is a creature of the Council whereas I&A, as a voice for the membership at large, is more free to be iconoclastic and more open in the statements it makes and the issues it promotes. Frank asked for ongoing and continuing discussion and project cooperation between the two groups, but stressed that APP would want well-reasoned positions and persuasive arguments from us.

Sarah Quigley asked if it would be helpful to APP if I&A drew up a list of topics that APP might address in the future. Frank suggested that any such list also include names of people willing to help draft a brief and potential resources helpful in crafting a statement on the issue. Frank also discussed the importance of professional consensus in relation to the issues that Council is willing to address. Council is unlikely to address any issue that cannot garner broad professional consensus.

After some additional discussion of APP and its direction, we heard from Donna McCrea, our outgoing Council liaison. Donna talked about the Council meeting that occurred earlier in the week, in which Council looked at various task force reports, including that from the Annual Meeting Task Force. Council adopted new principles on improving future Annual Meetings (such as taking note of social justice aspects when selecting cities and sites). She also mentioned that Council is still seeking input on action items in the strategic plan. She noted also that SAA will be funding a position with ICA related to Professional Organizations, and that a Task Force on Member Affinity Groups will be working on ways to make those groups more effective in the future. At this time, we were also introduced to our incoming Council liaison, Lisa C. Mangiafico.

Following Donna’s talk, Jeremy noted the achievements of the Roundtable over the last year, including the institution of the advocacy blog, the development of the first round of advocacy-related surveys, the provision of information on a number of various archival issues (including the Belfast Oral History Project/archival privilege controversy, the degraded state of Library and Archives Canada, the destruction of materials from the Ruskin College Labor Archives, the free speech threats in the Intelligence Authorization Bill, and ongoing threats to federal funding of archives and libraries), the nomination by I&A of the Friends of Georgia Archives & History for this year’s Jameson Award, and our unsuccessful attempt to restructure the Roundtable as a pair of permanent advocacy-related committees.

Lastly, we talked among ourselves about the future directions of I&A. Where do we want to go, and what do we want to do going forward? Erin Lawrimore promoted the idea of expanding our Advocacy Toolkit, including more blog posts that could be broadcast to the whole of SAA and not just amongst ourselves. She also suggested using *Archival Outlook* as a medium for promoting advocacy – perhaps one of us could write a piece promoting I&A’s advocacy presence.

Donna McCrea noted that APP will be focusing mainly on public policy, and that therefore I&A might take the lead, rather, in helping each other as members to be our own advocates.

Laura Starratt suggested bringing in new people to our activities, and getting hold of case studies, blurbs and other stories from people about their own advocacy and outreach projects at their institutions. She also suggested streamlining the ways in which we show ourselves to the outside world and work to change perceptions of ourselves.

Christine George pointed out that there are many different kinds of advocacy (grassroots, federal-level, court-level, etc.) that are conducted in different ways. I&A should be campaigning for all varieties of advocacy along the way.

Sarah Quigley mentioned that there is a great deal of “unconscious advocacy” going on out there in the world.

Lisa Mangiafico mentioned that, as an organization, it would be a good idea to invest in data collection that supports future advocacy efforts.

Following this free-form discussion, the meeting was adjourned.

Attendance: 20

Minutes submitted by Sarah Quigley, August 27, 2013