

Committee on Public Awareness: Annual Report

(Prepared by: Vince Lee, Chair)

For the 2020-2021 term, COPA worked on the following:

- **2020-2021 work plan**

As chair of COPA for 2020-2021, Vince Lee developed a work plan to guide the committee's work throughout the year, building upon the work outlined in the previous work plan developed by former chair Nick Pavlik. The full plan is attached to this report in Appendix A.

- **Early Career Member**

SAA launched a new initiative in 2019 to provide early career members with opportunities to serve on SAA appointed groups, which COPA was happy to participate in. Prior to the start of the 2020-2021 term, COPA Chair and Vice Chair/Chair-Elect Nick Pavlik and Vince Lee reviewed the early career member candidates and submitted their top three nominations to SAA Vice President Rachel Vagts. We were delighted that Rachel appointed our first choice, Kristianna Chanda, a Graduate Student pursuing her Masters of Information at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, as our early career member for the 2020-2021 period. During the summer of 2021, COPA was once again approached to host an early career member, with near unanimous support from the committee, COPA Chair and Vice Chair/Chair-Elect Vince Lee and Rachel Seale reviewed the early career member list of candidates and submitted their top three nominations to SAA Vice President Courtney Chartier. We were once again pleased that Courtney appointed our first choice, Ericka Dudley, a Graduate Student from Clayton State University to serve as our third early career member during the 2021-2022 period.

- **ArchivesAware! blog**

ArchivesAWARE is a blog hosted by the [Society of American Archivists](#) and managed by its [Committee on Public Awareness \(COPA\)](#). It was established in January 2016 to create an online space where professionals and students engaged in all aspects of archival work could share their experiences of and ideas for raising public awareness of archives and the value that archives and archivists add to business, government, education, and society as a whole.

This year, COPA member Katherine Barbera initially volunteered to serve as the blog's lead editor, but had to step down due to pre-existing obligations. COPA member Leon Miller volunteered to serve as the blog's lead editor for the rest of the year. He did a wonderful job stepping in during a critical time as editor continually refreshing the content of ArchivesAware and starting a new series entitled "Archival Authors". COPA is highly appreciative of his efforts to engage both COPA members and archival colleagues

outside COPA (and even outside the archives profession) to develop ideas and author posts for the blog.

To reach a wider range of audiences and to provide increased accessibility, the blog has incorporated audio-visual content with accompanying transcripts to the interviews. Here's one of our first posts with this feature:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPck7afdOm4&t=104s>

An additional debt of gratitude is owed to Katherine Barbera for starting us off and setting the tone as editor, COPA member Rachael Woody, who, through the posts she authored for *Archival Innovators* as well as her interviews in spotlighting archivists, and her recruitment of several guest authors, was among our most active contributors to the blog once again throughout the year. Early career member, Kristianna Chanda, also contributed posts on our series *Archival Innovators* and *Archives + Audiences*. We are sincerely grateful to Rachel Seale and other contributors for their dedication to maintaining ArchivesAWARE as a wonderful outreach resource for the archives profession!

Below are the blog statistics:

Year	Total Posts	Views	Visitors
2016	29	19,053	11,377
2017	24	12,838	7,545
2018	36	27,176	16,742
2019	36	28,647	17,531
2020 (to date)	28	29,143	17,852
2021	30	29,976	18,853

- **#AskAnArchivist Day**

2020 was the sixth year of #AskAnArchivist Day on Twitter, which took place on October 7th.

Year	Unique Users	Total Tweets
10/30/2014	1,949	6,065
10/01/2015	3,184	7,845

10/05/2016	3,742	10,005
10/04/2017	4,077	8,927
10/03/2018	2,909	6,758
10/02/2019	724	6,060
10/07/2020	1657	4537

For the 2020 #AskAnArchivist Day, select COPA members volunteered for two-hour shifts sharing tweets and retweets from the SAA Twitter account. This helped provide a central SAA “anchor” to the day’s activities, and more clearly communicated the fact that #AskAnArchivist Day was a COPA-sponsored event. Although in years past this worked very well the number of users and tweets during the event were down in 2020 compared to previous years. Part of the decline can be attributed to online fatigue due to COVID and working from home, as well as the short turnaround after the SAA Annual Meeting for planning and promoting the event in October. In evaluating the results, COPA has retooled for the 2021 event by proactively planning earlier in the year and forging partnerships with COPP and other institutions to promote the event to a wider audience.

- **Storytelling**

At this year’s SAA virtual conference, COPA sponsored a storytelling master class workshop that served both new and seasoned storytellers with a focus on the connections between narrative performance, teaching, research, and the online environment. COPA member Chris Burns was the main facilitator for organizing and coordinating the workshop, which was hosted by Micaela Blei. The workshop was widely successful and had 66 participants.

The Storytelling Workshop Master Class sponsored by COPA can be found here:
<https://www2.archivists.org/am2021/attend/storytelling-master-class>

Kicking off American Archives Month in October, COPA will once again host their fourth annual “*A Finding Aid to My Soul*” storytelling event for 2021. As with last year’s event, professional storyteller and Moth Grand Slam winner Micaela Blei will host this year’s virtual event. Attendees from the master class workshop will have an opportunity to apply what they’ve learned in sharing their stories with an audience. The call for pitches for this year’s event went out to the SAA membership and workshop attendees in early August with a deadline of August 31. This year’s storytelling virtual event is scheduled to take place on October 6 at 12 pm CT.

Details on how participants can pitch their story and the storytelling event can be found here:
<https://archivesaware.archivists.org/2021/08/05/pitch-your-story-call-for-stories-for-a-finding-aid-to-my-soul-virtual-event-on-october-6/>

- **Press Release**

As a follow-up to its first press release COPA also created its second press release during the 2020-2021 term, which focused on the centennial celebration of the nineteenth amendment and how archives all across the country marked the occasion with various programming, exhibits, and activities. COPA members Katherine Barbera, Lynn Cowles, Vince Lee, and Nick Pavlik drafted the press release, which was then revised and distributed to media outlets throughout the U.S. by SAA Director of Publishing Teresa Brinati via the service EIN-Presswire.

The press release can be viewed here:

<https://www2.archivists.org/news/2020/her-story-of-the-vote-archives-celebrate-the-nineteenth-amendments-centennial>

Based on the workflow established by this, COPA plans to issue several more press releases going forward and has already identified a number of additional topics as the focus of future press releases.

- **Webinar Funding Proposal**

Based on the feedback and attendance from the first COPA-sponsored webinar “Deriving Value from Collections in the Time of Corona”, COPA wanted to explore the logistics of providing future COPA-sponsored webinars as an educational resource for archivists. In the fall and spring of the 2020-2021 term COPA member, Rachael Woody led the planning and discussion of this proposal along with COPA Chair, Vince Lee and Vice Chair, Rachel Seale on the logistical requirements and practices for potential funding of webinar offerings. A Component Group Funding request was created and submitted to SAA for review.

Unfortunately due to the impact of COVID and the shortfalls created by budgetary constraints, funding considerations were suspended across the board for FY22. COPA will revisit this in the near future as much of the legwork and planning mechanisms are in place.

COPA’s Component Funding Request for a webinar can be found here:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1f3m1__73YdIboDG04ZEHQIJeXgJwjkdS/edit

- **Open House**

In preparation for COPA’s 2021 virtual business meeting held in late July, the Committee adopted an open house format, where guests and visitors external to COPA are made to feel welcome. A welcome video was produced in which first time visitors were greeted by the Chair of COPA along with highlights of COPA’s activities during the past year for those wanting to learn more. During the open house we provided our guests a Mad Libs template, created by COPA member Rachael Woody, for crafting their elevator pitch as well as a survey for activities they would like to see from COPA in the coming year.

The welcome video from COPA's Chair can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbX1BUHG1JU&t=1s>

The Mad Libs template for crafting an Elevator Pitch can be found

here: https://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/Mad_%20Libs_Elevator_Pitch_2021.pdf

COPA's survey and feedback form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfnIVQmRUUnAYNCK_IABwqi_vAW35cL-NINmXIAC7HY1XG2nw/viewform

- **Advocacy mini-workshop**

For the 2021 Annual meeting, COPA member Katherine Barbera led the progress on a joint COPA/COPP mini-workshop on advocacy that evolved into a workshop "*Build a Bridge to Stand: Making the Ask Even in Uncertain Times*" led by multiple groups: SAA Committee on Public Awareness (COPA), Committee on Public Policy (COPP), Issues & Advocacy (I&A) Section, the Regional Archival Associations Consortium (RAAC), and the Public Libraries and Archives/Special Collections. The advocacy workshop was very successful-we had 225 total registrants and over 150 participants during the session. We've received positive feedback from attendees and there was expressed interest from attendees for the group to offer another future workshop.

The workshop was recorded and can be viewed here:

https://www.pathlms.com/saa/events/2635/video_presentations/206870

Resources compiled by presenters and during mini-workshop:

 [Advocacy Resources | Build a Bridge to Stand Mini-Workshop SAA 2021](#)

- **COPA and COPP**

COPA chair Vince Lee and COPP chair Sam Winn continued the work of strengthening ties between the two committees by attending each other's monthly conference calls and, together with COPA and COPP vice-chairs Rachel Seale and Bryan Whitledge, worked on possible areas for collaboration between the two committees. Part of this collaboration resulted in a mini-workshop on advocacy at the SAA 2021 Annual Meeting as well as a contributing post to the ArchivesAware Blog on [Advocacy for Archives, History, and the Humanities](#) by Bryan Whitledge. COPP is also collaborating with COPA on planning, participation, and enlisting potential partnerships, and using their platform to spread awareness of the upcoming #AskAnArchivist Day this fall on October 13. Moving forward, incoming COPA and COPP chairs, Rachel Seale and Bryan Whitledge, plan to continue the collaboration starting with COPA and COPP jointly providing recommendations to SAA Council in response to the NHPRC report on how our committees might better advocate for smaller organizations, many of which may be too small to be members of SAA but would benefit from national leadership on how to advocate for their own needs.

Appendix A

Committee on Public Awareness 2020–2021 Work Plan

I. Goals

- A. Inform, excite, and engage SAA members about public awareness.
- B. Generate content for *ArchivesAWARE!* blog with the goal of refreshing content monthly
- C. Amplify SAA outreach efforts to national media about archives and archivists.
- D. Plan and develop COPA activities for the 2021 SAA Annual Meeting.

II. Objectives

- A. Encourage and enable SAA members to undertake outreach work.
- B. Collect and/or develop stories about archives and archivists.
- C. Plan for press releases, media interviews, and other activities on current events relating to archives.
- D. Create and/or coordinate outreach-related programming, toolkits and resources for membership use.

III. Strategies

- A. Encourage and enable outreach to the public by SAA members in 2020–2021.
 - 1. Evaluate #AskAnArchivist Day event (October) and possibly retool for next year.
 - 2. Review and enhance COPA content on SAA website:
 - a. Revisit COPA microsite and update.
 - b. Refresh as needed existing American Archives Month content.
 - 3. Assess member needs for a proposed Public Awareness toolkit and Public Policy toolkit:
 - a. Develop and conduct survey via Survey Monkey
 - b. Analyze survey results
 - c. Draft and implement plan
 - 4. Develop Speakers Bureau
 - a. Confirm participation of those on proposed list
 - b. Provide training and resources for speakers
 - c. Publish list of archives spokespersons with expertise in a variety of archives-related topics.
 - 5. Assess webinar survey results and outreach-related opportunities
 - a. Identify opportunities
 - b. Propose budget
 - c. Draft and implement programming plan for coming year
 - 6. Request the SAA Council to add media training to the public awareness/advocacy budget (March).

Agenda Item TK