

Description Section

Council Liaison: Stephen Curley

Report Submitted by: Katherine Duvall

2020-2021 Steering Committee Roster

Position	Name	Term Start	Term End
Chair	Katherine Duvall	8/1/2020	8/15/2021
Vice Chair / Chair-Elect	Katherine Madison	8/15/2020	8/15/2021
Immediate Past Chair	Cyndi Shein	8/15/2020	9/1/2021
Secretary	William Clements	8/15/2020	9/1/2022
Member-at-Large	Kelly Bolding	8/15/2020	9/1/2022
Member-at-Large	Helice Koffler	8/15/2019	9/1/2021
Newsletter Editor	Lori Dedeyan	6/3/2019	9/1/2022
Web Liaison	Scott Kirycki	3/1/2019	9/1/2022
Ex Officio	Matthew Gorham	9/15/2020	9/1/2022
Ex Officio	Susan Luftschein	10/31/2019	9/1/2021
Council Liaison	Stephen Curley	7/30/2020	9/1/2023

ACTIVITIES

Completed: - Completed a revision of our Standing Rules. The revisions were approved by the Section at large by ballot referendum. These updates primarily reflect the changes in the roles and responsibilities of Section officers and reflect updates to SAA guidelines. None of these changes fundamentally alter or change the Section's overall mission or objectives. - Completed the transition of our newsletter Descriptive Notes to a blog of the same name. Created an editorial team that meets monthly and developed submission and formatting guidelines. Successfully solicited, edited, and released eight blog posts on the new site.

(<https://saadescription.wordpress.com/>) - Built out our Documentation Portal to include a section for Inclusive and Reparative Description Resources and began adding resources to that section of the portal. (<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/description-section/description-section-documentation-portal>)

Ongoing: - We will continue to develop the section's blog Descriptive Notes. and solicit, edit, and add posts. We also continue to develop procedures and documentation for running the blog, including formalizing an editorial schedule. - We will continue to add resources to the Description Section Documentation Portal on our micro-site.

New: - We will increase our collaboration with other SAA Sections to build out the resources on the inclusive description section of the Documentation Portal. Collaboration discussions are already underway with the Native American Archives Section and the Women's Collections Section. - We will begin planning for the transition to a new Lead Blog Editor at the end of the

next year to ensure the sustainability of the blog. - Other projects to be determined by the 2021-2022 Steering Committee as the year progresses.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

1.3 - The Description Section has provided “leadership in ensuring the completeness, diversity, and accessibility of the historical record” by maintaining and adding to our Documentation Portal and expanding it to include Inclusive and Reparative Description resources. 1.4 - Through the blog, the Section provides a publication platform that allows archivists “to articulate the value of archives.”

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

2.1 - We decided to bring on an Early Career Member for 2021-2022. 2.2 - Through our newsletter and now our blog, we publish articles and updates about current and evolving descriptive practices. 2.3 - Through the blog and the Documentation Portal we provide accessible and free access to descriptive resources.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

3.2 - We “foster and disseminate research in and about the field” through our blog and our Documentation Portal. This year we also included updates from TS-DACS and SNAC in our annual meeting to keep our membership informed. 3.3 - This year we invited representatives from other Sections to our annual meeting to discuss their perspectives on inclusive and reparative description and we hope to foster this kind of collaboration into the future.

Goal 4: Meeting Members Needs

4.1 and 4.4 - Over the year, we kept the section membership up to date on activities and opportunities to contribute via the section’s listserv. We presented our activities at our annual business meeting and were available for questions and comments.

ANNUAL MEETING

Number of Attendees: 90

Summary of Meeting Activities: The steering committee led a successful annual business meeting on July 26 as a part of the annual SAA conference - held virtually for the second time. Members got to hear directly from the Section’s Web Liaison, Scott Kirycki, and our Lead Blog Editor, Lori Dedeyan, along with updates from TS-DACS and SNAC. The annual meeting also included lightning talks from the leaders of other SAA Sections on the topic of inclusive and reparative description. We heard from members of the Native American Archives Section, the Accessibility and Disability Section, the Labor Archives Section, and the Women’s Collections Section.

Link to Meeting Minutes:

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

The Steering Committee is active and engaged and committed to continuing a number of projects in the coming years. We had a good turn out at the annual meeting and a number of responses to our calls for blog posts; otherwise measuring member engagement is difficult.

What forms of communication work best for your section members? (For example: email listserv, conference calls, in-person meetings)

The email listserv along with annual Zoom meetings work well for the wider membership. As we have not had an in-person meeting in 2 years, it's hard to tell if that would work better than a virtual annual business meeting. For the Steering Committee, regular Zoom meetings and email work well for communication.

SAA is exploring programming and topical affinities between sections. ([Learn more here.](#)) Does your section share issues or scope overlap with other sections? If so, which sections?

Description is a broad and important topic in archives, so this section shares issues and scope overlap with almost every section that deals with archival description in some form. This past year we worked with the Native American Archives Section, the Accessibility and Disability Section, the Labor Archives Section, and the Women's Collections Section on lightning talks on inclusive description for our annual meeting, but there are a number of other sections that could participate in this work going forward. In addition, descriptive work also overlaps with the work of sections like Encoded Archival Standards and the Metadata and Digital Object Section or sections that are based on format like Design Records, Electronic Records, the Oral History Section, and the Web Archiving Section.

If your section were to be part of an umbrella of affiliation with other sections, how would you describe the overarching theme of that umbrella?

One umbrella could possibly be "description." It is a core archival function and a necessary activity of archives and archival collections. While many SAA sections are grouped based on identity (of archivists or of collection materials), description as a topic and function is shared across all types of repositories. Depending on how the umbrellas are grouped, another possible option is something akin to "technical services" for sections that deal with back-of-house issues.

Do you have any concerns or questions about the potential for your section to merge or affiliate?

The Description Section is a large section with a wide-reaching scope, as archival description takes a lot of forms and impacts many aspects of archival work, so we would advocate for the section to remain as is and not merge with any other sections. We'd like to know more about what being part of an umbrella of affiliation would entail before making any further determinations.

QUESTIONS FOR COUNCIL

As one possible avenue for the coming years, the section is looking to find a way to assist people working on grassroots community-specific descriptive resources or collaboratively with communities on descriptive projects - possibly through grants to help pay community consultants for these projects. This idea needs to be developed, but we are interested in getting more information on how we might implement a funding project through some of the grants available for SAA sections or some other means.