

SAA Committee on Public Awareness

Minutes, September 9, 2020 (Leon Miller)

Present: Kate Barbera, Chris Burns, Rachael Woody, Kristianna Chanda, Lynn Cowles, Vince Lee (Chair), Leon Miller, Teresa Brinati (Staff Liaison), Samantha Winn (COPP Chair), Rachel Winston, (Council Liaison)

Could not attend: Rachel Seale, Anna Trammell

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- I. Previous minutes approved by acclimation. Lee thanked Cowles for taking the minutes.
- II. A Finding Aid to My Soul (**Burns**):

**BACKGROUND:** This is the third year of a story-telling event at SAA. It was created to raise awareness of COPA among SAA members and provide archivists with a creative outlet for honing their communication skills. The first year was a great success. For the second year SAA paired the program with the award-winning storyteller and educator Micaela Blei who offered a workshop in addition to a storytelling event. For this third year, Blei offered a workshop in August. She will also work with five selected storytellers to hone their presentations.

This year's event will be held October 1. Seventeen applicants submitted story ideas from which Burns, Seale, Barbera, Brinati, and Blei selected five. Given the online nature of the event, the subcommittee hopes to keep it relatively short, lasting roughly an hour. The concern now is how to publicize it. Our main avenues are the blog and SAA's Twitter feeds.

**Barbera** was very impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of last year's event.

**Brinati** informed the committee that the event was announced in today's "In the Loop" and will be the featured announcement in two weeks. For the upcoming program, Brinati stated that participants will need to log into the SAA website for security purposes and that SAA staff are currently working on an SAA home page link. SAA is in Burn's debt for creating and running the program.

- III. Ask an Archivist Day (**Lee**)

The event will be held on (Wednesday) October 7, 2020. It goes back to 2014. In the past it was promoted by committee members creating memes to post on social media which we

want to continue that this year. We also want to promote it on the blog. We need additional volunteers for the time slots.

The committee agreed on October 7, 2021, as the date for next year's event. At Burn's urging Cowles confirmed that it does not conflict with other events or religious holidays.

#### IV. ArchivesAWARE! (**Barbera**):

**BACKGROUND (Burns):** The blog was one of the first main projects of the first COPA committee. It had an excellent start followed by a period of less activity. Its first successful project was the blog series "There's an Archivist for That." Early participants learned that a calendar for submissions was important along with structures for providing content. The blog rarely received content from persons outside of COPA committee members and Woody has made an especially strong contribution with her "Responses and Retrospectives" series.

**Brinati:** a catalyst for the blog was the enthusiastic presidency of Kathleen Roe who made advocacy the theme of her presidency. Federal funding impact stories were an initial success. Brinati uses the blog as an example for other SAA groups regarding how to successfully refresh content.

**Barbera:** Barbera is evaluating the blog and noted that content is being submitted less frequently. To address that, Barbera has altered the schedule so there are now four tabs: pending posts, scheduled posts (posts with a publication date); past posts back to 2017 (Barbera noted that there is also a blog archive on WordPress), and mini-series. Mini-series, with four or five posts on one theme, seem to be a growing trend in various formats (such as podcasts) and she and Woody brainstormed on possible new ones, such as American Archives Month, "most unusual item in your archives," repurposed "I love being an archivist" content from last year; and repurposed content from "Ask an Archivist" Day.

**Woody:** an appropriate topic might be what archivists are going through regarding Covid.

**Lee:** mental health is an important issue for archivists now. Lee also mentioned practical issues regarding archivists and Covid: how do archivists work with donors or pick up collections?

**Barbera:** another idea is to repurpose Archival Outlook content: Brinati: this would be a good way to give content from new voices a wider audience. Brinati suggested that Kate, Abigail, and herself review recent issues to determine what they might use to strengthen the blog.

**Burns:** the October mini-series needs to be established now. Barbera replied that she will begin working on it.

Lee thanked Barbera for her work.

V. SAA 2020 Recap (**Lee**): Because of the virtual annual meeting, COPA could not have a table but Lee looks forward to having a table at next year's SAA meeting in Anaheim as well as a COPA session proposal.

VI. Standing Updates:

1. [Committee on Public Policy](#) (Samantha Winn, chair). Upcoming COPP projects will focus on trying to assist state and local archives faced with funding cuts and providing resources for federal elected officials after the November election.
2. Lee reported on a phone meeting for the [CoSA/NAGARA/SAA Joint Working Group on Issues and Awareness](#). Lee noted that the group discussed a joint document and that the group is seeking to fill a membership slot. Regarding federal news, it was noted that increased expenditures are difficult during an election year and that 2021 seemed more promising for federal support for cultural preservation, particularly if it could be tied to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Constitution. Lee also reported that the Mayor of Birmingham has walked back his threat to close his city's public library.
3. Council Liaison Rachel Winston had to leave early but Lee asked Brinati if she had any Council updates. Brinati reported that Council is now meeting every other month and that Council is seeking volunteers for the newly-formed [Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group](#).