

Committee on Public Awareness: Annual Report

(Prepared by: Katherine Barbera and Chris Burns, Co-Chairs)

For the 2023-2024 term, COPA worked on the following:

- **2023-2024 Work Plan**

Co-Chairs Anna Trammel, Chris Burns, and Katherine Barbera prepared a work plan and task list for 2023-2024. Over the past several years, the committee has experienced high turnover in members so the co-chairs focused our efforts on building positive group dynamics with the new members, clarifying COPA's mission, and identifying an actionable set of priorities to galvanize the group. Co-chair Anna Trammel stepped away from the committee mid-year for personal reasons.

The task list, which is based on the activities assigned to COPA in the "SAA Strategic Plan Actions and Timelines FY 2023 – FY 2025," included:

Media Training

- Contact potential partners (ALA, COSA, etc.)
- Establish what we want out of media training
- Explore instructors and pricing
- Develop draft of application for participants
- Present proposal/request funding to SAA (and possibly other partners)
- Develop post-training plan for continued engagement with participants

Toolkit/Resource Development

- Identify areas of focus for the toolkits
- Identify SAA members to help craft toolkits
- Develop template for toolkits
- Assign a COPA member to work with a subject area expert to draft each toolkit

Archives AWARE Blog

- Establish a plan for what we want out of the blog; set realistic goals
- Identify a blog editor
- Develop a schedule for post contributions from all COPA members
- Develop a plan for re-using existing blog content

- **Media Training**

COPA is in the early stages of planning and organizing a new media training course. COPA offered a similar training in 2018 and developing and improving on this training continues to be an area of interest for SAA. SAA is especially interested in creating a cohort of archivists who have received media training.

Co-chair Katherine Barbera met with the Committee on Education in March 2024 to discuss options and requirements, and soon after, COPA began preparing a proposal

outlining desired learning outcomes, resources, and other requirements, including options for structuring the course(s) and identifying instructors. Incoming vice chair Claudia Willett also completed an assessment of existing documentation and data about past SAA media training efforts.

Incoming vice chair Claudia Willett and outgoing co-chair Katherine Barbera will meet with SAA leadership in the fall after the annual meeting to clarify expected outcomes before finalizing the proposal and submitting it to SAA leadership and the Committee on Education. In 2025, COPA aims to work collaboratively with the Committee on Education and other stakeholders across SAA to design and develop the training opportunity, building toward a launch in 2026.

- **Toolkit/Resource Development**

COPA aims to develop toolkits and other resources for SAA, especially regarding niche and speciality areas such as corporate archives. After reviewing the other priorities on the 2023/2024 task list, the committee chose to focus our efforts on rejuvenating the ArchivesAWARE blog and developing media training. COPA will return to the toolkits and other resources next term.

- **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.

After many years of running a productive blog, the momentum proved difficult to maintain over the last few years. The challenges COPA faced with the blog can be attributed to changes brought on by the pandemic, difficulty finding a member to serve as blog editor, the loss of a number of long-time committee members, and significant trouble retaining newer committee members.

As outlined above, a main goal for COPA this past year was to restart blog activity, albeit in a way that felt appropriate to the committee members given the other priorities of the committee and their own bandwidth.

To that end, the committee completed the following this year.

- Felicity Knox volunteered to serve as the blog's editor.
- The existing blog calendar of possible future posts was revisited and updated.
- Sidney Louie and Chris Burns modified and simplified sets of questions that could be sent to interviewees for three existing blog series (There's an Archivist for That, Archives + Audiences, Archival Innovators) and two potential new series (Asking for a Friend, How Do I Become An Archivist).
- Felicity Knox re-published two blog posts with content of continuing interest.

- [From the Vaults — Public Relations and Marketing for Archives: An Interview with Peter Wosh](#)
- [From the Vaults — Responses and Retrospectives: But I thought I was an Archivist?](#)
- Angie Piccolo published one There's an Archivist for That! blog post.
 - [There's an Archivist for That! An Interview with Donna Wojcik of the New Mexico Farm and Ranch Heritage Museum](#)
- Claudia Willett published two There's An Archivist for That! blog posts.
 - [There's an Archivist for That! An Interview with Rebekah Valentine, Lead Archivist for the Dianne Feinstein papers](#)
 - [There's an Archivist for That! An Interview with Chloe Pfendler and Chris Doan, Archivists for Silicon Valley Archives](#)

While the number of posts produced this year is relatively modest compared to some past years, the structure and workflows for the blog have been re-established and we are looking forward to building upon this foundation in 2024-2025.

- **Open House**

COPA held an [Open House](#) on July 1 during its annual meeting. The Open House, organized by COPA member Sidney Louie, featured an introduction to the work of COPA followed by a live interview for the blog with Dr. Laura LaPlaca and Ashley Senske of the National Comedy Center in celebration of International Joke Day. LaPlaca and Senske spoke in detail about their work and the Center, and also shared a few jokes from their archives. The event was well attended and a nice way to introduce the work of COPA and raise awareness of the work of an archives and its archivists.

- **Storytelling/Finding Aid to My Soul**

Chris Burns led planning discussions about re-starting COPA's storytelling work. Past efforts, which took place between 2018 and 2021, involved working with a consultant, [Micaela Blei](#), to run a storytelling workshop for archivists and produce and host a storytelling event, Finding Aid to My Soul. COPA decided towards the end of this year to once again work with Micaela on an October 2024 workshop and a February 2025 storytelling event. More details will be forthcoming about both of these activities over the next few months.

For reference purposes, information about the 2021 workshop and event can be found [here](#).

- [Storytelling Workshop Announcement on SAA website](#)
- [Storytelling event announcement and recording on SAA conference site](#)

- **Closing**

Despite struggles to retain members in recent years, starting in the first year of the pandemic, COPA is in a strong position moving into the 2024/2025 term. Newer members such as Angie Piccolo (incoming chair), Claudia Willett (incoming vice chair),

Felicity Knox (new ArchivesAWARE editor), and Sidney Louie (organized the 2024 open house) have stepped up, taken on responsibilities, and are bringing fresh energy to the committee.