

Description Section

Report Submitted by: Will Clements
Council Liaison: Conor Casey

Steering Committee Roster 2023-2024

-Elizabeth (Betts) Coup Chair 2024-08-15 – 2025-09-01 -Max Goldberg Vice Chair/Chair-Elect 2024-08-15 – 2025-09-01 -Mandy Bernard Lignelli Secretary 2024-08-15 – 2026-09-01 -Melissa Haley Member-at-Large 2024-08-15 – 2026-09-01

Activities

Completed:

This year a subcommittee of steering committee members spent weeks reviewing and revamping our Inclusive Description Documentation Portal, which is an evolving list of resources for archivists seeking guidance on how to describe collections in a more inclusive way. The Section also collaborated with the Collection Management section to plan a virtual panel discussion on the intersection of archival description and collection management, that was attended by over 100 people. Another collaborator this year was the Visual Materials Section, with whom our secretary Phoebe planned a Bring your own breakfast event on Description and Cataloguing of Visual Materials at the in-person SAA annual meeting in Chicago. Our Section Annual meeting included updates from members of TS-EAS, TS-DACS, SNAC, and our Council Liaison, as well as a panel discussion on Project Management and Archival Description, with panelists from CCNY, NC State, and Northwestern University, followed by a robust Q&A and moderated discussion. This meeting was attended by over 100 people.

Ongoing:

Our Section's blog, Descriptive Notes (<https://saadescription.wordpress.com/>), has become a powerful tool for amplifying the work of archival description. Since last September, the blog has published 24 posts submitted by our section's members on topics ranging from inclusive description, to project management, to conference dispatches. Together, these posts have made our "invisible labor" visible to over 16,000 readers from 53 countries. The 2023-2024 editorial team consisted of Kate Madison (Lead Blog Editor), Ashley Gosselar, Betts Coup, Will Clements, Phoebe Nobles, Sarah Bush, Elizabeth Mubarek, Kate Morris and Cate Peebles.

New:

No new projects planned at this time.

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

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 on our Section’s micro-site. Through our blog, Descriptive Notes, the Section provides a publication platform that allows archivists “to articulate the value of archives.”

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

The Section provides a publication forum through our blog, Descriptive Notes, about current and evolving descriptive practices in archives. Through our blog and our Documentation Portal, the Section provides free and accessible information about archival description and descriptive resources. We collaborated with the Collection Management and Visual Materials Sections on virtual and in-person programming that reached hundreds of members.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

The Section “foster[s] and disseminate[s] research in and about the field” through our blog and our Documentation Portal. This year we again included updates from TS-EAS, TS-DACS, and SNAC in our annual meeting to keep our membership informed. Our collaborations with other sections on programming and our annual meeting panel provided a forum for ideas related to project management and description of visual materials to large numbers of participants.

Goal 4: Meeting Members Needs

The Section membership is regularly kept up to date on activities and opportunities to contribute via the Section’s listserv. A report was made to membership at our annual business meeting, where we also invited members to come forward with projects and ideas. Steering committee members are available for questions and comments. Chair Will Clements published a post on the Section’s blog this year summarizing Steering activities planned for the year and encouraging members to reach out to the Section’s Steering Committee with ideas. As outlined previously, our programming has reached hundreds of members this year alone, and our blog's readership stats speak for themselves.

Annual Meeting 2024

Number of Attendees: over 100

Summary of Meeting Activities:

The outgoing Description Section Steering Committee welcomed over 100 attendees to our section’s annual meeting on July 10, 2024. Attendees heard a recap of 2023-2024 section business, a panel discussion on Project Management and Archival Description, with panelists from CCNY, NC State, and Northwestern University, followed by a robust Q&A and moderated discussion, updates on ongoing projects, and news about Description Section Steering Committee elections. In addition, representatives from SAA Council, TS-DACS, TS-EAS, and Social Networks and Archival Context (SNAC) provided updates on their groups' activities.

Link to Meeting Minutes:

Self Assessment

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

The Section's Steering Committee is active in and committed to a number of projects with long-term scope (the blog and updating the Inclusive Description section of our Documentation Portal). This year we had no difficulty soliciting candidates for Steering Committee membership. We had an excellent turnout for our annual meeting and have been able to maintain a regular blog posting schedule thanks to a high response rate to our calls for new content.

Questions for the SAA Council

None at this time.