



SAA Annual Reports Sections

2023-2024

Society of American Archivists

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Diversity Committee

Report Submitted by: Kristen Chinery
Council Liaison: Selena Ortega-Chiolero

Steering Committee Roster 2023-2024

Incoming Vice-Chair: Zachary Tumlin Incoming committee members: Elizabeth Heu, Renee James, Jim Kuhn

Activities

Completed:

Reestablished communication with affiliated sections and ex-officio appointments to ensure the broadest possible input for our work. In reviewing recommendations that the 2022-2023 Committee made to Council, notes from the 2023 Diversity Forum, and the DEIA workplan, we identified items that needed attention. This included reaffirming (through our Council liaison) the recommendation for Council to conduct a disability audit (brought to Council in November 2023). Reevaluated the legacy case study program to determine if a need still existed with the rise of online publications and other archival publications. Due to inactivity and a lack of discoverability, we removed the case study link from the microsite and will re-direct future inquiries to consider other SAA publication opportunities. Worked with the User Experience Section to review and provide recommendations for their Standing Rules. Assisted the Membership Committee in reviewing questions for their quarterly membership survey about the Annual Meeting. Developed the 2024 Diversity Forum for the Annual Meeting, which focused on how current attacks on DEIA are impacting archives. The Forum was organized as a virtual-only traditional panel format and took place on August 17, 2024.

Ongoing:

Last year's committee submitted a recommendation to co-develop training opportunities and asked SAA leadership to support and validate post-custodialism, radical empathy, communication, and ethics in collecting in a visible way. We communicated with Council and the Education Committee to explore how to move that work forward. More conversation is needed. Collaborated with the Standards Committee on their Procedures for Review and Approval of an SAA-Developed Standard. Determining what role the Diversity Committee could play in reviewing new and revised SAA standards for compliance with DEIA requirements will be an ongoing initiative.

New:

Partnering with SNAP to co-sponsor an event in the fall. Began discussions with Membership Committee to collaborate on developing Mentoring Guidelines for new hires.

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

Continued collaboration with committees/sections to ensure DEIA perspectives are at the forefront of archival work.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

Based on last year's Diversity Forum feedback, the Diversity Committee identified non-academic archivists who are new to the profession as a constituency group that often lacks opportunities and inclusion. The Committee worked with SNAP this past year to develop programming and will be co-sponsoring an event in the Fall.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

Collaborated with the Standards Committee to determine how the Diversity Committee could assist in reviewing new and revised SAA standards for compliance with DEIA requirements. Advocated to Council for Diversity Committee representation on the Archival Workers Labor Task Force. The Committee feels that a rep on the Task Force is the most effective way to promote precarious labor as a topic of concern.

Goal 4: Meeting Members Needs

The Diversity Forum continues to serve as an effective vehicle for inclusion-based education, exposure to varied perspectives, and participation.

Annual Meeting 2024

Number of Attendees: 79 attendees at the Diversity Forum

Summary of Meeting Activities:

This year's Diversity Forum focused on recent and increasing attacks on DEIA initiatives and programming in our country and how it impacts archives. The featured speakers were Maigen Sullivan and Joshua Burford, co-founders and co-Executive Directors of Invisible Histories, an organization focused on documenting and sharing LGBTQ+ Southern history. They shared their first-hand experience with the repercussions of anti-DEIA legislation and led a discussion of how we as a profession can respond and advocate for inclusion.

Link to Meeting Minutes: Session not recorded to protect participant anonymity, notes not available.

Self Assessment

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

Members of the Diversity Committee were very engaged this past year. They consistently and actively participated in monthly committee meetings, numerous subcommittee meetings, collaborative projects, and planning.

Questions for the SAA Council

The Diversity Committee submits a formal request to have the Diversity Forum scheduled at a more appropriate and inclusive time. Until recently, the Forum took place on the first official day of the conference, from 12pm-1:15pm. Holding the Diversity Forum on Saturday morning when people are checking out, and concurrently with other DEIA-related sessions, does not indicate a commitment on SAA's behalf to DEIA issues or member needs. To that end we also respectfully ask that the Forum be offered in the hybrid format, just as with a plenary, in order to ensure broad participation from conference attendees.

Emerging issues from this year's Forum:

- Several individuals raised concerns about the Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA). The Diversity Committee formally requests that Council discuss the limits this legislation will impose on collecting and consider drafting a statement.
- Archivists are being actively threatened with loss of employment if they participate in diversity work, including attending meetings of this committee. The Diversity Committee formally requests that Council explore actionable ways to address the impact of DEIA bans on people, collections, and institutions.

The Diversity Committee unequivocally supports DSGS and the need to retain its status as a Section. The Committee notes continued challenges in communicating with Council. The membership has repeatedly brought this up as an issue and is particularly interested in Council providing the Committee with clear direction as to the work they would like to see the Committee take on in the coming year.

In order to foster better communication among component groups and committees, the Diversity Committee suggests that in addition to the annual Leadership Training (to be held in the fall) SAA organize a mid-year check-in for SAA leaders to come together and discuss potential for collaboration, concerns with regard to the organizational structure and how SAA might better serve its members.