

Society of American Archivists
American Archivist Editorial Board
Virtual Meeting | July 23, 2021

MINUTES

In attendance: Amy Cooper Cary (*American Archivist* Editor and Editorial Board Chair), Bethany Anderson (Reviews Editor), Sumayya Ahmed, Carrie Daniels, Bridgette Hammond (early-career member), Katharina Hering, Eric Hung, Shadrack Katuu, Jessica Lacher-Feldman, and Alison Trulock; incoming members Mark Matienzo, Marlee Newman, and Karen Gionet Zentek (early-career member); and *ex officio* member Sarah Demb (Interim Publications Editor), Mario Ramirez (Council Liaison); and Katherine Fisher (Publications Board early-career member) and SAA staff Teresa Brinati and Abigail Christian.

Unable to attend: Ben Goldman, Kate Puerini, Sylvia Welsh, and early-career members Asa Espanto and Grace Moran.

I. WELCOME

American Archivist Editor Amy Cooper Cary thanked outgoing Board members Carrie Daniels and Alison Trulock for their exceptional work on the Board during their term of service, their quality of peer reviews, and their willingness to work to improve Board processes. Cary also thanked early-career members Espanto, Hammond, and Moran for their great work on the hidden content project. Cary then welcomed Matienzo and Newman to the Board, both of whom bring a wealth of experience in SAA and in publishing, respectively.

II. DISCUSSION ITEMS: DEIA INITIATIVES

A. Process Improvements

- i. Cary broached the subject of creating a DEIA statement specific to *American Archivist*. Some Board members asked for clarification on its need. If tied to specific actions, a specific DEIA statement make sense, but on their own, DEIA statements often end up being the only action taken by a body and can come across as performative. (See [On Being Included](#) by Sara Ahmed [Duke University Press, 2012] for more on this perspective.)
- ii. Perhaps creating a list of actions the Board will take could be a first step in this process, and then extrapolate a statement around these courses of action.
- iii. If the Board does issue a DEIA statement, it should work off the Board's [response to the Boles article](#) as some of this work was done previously and the statement should connect to these early initiatives.
- iv. The statement should also be in conversation with the SAA Council's DEIA working group, which is working off recommendations from the [SAA Diversity Committee's report](#) from spring 2021 and which has some great suggestions for actions for SAA's publications in general.

- v. The statement should include info about the kinds of articles the Board wants to publish, followed by Board members tailoring calls for submissions to specific groups (i.e., Accessibility and Disability Section, Students and New Archives Professional Section, Archivists and Archives of Color Section, Women Archivists Sections, Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section, and Native American Archives Section).
- vi. Developing an article or special section about the history of the diversity the journal could help the Board get to the policies and issues we need to affect.

To Do #1 (Cooper Cary, Hering, Hung, Lacher-Feldman, and Matienzo): Cooper Cary will connect with members to create a bibliography about what's been written about the journal's and SAA's history.

To Do #2 (Brinati and Christian): Check with Allen Press about the possibility of adding optional demographic information for journal contributors so we can begin tracking this info.

B. Peer Review

- i. The Board discussed the [current rubric](#) and its effectiveness. In general, having a rubric is helpful, especially for the Editor as they make comparisons. The current rubric doesn't apply to all articles (for example, if an article is a perspectives piece and therefore doesn't have as much research tied to it). The rubric is also only as helpful as people know how to use it and craft their feedback for how articles can be improved versus rating aspects of it as "good."
- ii. The rubric also conforms to a Western style of essay writing, so is not as helpful when evaluating international submissions. The rubric has a focus on grammar, which is not as useful as it limits consideration from non-native English writers and we have a great copyediting process in place. Better to focus on content as much as possible. A rubric calling for a more narrative structure may be helpful.
- iii. Currently, the peer review is a double-blind process—which means that both the reviewer and author identities are concealed from each other. One board member suggested exploring the possibility of non-anonymous reviews, or perhaps the submitter can choose if they want to be anonymous or non-anonymous with an opt-in box when submitting. The archives profession is small, so a non-anonymous peer review could be a challenge in not hurting feelings. Many international editorial boards use a double-blind review process. On the other hand, non-anonymous peer reviews may better allow for discussions of positionality. An opt-in box or an option for requesting further conversation could serve the purpose for those wishing to have non-anonymized reviews and more discussion between reviewer and contributor.
- iv. A Board member suggested requesting 100-word DEIA statements or explanations on why they wrote the article from submitters, which may assist in peer review process.
- v. Another Board member suggested an "Additional Sources" section in the rubric, where reviewers can suggest other articles that may be helpful to the author.

To Do #3 (Cooper Cary): Provide Board members and especially peer reviewers with examples of solid reviews so that people know what to aim for.

To Do #4: (Cooper Cary): Review formatting of the rubric so that visual clues encourage explanation rather than brief comments, and write an introduction for the rubric which stresses the purpose and value of the responses, especially for reviewers not on the Board.

To Do #5 (All Board Members): Send examples of other good rubrics or suggestions for additional questions or revised questions to Cary.

To Do #6 (Brinati and Christian): Check with Allen Press about the possibility of an opt-in box for non-anonymous peer reviews.

C. Onboarding New Members

- i. Currently new Board members receive a welcome email that introduces them to all of the online resources available to them and links to previous meeting minutes. This year, a Zoom orientation will also take place after the SAA conference in August.
- ii. As new members join the Board, they shared what was helpful to know before committing to the Board as well as what they'd still like to know. Knowledge about the time commitment to the Board as well as flexibility of members' schedules change. Examples of what's expected is helpful, especially around providing constructive narrative feedback in their peer reviews.
- iii. Does the Board offer a mentoring process for new authors? This question has come up a few times. The Publications Board has a shepherd for each book project; could the Editorial Board have a similar shepherd for each article? One low-hanging solution might be to collaborate with the SAA Membership Committee's Mentoring Program, which often pairs mentors and mentees around certain topics. The Mentoring Program could be on the lookout for members interested in mentorship around writing an *American Archivist* article. If there's a response, an interested Board member could step in as mentor.

To Do #7 (Cooper Cary, Brinati, Christian): Schedule New Board Member orientations via Zoom.

D. Engaging with Component Groups

- i. The Board could create a list of SAA Sections that Board members are engaged in. Board members should be on the lookout for how they can encourage submissions.
- ii. Special sections in the journal about specific topics or from specific audiences are great. Katuu was on the editorial board for *Archives and Manuscripts* when it issued a call for submissions from new professionals and emerging scholars, which resulted in 70 submissions and constituted a full issue called "[New Horizons: Writing on Records and Archives from Emerging Scholars.](#)"

To Do #8 (Brinati and Christian): Develop a simple form for Board members to indicate to which SAA Sections they belong.

To Do #9 (All Board Members): Fill out the form and engage your Sections about *American Archivist*.

III. BRIEF UPDATES

A. Reviews Editor – Bethany Anderson

- i. Reviews are in progress for issues 84.2 and 85.1. Anderson's term ends in 2021; plans for a transition to begin this fall.
- ii. Reviews Portal has been including more reviews of archives in pop culture, as well as a documentary and exhibition at the Guggenheim, as well as for many productive office tools but for archivists specifically, and archival instruction sets of primary sources. More than 15 reviews this year. Portal has received more than 42,000 views since its 2016 launch and 20,000 unique visitors.
- iii. Katherine Fisher (Publications Board early-career member) has solicited reviews of cases from the seven case studies series as a way to amplify those case studies and to encourage practical application of their takeaways. Four reviews are in process and a new call for contributors will go out this summer. Cooper Cary congratulated Fisher on receiving the 2021 Fellows' Ernst Posner Award for best essay in volume 83 of *American Archivist*.

B. *Archives in Context* Podcast – Bethany Anderson

- i. *Archives in Context* added the new role of project manager to the team, filled by Lolita Rowe, community outreach archivist at Emory University.
- ii. The podcast is in the process of adding transcripts for episodes on the website to enhance their accessibility.
- iii. The most recent interview in Season 5 featured members of the Archives for Black Lives in Philadelphia's Anti-Racist Description Working Group on the creation of the *Anti-Racist Description Resources*. The season will wrap after one more episode. The team is meeting shortly to plan for season 6.

To Do #10 (All Editorial Board Members): The Board's feedback on the [podcast or ideas for interviewees](#) and for Reviews are welcome! Send to Bethany Anderson.

C. **Hidden Content Team** – Bridgette Hammond, Katharina Hering

Early-career members Moran, Espanto, and Hammond have been going through past *American Archivist* issues to determine what should be further highlighted and restructured.

To Do #11 (Brinati, Christian, Cooper Cary, Espanto, Hammond, Moran, Hering, and Zentek): Meet to discuss next steps and transition.

D. **CORDA/Dataverse** – Amy Cooper Cary

Cooper Cary met with the CORDA team to discuss a collaboration between *American Archivist* and the SAA Dataverse. Cary would like to develop a statement encouraging journal contributors to submit their datasets to the SAA Dataverse.

E. **Publications Editor** – Sarah Demb

- i. The Publications Board welcomed new career members and thanked those cycling off at its recent meeting.

- ii. DEIA initiatives revisiting processes including our members' roles as shepherds and thinking how to embed DEIA into that and diversifying vendors. Pleased with recent success of book discussions: [Archival Accessioning](#) in July and [A Matter of Facts](#) in March. And published a Teaching With Primary Sources Case Study, "[Stories of Power and Diversity during COVID.](#)"
- iii. Volume 4 in the Archival Fundamentals Series III, [Reference and Access for Archives and Manuscripts](#), is the 2021 Waldo Gifford Leland Award winner and was selected for the 2021 One Book, One Profession reading initiative.
- iv. *Archival Accessioning* was published in July. Keep an eye out for three new books forthcoming in the fall:
 - *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives* by Scott Cline
 - *Managing Business Archives in the 21st Century*, edited by Sarah Polirer
 - *Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, and Advocacy*, edited by Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke

F. Council – Mario Ramirez

- i. The Council hired Jackie Price Osafo as SAA's new executive director.
- ii. As the SAA Council is working on a DEIA Strategic Plan, which is in process. Keep an eye out for member forums for opportunities to weigh in on SAA's DEIA plans.
- iii. Implementation of ACENSUS*II will begin in September.
- iv. Salary transparency on the job board was approved in May; logistics are still in process for implementation of this requirement.
- v. The Council is developing topical meetings led by Council members throughout the year to connect leaders with members and Council initiatives.
- vi. Ramirez is also liaison to the 2021 Nominating Committee. If the Board has nominations, particularly for the vice president/president-elect position, please let Ramirez know.

IV. ISSUE UPDATES & MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS

- A. The first digital-only issue, [issue 84.1 \(Spring/Summer 2021\)](#) was released this summer.
- B. Issue [84.2 \(Fall/Winter 2021\)](#) is in progress. It includes a special section on design records, guest edited by Karen Trivette
- C. Articles for issue [85.1 \(Spring/Summer 2022\)](#) are scheduled; new submissions will be considered for issue 85.2 (Fall/Winter 2022).
- D. Manuscript Submissions: In 2020, the journal received around 70 submissions. The majority required revisions; the majority of those that were resubmitted were accepted. Comparatively, the journal has received fewer submissions at this point of time in the year, possibly due to pandemic-related effects. Right now is a great time for the Board to be on the lookout for and encourage submissions.

V. BRIEF READERSHIP SURVEY

Cooper Cary would like to conduct a brief survey or ten questions to readers of *American Archivist* about the digital version. Survey to be conducted in Spring 2022.

To Do #12 (Cooper Cary): Develop a draft set of questions for the readership survey.

To Do #13 (Brinati and Christian): Share information about global web traffic to the journal with the Board.

To Do #14 (Brinati, Christian): Send standing dates for bimonthly, hour-long meetings on Fridays.

To Do #15 (Brinati, Christian): Organize “Write Away” forum.