

Society of American Archivists
***American Archivist* Editorial Board Meeting**
August 2, 2019 | Austin, Texas

MINUTES

In attendance: Cal Lee (chair and editor), Bethany Anderson (reviews editor), Carrie Daniels, Jennifer Meehan, Heather Soyka, Karen Trivette, Alison Trulock, Katharina Hering (draft minutes), Mario Ramirez (incoming Council liaison), Erin Lawrimore (outgoing Council liaison), and Teresa Brinati (SAA staff liaison).

Unable to attend: Scott Cline, Ben Goldman, Josh Schneider, Chris Prom (ex officio, Publications Board chair), Abigail Christian (SAA staff liaison).

I. Welcome and Update

- Lee acknowledged and thanked outgoing Editorial Board members Meehan (two terms) and Cline (one term).
- Lee also announced that SAA Council resolutions were passed honoring two long-time journal partners: [Meg Moss](#), for her skillful copyediting and [Kelly Sweeney](#) for her fetching design work.
- The Board agreed to work through the agenda as swiftly as reasonable so that as much time as possible could be used to address the Boles article and the canceling of the journal brown bag lunch discussion during *ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2019*.

II. Reports

A. SAA Council updates

- Ramirez introduced himself as the new Council liaison. The Board welcomed him, briefly introduced themselves, and shared with him recent activities and an overview of processes.
- Lawrimore shared Council updates:
 - Approved a resource kit of documents and templates developed by the Tragedy Response Initiative Task Force, to be posted to the SAA website;
 - Approved a [petition](#) to form a new Accessibility and Disability Section, dedicated to engaging the archival profession on accessibility topics including archivists with disabilities, users with disabilities, collections representing people with disabilities, and the accessibility of collections, spaces, and workflows;
 - Approved [revisions](#) to the *Guidelines for Standardized Holdings Counts and Measures for Archival Repositories and Special Collections Libraries*;
 - Approved revisions to the standing rules to rename the now Collection Management Section; and
 - Created a task force to review and recommend revisions to the criteria for the selection of SAA Fellows.

- Lee thanked outgoing liaison Lawrimore for her collaboration throughout her three-year term on the Council. Both Ramirez and Lawrimore had other commitments and left the meeting.

B. Publishing Program

Brinati reported the following:

- Five new books published:
 - Archival Fundamentals Series (the first three of seven volumes) *Volume 1: Leading and Managing Archives and Manuscripts Programs* edited by Peter Gottlieb & David W. Carmicheal, *Volume 2: Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* by Dennis Meissner; and *Volume 3: Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists* by Kathleen D. Roe.
 - *Archival Values: Essays in Honor of Mark A. Greene* edited by Mary Caldera & Christine Weideman (2019 One Book, One Profession selection)
 - Archival Futures Series (the first volume in the this new series co-published with ALA): *A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in an Information Age* by Laura A. Millar
- 17 more books in the pipeline.
- New online *Dictionary of Archives Terminology* to be published this fall.

D. Reviews Editor and Reviews Portal

Anderson reported that eleven reviews and one review essay were published in 81:2 (Fall/Winter 2018) and eleven reviews were published in 82:1 (Spring/Summer 2019). More reviews of open access publications/scholarship and reports have been encouraged in the past year. The Reviews Portal continues to publish reviews of archival resources and technologies and reviews of archives and archivists in pop culture. The Reviews Portal added two editors-at-large in May 2019, who will write reviews for the portal and help recruit reviewers.

E. Podcasts

- Anderson reported that work on the joint *American Archivist* and Publications Board podcast [Archives in Context](#) continues to progress. Season 1, which consists of 7 episodes, was released in January 2019. Season 2 is currently in production and is slated to be released September 2019. The podcast team has also grown: two members from the Committee on Public Awareness (COPA) joined the podcast team as cohosts.
- In addition, Trivette and her husband Geof Huth host a weekly podcast [An Archivist's Tale](#).

F. Online Quality Control and “Hidden Content”

The journal website is being updated this fall by Allen Press, the host. It will provide an opportunity to make quality control changes as well as implement the “Hidden Content” project. A previous intern (Barbara Gombach) reviewed the entire run of the journal and specifically looked at files of grouped content (e.g., “front matter” and “additional matter”) from the original

digitization in 2007. She then prepared a spreadsheet itemizing the content in those files. The next steps are to make a decision about what content should rise to the article level, download the PDFs, separate out the content accordingly, then submit to Allen Press for uploading. That project is going to require a subgroup of the Board to tackle. The interns could also be a part of this project.

TO DO #1 (Lee and Brinati): Establish a subgroup to tackle this project.

III. Discussion items

A. Engagement with SAA Component Groups

Board members will continue to reach out and encourage submissions at various section meetings during *ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2019*. Soyka established contacts with participants at the Research Forum earlier in the conference. Flyers for encouraging submission of articles to the journal were distributed to all Board members for distribution during the conference.

B. Proposed Special Section/Issue

- Trivette proposed a special section or special issue (depending on volume of content) on archives and design with a publication date of spring/summer of 2021. Board agreed to move forward with this.

TO DO #2 (Trivette): Prepare call for submissions and send to SAA for announcing via various communication outlets.

- Board agree that special focus issues are good but that they do require a lot of planning and need to fit in the regular publication schedule without displacing other content.
- Discussion about grouping articles in general based on subject matter. Soyka suggested that the journal should be like an old school vinyl record album—group like articles (just like songs) together so that there is a certain flow. Lee tries to group like articles together.

C. Encouraging International Submissions

- The journal will continue encouraging more international submissions: Trivette has posted calls for submissions on the ICA listserv. Lee and others have also reached out to international colleagues directly, and efforts seemed to have resulted in a few submissions.
- Expand publication exchange programs with professional associations in other countries.

TO DO #3 (Hering): Prepare a list of English-language archival journals (and other languages) based on ICA information.

- It would be helpful to develop a profile of the *American Archivist* in the context of other English-language archival journals to give authors a better sense why they should (or should not) submit articles to it as opposed to other journals.

D. Editorial Policy and Submission Guidelines

- The Board discussed reorganization of website to make editorial policies more visible.

- Currently there are no guidelines for the submission of research data, but Lee hopes to establish these down the road. In the meantime, he refers authors to contact research data support offices on campus (if they exist.)
- Lee provided summary of submissions and timeframe: Goal to get reviews back to the authors after one month; 68% revise and resubmit within 90 days. [Cal: plz add missing stats. Thx!]

E. Guidance to Peer Reviewers.

- Board engaged in a detailed discussion about the peer review process.
- Board agrees that it would be beneficial to review guidelines and strengthen them as well as provide “training” for peer reviewers.
- Lee highlighted importance of providing feedback to authors that is actionable rather than general such as “the writing needs to be tightened.” Peer reviewers should point to specific examples.
- Survey practices at other journals and see what’s worth adapting.
- Soyka, Trulock, and Daniels volunteered to serve on a subcommittee that will revisit peer review guidelines and explore ways to provide more guidance to peer reviewers.
- Also discussed was developing a survey for peer reviewers and authors to collect feedback on the process.
- Ideally, Editor provides peer reviewers with feedback, but this is not manageable on a larger scale.
- How can we recruit more peer reviewers, lower the barrier, and increase diversity in the pool?

TO DO #4 (Soyka, Trulock, and Daniels): Establish subcommittee, revisit peer review guidelines, and suggest improvements for Board consideration.

VI. Brown bag, Frank Boles article

- The SAA Council at its August 1 meeting voted to cancel the scheduled *American Archivist* Brown Bag lunch session focused on the forthcoming journal article “To Everything There is a Season” by Frank Boles. The Council believes that giving a platform to the article noted above at this conference contradicts this effort to be inclusive. Lee met with Council Executive Committee members Vice President Evans, Treasurer Amy Fitch, and Executive Director Nancy Beaumont early in the morning on August 3 and was informed of this decision prior to the Council issuing its statement.
- Board members acknowledged that the Council while deciding to cancel the brown bag event emphasized the autonomy of the Editor and Editorial Board.
- Lee has received emails from members regarding the article and has responded to every email received.
- The Board discussed the process for selecting articles for the brown bag events. The purpose of the brown bag lunch discussion at the Annual Meeting has been to allow members of the profession to preview and discuss a forthcoming article in *American Archivist* (in this case, Volume 82, no. 2) before it goes to press. The Editor has traditionally selected articles on large social/professional issues faced by the profession.

[Here is a list of previous brown bag lunch selections:

- 2012 – [“Dust Clouds of Camels Shall Cover You’: Covenant and the Archival Endeavor”](#) by Scott Cline;
 - 2013 – [“A Critique of Social Justice as an Archival Imperative: What *Is* It We’re Doing That’s All That Important?”](#) by Mark A. Greene;
 - 2014 – [“Archival Diasporas: A Framework for Understanding the Complexities and Challenges of Dispersed Photographic Collections”](#) by Ricardo Punzalan;
 - 2015 – [“Being Assumed Not to Be: A Critique of Whiteness as an Archival Imperative”](#) by Mario H. Ramirez;
 - 2016 – [“Filling the Gaps: Oral Histories and Underdocumented Populations in The American Archivist, 1938–2011”](#) by Jessica Wagner Webster;
 - 2017 – [“Surveying Archivists and Their Work toward Advocacy and Management, or ‘Enterprise Archiving’”](#) by Sarah Buchanan, Jane Gruning, Ayse Gursoy, and Lecia Barker;
 - 2018 – [“‘Be Damned Pushy at Times’: The Committee on the Status for Women and Feminism in the Archival Profession, 1972–1998”](#) by Alex Poole.]
- The Boles piece is the only one in the forthcoming issue of the journal on the topic of social justice and was selected by the Editor to provide one venue for discussing the place, importance, and meaning of social justice as it related to archives, archivists, and the records.
 - As in previous years, the RSVP is for two reasons. First, the availability of the article in time for the brown bag is always tight due to production processes and it provides a way to alert people of its availability online. Second, for logistics purposes the annual meeting planners need to know an approximate number of participants so that an appropriately sized room can be assigned. This does not preclude others from showing up, but as with many other aspects of the Annual Meeting, having people sign up ahead of time helps with planning and logistics.
 - The scheduling of the brown bag discussion with the Diversity Forum was unfortunate but certainly not intentional. There are so many events happening and so many moving parts at the Annual Meeting during any given time and the annual meeting planners do their best to balance the schedule. The topic of the brown bag was not known when scheduling took place.
 - The Board discussed how we might revise the process of selecting an article for the brown bag lunch that would involve all members of the Board or a subgroup of the Board.
 - The Board also discussed strategies for including additional voices along with Boles article. The most feasible way to do so may be to move publication of the Boles article from Volume 82, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2019) to Volume 83, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2020) so that the additional voices had time to prepare content.
 - The Board agreed that it is critical for Lee’s introduction to the issue of the journal address the controversy, editorial policies, peer review.
 - The Board agreed that we need to be transparent about the strategy for addressing the conflict, and ensure that the journal will be a welcoming forum for debate about the article.

- There was discussion about whether the brown bag sessions should be held at all. Several Board members emphasized that the brown bags are an important forum and mini event to discuss forthcoming articles. The brown bag does not have to be limited to a forthcoming article but could also focus on an article that has been published recently.
- Board members ensured their support of Lee and agreed to serve as a sounding board for Lee throughout the process.

TO DO #5 (Lee): Send an email by Sunday (August 4) to SAA Vice President Evans touching base regarding Editorial Board meeting discussion and some next steps, including feasibility of holding Editorial Board meeting in Chicago in September or October.

TO DO #6 (Lee): Contact Frank Boles (who is not at the conference) regarding controversy and potential plan to move publication of article to following issue to facilitate including additional voices.

TO DO #7 (Lee and Brinati): Convene a one-hour conference call of the Editorial Board (including outgoing members Cline and Meehan) in August (date TBD) to pursue next steps and identify date for Chicago meeting.