

Society of American Archivists
***American Archivist* Editorial Board Meeting**
Conference Call | August 26, 2019

MINUTES

In attendance: Cal Lee (Chair), Bethany Anderson (Reviews Editor), Adriana Cuervo, Caroline Daniels, Benjamin Goldman, Katharina Hering, Josh Schneider, Heather Soyka, Karen Trivette, Alison Trulock; Jennifer Meehan (former Editorial Board Member); *ex officio* members Christopher Prom (Publications Director), and SAA staff Nancy Beaumont, Teresa Brinati, and Abigail Christian.

Unable to attend: Scott Cline (former Editorial Board member), Mario Ramirez (Council Liaison).

I. WELCOME & ROLL CALL – Cal Lee

II. NEXT STEPS FOR PUBLICATION OF BOLES ARTICLE

- A. Context:** SAA Council decided to cancel the planned Brown Bag lunch discussion of “To Everything there is a Season” by Frank Boles at *ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2019*. At the *American Archivist* Editorial Board meeting in Austin, there was consensus to invite people to write Letters to the Editor to share counterpoints to the Boles article. SAA Council put forward a list of people to consider inviting to write letters.
- B. A Question of Timing.** The Board discussed the option of pushing back publication to the Spring/Summer 2020 issue (vol 83, no. 1) to give sufficient time for those writing responses, for the Editor to sufficiently address the discussion in his introductory article, for Boles to make revisions in response that the Editor has conveyed to him, and so as not to hold up the current production schedule. Nineteen authors are waiting for their articles to be published in the Fall/Winter 2019 issue. The Fall/Winter 2019 issue will also include an index, which adds another two months to the production schedule. In a message to the Editor, SAA President Meredith Evans conveyed that SAA Council suggested publishing the Boles article in the forthcoming Fall/Winter 2019 issue for “the membership to have the opportunity to engage with the article and the responses to it while interests in the issue are at peak.” Members of the Board conveyed that, regardless of when the Boles article is published, a top priority should be engaging the with SAA membership soon in the interest of openness and transparency, and to ensure that those who would like to make specific contributions to the discussion have an opportunity to do so. As confirmed in a follow-up online poll, the Board largely supports (7 in favor and 1 opposed) publishing the article and responses in the Spring/Summer 2020, but including something about the article and its status in the Fall/Winter 2019 issue, in addition to an Off the Record post, possible Twitter chat, and other outreach, such as teaming up with the Issues and Advocacy blog, etc., to have in the record what is happening. Teresa and Abigail will also be exploring with Allen Press the possibility of publishing the other articles and book reviews earlier online, so that we can delay publication of the full issue to include the Boles article and associated responses without penalizing the other authors.

C. Discussion:

- In light of member concerns, should the Boles article return for additional peer review? This would be unprecedented and the Board had discussed at the Austin meeting the social contract between Journal and author in accepting articles for publication. Because the article available that Annual Meeting was a preprint and not the final published version, we also have the opportunity to engage with the author in revisions to address concerns raised in recent discussions.
- The Board discussed whether some letters and comments could be published in subsequent issues, but agreed that it is preferable to share at least some responses alongside the Boles article in the same issue. There could be a two-part approach: If the article were published in Fall/Winter 2019 alongside a few response pieces, the Board could issue an invitation for more pieces in other issues.
- At the Editorial Board meeting in Austin, we agree that it will be important for the Editor's introductory article to address the controversy and discussion surrounding the Boles article.
- An online supplement to the issue was discussed. *American Archivist* has had one previously for SAA's 75th anniversary. It was a special issue vs. an addendum. However, a supplement doesn't buy more time in the production process. People are quick to react online, but to organize thoughts in a publishable manner takes time. And what is most important is putting the Boles article in an appropriate context. The framing is key, which wouldn't happen if articles were split up.
- Another key element, regardless of when it is published, is the Board's communication and transparency about how the article and responses are being handled. The Board needs to share what is forthcoming, how it happened, and what the Board is doing about it. The issue's content and the Board's response and can be shared more immediately in a guest post on the *Off the Record* leadership blog.
- Another outreach element the Board could do is host an online discussion as a way to connect with those who don't want to write an article or response but who are wondering what is happening and to further transparency on the Board's part.

III. COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

- There were no objections to inviting people whom the SAA Council recommended to write Letters to the Editor, but the Board was concerned that this was somewhat limiting and would like to open up the call more broadly.
- As part of the *Off the Record* blog post, the Board could say it is interested in people's responses, give a deadline for when people can be included in the next issue, and share different forms in which they can respond (letter to the editor, an article, or a perspective piece which is shorter than an article), and word lengths for each of these forms as guidelines.

IV. SCHEDULING EDITORIAL BOARD MEETING IN CHICAGO THIS FALL

- **October 27–29** has been selected as the dates for the three-day meeting. Brinati and Christian will investigate accommodations and meeting space. As soon as

both are secured, they will notify Board members so that people can begin making travel arrangements.

- Day 1 will be a working dinner from 6:00pm to 9:00pm CT; Day 2 will be a full-day meeting from 9:00am to 4:30pm; and Day 3 will be a half-day meeting from 9:00am to noon CT. SAA will cover the cost of travel, accommodations, and meals.

V. FURTHER COMMENTS/ CONCERNS

- Another option to the production schedule is to do rolling production for this issue. We would release the Fall/Winter 2019's other articles and reviews online—and the responses as they come—and delay the print publication until all content is in. Alternatively, if the Boles article and letters to the editor are published in Spring/Summer 2020, we could publish those elements online as soon as they're available in order to provide more time for members to engage with them. SAA staff will explore these options.
- There is a concern that the Board will not be engaging with public about this issue until the late October meeting, which seems too far in the future. The *Off the Record* post, invitation for responses, and some of the outreach could happen sooner. There is also concern about how the Board is setting up to handle future problematic content, improving its process, or content with this kind of feedback. These issues will be part of the agenda at the October meeting.

VI. NEXT STEPS

TO DO #1: (Lee): Email SAA President Meredith Evans to share what was discussed and next steps so Evans can keep the Council updated.

TO DO #2: (VOLUNTEERS NEEDED) Board members will consider what outreach steps to take next and who will take the lead on specific items, i.e.:

- [Off the Record blog post](#) (would be ideal to have this prepared in the next two weeks)
- Broader call for responses
- Twitter chat / outreach
- Issues and Advocacy partnership
- Other ideas welcome.

TO DO #3: (All Board Members): Begin making travel arrangements to attend the Board meeting October 27–29. Please plan to arrive by 6pm for a working dinner on October 27 and stay through noon on October 29.

TO DO #4 (Brinati and Christian): Look into online-first publishing for the fall/winter issue with print to follow once responses to the Boles article have been submitted.