

Society of American Archivists
The American Archivist Editorial Board Meeting
Chicago, IL | February 11-13, 2018

MINUTES

In attendance: Cal Lee (Chair), Bethany Anderson (Reviews Editor), Barbara Gombach (intern), Scott Cline, Adriana Cuervo, Carrie Daniels, Jennifer Meehan, Josh Schneider, Heather Soyka, Karen Trivette, Alison Trulock, *ex officio* member Chris Prom (Publications Board Chair), and SAA staff Nancy Beaumont, Teresa Brinati, and Abigail Christian.

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Lee introduced himself as the new editor and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Board members shared their favorite articles in the journal as an ice breaker.

TO DO #1 (All Board Members): Send your selections and a brief statement why to Abigail (achristian@archivists.org) for use in marketing the journal (“staff picks”) in *In the Loop* and on social media.

II. REPORTS

A. Editor—Cal Lee

- Since Lee’s transition into the role of Editor on January 1, he is delving into the current issue so he can prepare an introduction, getting familiar with the PeerTrack system and production workflow, managing new submissions, and reviewing webpages. Issue 81-1 (Spring/Summer 2018) is in production and scheduled for release in June.

B. Reviews Section—Bethany Anderson & Gloria Gonzalez

- Issues 80-2 and 81-1 contain 11 reviews. Anderson aims to publish about ten reviews per issue and to expand the type of publication being reviewed. Recent topics have spanned digital preservation, photo archives, bio-archives, and feminism in archives. She is looking more and more to find where main publishers and university presses intersect with archives.
- The guidelines for review submissions have been updated to be consistent with guidelines for journal submissions.
- Anderson worked with members of the Publications Board to submit a proposal for a podcast (<*in-context*> *the podcast on archives and the people behind them*) to the Council, which will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Four reviews have been published on the Reviews Portal since last July. The podcast will be hosted on the Reviews Portal, adding a multimedia dimension.
- Anderson and Gonzalez would like to begin adding reviews of exhibits as part of the reviews content. This idea is prompted by a recent *American Archivist* article in Issue 80-2 on exhibits as scholarship. There is precedent for including exhibit reviews in *The American Archivist*, though infrequent. Some Editorial Board members expressed concern that in reviewing exhibits, larger institutions with

money may be inadvertently privileged over smaller institutions and lone arrangers. Bringing on another person to the Reviews team to coordinate exhibit reviews and actively recruit content from a diverse places would allay this concern. Other concerns are the difficulty of access to onsite exhibits and the strong visual component and ephemerality of exhibits. The Reviews Portal could be a way to *see* reviews through different media (video, audio, etc.) as a complement to the print review. The question is what value does reviewing exhibits give to general readers versus exhibitors and should we actively seek such submissions. Perhaps a list of past and current exhibits on the Reviews Portal is a better resource than reviews in the journal.

TO DO #2 (Gonzalez and Christian): Share call for reviewers in *Archival Outlook*, *In the Loop*, and on social media.

C. SAA Council—Nancy Beaumont

- SAA Council has recently issued statements related to records, legislative issues, and social responsibility. Most recently, the Council released a statement against sexual assault, on police mobile camera footage as archival records, and on federal funding of archives programs. At its November meeting, the Council approved minor changes to SAA's Strategic Goals.

D. Publications Editor—Chris Prom

- The Publications Board has been focusing on three main tasks: commissioning and writing new books to foster professional literature, developing new publishing partnerships such as with ALA Editions and Facet Publishing, and overall giving members an opportunity to publish in book form. In development now are manuscripts in the Archival Fundamental Series III.

E. Publishing Program—Teresa Brinati

- A number of outreach initiatives have been done for the publications program through ad exchanges with other journals, nominating books and articles for awards, sharing past issues of *The American Archivist* and *Archival Outlook* with SNAP members and regional organizations, and partnering with ALA to distribute a flyer promoting SAA books and the journal at the recent ALISE conference.

TO DO #3 (All Board Members): Let Brinati and Christian know about awards in which *American Archivist* articles would be eligible as well as other professional journals in which to initiate ad exchanges.

III. PROCESSES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

A. Manuscript Review Process

- The current process is that Lee uses PeerTrack to invite three people (one editorial board member and two others) to review each submission. A new policy is that if an invited reviewer does not respond in 7 days, he/she will be disinvited and a new reviewer will be asked. Once an invitation is accepted, a reviewer is given 30 days to complete a review.
- Ideas for improvement:

- Encourage commitment to the process by awarding a “best review” each year.
- Provide feedback to reviewers about their review—if their feedback was helpful and how so. Other than the rubric, we don’t provide much guidance for reviewers.
- If a review requires a heavy level of revision, but shows promise as a potential article, it should go back to the same reviewer(s) for a second round of feedback. Minor revisions can just be resubmitted for acceptance, based on the decision of the Editor.
- Make authors aware of the level of revision for which they are being asked. Lee will decide if major or minor revisions are needed based on reviewer feedback.

TO DO #4 (Lee, Brinati and Christian): Work with Allen Press to implement a new process in which reviewers are invited to re-review selected submissions.

TO DO #5 (Lee): Send a batch email to reviewers that introduces Lee as the new Editor and share expectations around deadlines and new levels of revisions.

B. Improvements to Editorial Policy

- We should better promote the journal’s types of content (case studies, perspectives and reviews versus just research articles) to encourage a broader range of submissions.
- Provide guidelines, examples, and list of resources for how to better share statistics within research. One possibility is to pursue a contract with the Odum Institute at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, which can provide support for authors who are not strong in this area. Odum would be consulting service paid for by SAA (free to authors) during their revise and resubmit stage. The Editorial Board would encourage authors to use their own campus resources first, if available, and Odum as a backup. Odum Institute could also provide data support, creating an instance of [Dataverse](#) for *The American Archivist*.
- Expand taxonomy for reviewers. People should be able to suggest their own taxonomy in PeerTrack.

TO DO #6 (Brinati and Christian): Add links to editorial policy under journal contents to how-to pieces. Change the maximum length to “suggested length.”

TO DO #7 (Lee, Brinati and Christian): Revise editorial guidelines and editorial policy so they’re consistent in the types of submissions they elaborate.

TO DO #8 (Lee and Brinati): Pursue relationship with Odum Institute.

TO DO #9 (Lee and Christian): Ask Allen Press about the possibility of creating a field in PeerTrack so that authors can suggest their own taxonomy. Lee to brainstorm list of more categories to include in PeerTrack.

IV. SPECIAL CONTENT

A. Research Forum Content

- The Editorial Board considered publishing content from SAA's Research Forum in the journal. Their content does not have as robust a peer-review process as *The American Archivist*, so it would need to go through the journal's process. However, this collaboration has lots of organizational upside and would strengthen both the Forum as well as journal content. Peer-reviewed articles would appear in a special section of the Fall/Winter issues of the following year. If there were ever more articles from the Forum than the journal could accommodate in a single issue, a special online supplement of Forum content could be created (similar to what was done for the SAA 75th Anniversary content in vol. 74 in 2011).

TO DO #10 (Soyka): Talk with Nance McGovern (Forum co-founder and co-organizer) about a collaboration on Forum content and *The American Archivist*.

B. Special Sections

- A proposal has been received from Barbara Teague (executive director of Council of State Archivists) for a special section on state archives in collaboration with CoSA. The Editorial Board decided to move forward with this special section. Much is happening in this sector but it is often underrepresented in the journal.
- Other special section ideas from the Editorial Board include a special section on music archives (to be led by Cuervo) and design archives (to be led by Trivette). A call for abstracts would be put forward simultaneously and we would see what responses are received. The stronger of the two will move forward first.

TO DO #11 (Cuervo and Trivette): Create a prospectus for these two sections for the Editorial Board in the next month. Consider targeting recent conferences or events where these issues are featured.

C. International Articles

- The Editorial Board considered how to include ongoing international content in the journal. The journal used to have an "International Scene" section featuring two or three brief articles from archivists around the world. We could continue this in a two- to four- paragraph "From the Editorial Board" feature focusing on international happenings. This content may also be better suited for *In the Loop* or the Reviews Portal because of the frequency and immediacy of these channels.

TO DO #12 (Cuervo, Meehan, Soyka, Trivette) Develop a plan to present to the Editorial Board for including and promoting international content.

TO DO #13 (Trivette): Reach out to the International Council on Archives to place a call for submissions to *The American Archivist* in their communication outlets.

D. "Hidden Content" Project

- Brinati provided some context for this project that the Editorial Board's intern Barbara Gombach is working on. The initial digitization of journal content in 2010

was based on specifications determined by the Editorial Board. Each PDF file represented either a discrete article or content clustered in logical groupings. The major groupings were 1) front matter beginning with the cover and ending with any material prior to the editor's introduction, including the printed table of contents; 2) articles, regardless of type or origin, including press releases, republished documents, and other items that can be assigned authorship; 3) a single cluster of book reviews; and 4) back matter, including official SAA Council minutes, volume indexes, advertisements, and other materials published separately from the core content of the journal.

- As it turns out, lots of the clustered content deserves to be de-clustered so that it's more discoverable. Gombach has been going through back issues starting with the first issue and highlighting in a spreadsheet clustered content that should be separated into individual PDFs. She has found lots of gems and is about 40% finished.
- Once data is collected, the cost of making these changes with Allen Press could be extensive. Pursuing grants to effectively complete this project and update the online content should be considered when the time comes.

TO DO #14 (Gombach): Write an article for *Archival Outlook* on this project and her reflections on the association and journal over the years.

Lee has noted a variety of problems with articles in *American Archivist* online (e.g. corrupted PDFs, marginal notes in text). These should be replaced with good PDFs. Some are a higher priority than others.

TO DO #15 (Lee, Brinati, Christian): Compile a shared list of problems with *American Archivist* online content needing correction, then prioritize and devise plan for addressing them.

TO DO #16 (Lee): Submit request for two interns for next year: one to work on quality control issues, and one to conduct a study of citations to *American Archivist* articles.

V. SPECIAL PROJECTS

A. Podcast

- Anderson reported on the podcast proposal put together by the representatives of the Editorial Board and Publications Board. Called *<in-context>: The Podcast on Archives and the People Behind Them* will highlight journal and book authors to begin with. Episodes would average 20 minutes with occasional longer ones; one episode will be released per month. The Publications Board and Editorial Board will alternate months. Six episodes are currently planned. Hosting the podcast on a Wordpress site might be a good anchor site and help with long-term preservation at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.
- The proposal was submitted in January to the Council liaisons for the Editorial and Publication boards for sharing with the full Council, but was returned with feedback. One concern is that content is appropriately copyrighted; the podcast team can use a

release form developed by the SAA Oral History section. Other concerns include how to recruit people for the next generation so the podcast is sustainable, what metrics are used for measuring success, and if the audience is SAA members and archivists or non-archivists (either the general public and/or allied professionals). In addition, it was suggested that the podcast should aim to be SAA-wide in interest rather than just publications. Many of these concerns will be addressed after the trial run of the first six episodes. The scope and audience can then expand. A revised proposal is in process and will be resubmitted shortly.

B. Readership Survey

- The last survey for *The American Archivist* was conducted in 2010. The Editorial Board discussed what they would want to know if a new survey were implemented, such as: a) Have you considered writing for the journal? Why or why not? b) What's stopping you from engaging in scholarly pursuits? c) How are you reading the journal—online and/or in print? The Editorial Board decided that based on the time investment of a full formal survey, the need is not pressing. More informal and smaller outreach initiatives—such as Board members using a variety of discussion lists to ask questions—might be enough to garner the feedback wanted right now.

TO DO #17 (Board): Add to the agenda for the 2018 August meeting revisiting the possibility of a readership survey.

VI. PROMOTING EXISTING CONTENT + SOLICITING NEW CONTENT

A. The Board brainstormed ideas for promoting existing content.

- Prepare questions for discussions in book clubs and student sessions about journal articles.
- Take a page from the Publications Board playbook—launch a One Article, One Profession, based on One Book, One Profession.
- Feature “Staff Picks” (Board members’ favorite articles) in *In the Loop* and on the Reviews Portal.
- If something of interest to a specific section is published in the journal, promote that article directly to the sections.
- The Editorial Board member who is a reviewer for a specific article is also a promoter of that article when it comes out. (A “shepherd” of the article through the whole process.)
- Be on the lookout for #FlashbackFriday and #ThrowbackThursday types of posts for social media. If anyone comes across any nuggets (quotes, past articles, etc.) to share, email Christian.

TO DO #18 (Brinati, Christian, and Board): Implement as many of these ideas as reasonable over time and continue to revisit them at future Editorial Board meetings.

B. The Board brainstormed ideas for soliciting new content.

- Host a SNAP Twitter chat about the SAA publications program. Have members from the Editorial Board, Reviews team, and Publications Board chat with SNAP members about ways to get involved and write.

- Host a Live Facebook event for those wondering how to write and submit to the journal.
- Have Editorial Board members attend different sessions at the SAA Annual Meeting and personally follow up with strong presenters about submitting to *The American Archivist*.
- Work with the Annual Meeting Program Committee to ask conference presenters beforehand about writing articles for *The American Archivist*.
- Add to the conference proposal form a check box for those interested in publishing their presentations or research in *The American Archivist* and/or *Archival Outlook*.
- Creating a separate “New Voices” category within *The American Archivist* for SNAP members. Have a dedicated flow for those submissions and be intentional about encouraging and mentoring new authors.
- Instead of Office Hours at the Annual Meeting, have Editorial Board members at the Career Center to conference attendees about submitting content to the journal.
- Take the SAA Mentors’ “Growing Leaders” model and adapt it for new authors.
- Create a suggested topics list to circulate help spark people’s ideas for prospective articles.
- Acknowledge *new* authors during “Salute to Authors” (aka Lemonade Toast) during the Annual Meeting.
- Feature Theodore Calvin Pease and Fellows’ Ernst Posner winners on a poster in the bookstore at the Annual Meeting.

TO DO #19 (Brinati, Christian, and Board): Implement as many of the above ideas as reasonable over time and continue to revisit these them at future Editorial Board meetings.

TO DO #20 (Brinati): Create a promotional flyer for Editorial Board members to distribute at conferences and events they are attending.

TO DO #21 (Lee): Create a shared Google spreadsheet for upcoming conferences that members are attending in which they could solicit new content.

TO DO #22 (Lee): Create a shared Google spreadsheet for the different SAA sections and other professional groups to which Editorial Board members belong so contact points can be divvyed up.

VII. DREAMING

A. What’s missing from *The American Archivist* website?

- Add a hyperlink for “Feedback” in main navigation bar.
- Add advice for new authors (Be an Author) under Submissions and/or About.
- The search box should be larger, if possible and perhaps read “Search the Journal” to be clear it is just for the journal.
- Request that the current Rutgers ad running on the website be a higher resolution.
- Develop guidelines for perspectives and international scene pieces to be consistent with other guidelines’ formats.

TO DO #23 (Brinati, Christian, and Board): Implement above suggestions.

B. What small change could make a big difference?

- **Conflict of Interest:**
 - The Editorial Board discussed creating clear guidelines for conflicts of interest, particularly for reviewers (whether in the journal and on the Reviews Portal) who may know or be close to creators of the products they're reviewing.
 - If an article about a project that Lee is working on is submitted for publication consideration, he'll recuse himself from the editorial process. If the article is accepted for publication, a note will be included regarding the recusal.

TO DO #24 (Lee and Anderson): Come up with language for clear guidelines on conflict of interest situations.

- **Cover Art:** Since archival collections are typically rich in visual materials, why not be more proactive and intentional about the images used on the cover of the journal. Possibly add a new department to the journal that includes a brief essay about the cover image and its importance. Currently, we solicit photos from articles in the issue, but we are not always able to get interesting or "striking" images for the cover. This would allow us to feature images from any repository—not necessarily relating to the articles—and talk about different photographic collections.

TO DO #25 (Brinati and Christian): Develop a plan for implementing this new visual materials department.

- **Pull Quotes:** Because each article does not always include visual materials, consider adding pull quotes to break up a sea of text on a double-page spread and pull the reader through the article.

TO DO #26 (Brinati and Christian): Send a few layout examples that use pull quotes to the Board for consideration.

- **Encourage writers who don't have built-in time at their jobs for writing.**
 - Consider setting up co-authoring/matchmaking opportunities.
 - Encourage short articles as well.
 - Foster a writing group activity or writing support group on Facebook. Model an initiative after National Novel Writing Month and tie in to Archives Month, right after the SAA Annual Meeting.
- **Change perception of what *The American Archivist* does or doesn't do.**
 - Do more special sections on issues related to archives and technology or research data management so that more articles on these topics are submitted.
 - Editorial Board members can attend and seek submissions from allied conferences such as CLIR or DLF.

- Brainstorm topics for articles that we haven't had yet and place a call for them. Topics such as project management and leadership in the archives, skills not necessarily learned in graduate school; practical articles on email and human rights from state archivists; congressional papers section and military archives section and their intersection with advocacy topics and representation.
- Cultivate authors on state and government archives topics at the CoSA, NAGARA, SAA Joint Annual Meeting in August in Washington, DC.