

Auf Wiedersehen, Solveig!

Teresa Brinati, SAA Director of Publishing

SAA Director of Education Solveig De Sutter is known for, among other things, her unique turns of phrase—what her colleagues on staff refer to as *Solveigisms*. Perhaps you’ve been a party to them: “In one swoop fell,” “It’s like nails on wallpaper,” and “Swat two flies with one swatter.” On December 31, 2016, Solveig will officially retire from her position, although she will be available on a project basis in support of the new director of education. In addition to singular phraseology, Solveig will be remembered for the supportive guidance she provided in building a highly respected continuing education program. Here she shares a few thoughts about her sixteen years at SAA.

TB: Where did you get your accent and how did you get into association work anyway?

SDS: (Laughs) Well, I was born in Ulm, Germany, and came to Illinois as a teen. I don’t think I have the accent, I think you Midwesterners do! My first job was as a receptionist at the Peoria Convention and Visitors Bureau and I worked my way up to director of sales and marketing. When I moved to Chicago I took a position as continuing education manager at the Society of Real Estate Appraisers. That’s when I realized I liked working in continuing education and for an association. At the Appraisal Institute I was director of courses, then I worked briefly for a start-up that provided continuing education to graphic designers before discovering my true calling at SAA.

TB: How many educational offerings have you overseen in your sixteen years at SAA?

SDS: SAA averages 100 offerings a year. If my math is correct, that’s more than sixteen hundred—and that’s not counting the ones that didn’t make it!

TB: Which workshop/webinar/curriculum were you most excited to develop?

SDS: Probably the Digital Archives Specialist Curriculum and Certificate Program. DAS for short.

TB: Is that because the acronym DAS is also a German term meaning *the*?

SDS: (Chuckles) With DAS I was excited to do something in a structured way, outlined from the start, and that I was convinced was answering a profession-wide need. DAS was developed in 2011 and at that time many SAA members didn’t have the wherewithal to effectively appraise, capture, preserve, and provide access to

electronic records. Prior to 2011, SAA offered some workshops and summer camps, but it became clear that there needed to be a whole curriculum developed that would prepare members and others to deal with born-digital records. SAA made an investment in developing the curriculum and the results have been beneficial on many levels. To date, there have been nearly a thousand participants in the DAS program.

TB: Much of your career has been in continuing education. What trends have you noticed?

SDS: There is an ever-increasing request for online, on-demand education. At least 50 percent of SAA’s educational offerings will eventually be available in that format. Not just webinars, but interactive courses online. As travel funds continue to dwindle, archivists will still need professional development to stay current with best practices. Even when education was funded by employers, people were challenged to take time away from their workplace because they are often “lone arrangers” with no one to fill in for them when they are absent. The online, on-demand option is economical *and* convenient because you can take it in small bites as your schedule allows and wherever you have access to a computer or mobile device.



TB: You have been to sixteen SAA Pre-conferences and Annual Meetings. Do you have a favorite memory?

SDS: Wow, I wasn’t anticipating that question. I have several favorite memories and they all have to do with dancing with SAA members. At the 2003 Annual Meeting in Los Angeles, there was an all-attende reception at the Santa Monica Pier with a live band and it was wonderful to be outside under the stars bopping to music. In New Orleans in 2005, there was a reception at a bowling alley that included a DJ who had everyone swinging. And just this year in Atlanta, Trader Vic’s had a lovely combo playing standards. It’s been wonderful to socialize with members in such fun settings.

TB: What’s up in the next chapter of your life?

SDS: First of all, these sixteen years at SAA have truly been the best of my professional life. Much of it is due to the really wonderful, talented, and interesting people I worked with and for. And I look forward to continuing in a much, much smaller capacity on a project basis. But with all the additional time I’ll now have, I’m going to travel. My first trip will be this winter through the south of France in a European Winnebago with a couple of friends. I’m also going to take piano lessons, which I did as a child for five years. And I’m going to tend my garden, not in a frantic weekend timeframe, but a little bit every day.

TB: Are you going to do all of this “in one swoop fell”?

SDS: (Laughs again) That question is like “nails on wallpaper”! ■