

Council Minutes

August 29, 2000

Adam's Mark Hotel

Denver, Colorado

President H. Thomas Hickerson called the meeting to order at 8:31 a.m. Present: Vice President Lee Stout, Treasurer Robert Sink, and Council members Fynnette Eaton, Mark Greene, Becky Haglund-Tousey, Dennis Harrison, Karen Jefferson, Jane Kenamore, Richard Pearce-Moses, Helen Tibbo, and Wilda Logan Willis. Also present: incoming Treasurer Elizabeth Adkins, incoming Council members Thomas Battle, Tom Connors, Jackie Dooley, and Executive Director Susan Fox. Karen Benedict, SAA's Representative to the International Council on Archives Section on Professional Associations, joined the meeting later in the afternoon.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Tousey moved and Tibbo seconded adoption of the agenda. PASSED.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES TO THE JUNE 25-26, 2000 MEETING

Tousey moved and Stout seconded adoption of the June 2000 minutes. PASSED.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Jefferson reported no electronic transactions between Council meetings.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

Hickerson recommended that Council plan its meetings in May and January so that the meetings are not spaced so closely together. He recommended that new electees to Council be informed that there are two Council meetings at the annual meeting, particularly the one held on the last day of the annual meeting.

Hickerson complimented Council for its work over the past year, especially in grappling with some very difficult issues. He suggested that Council consider having the outgoing president serve on the Executive Committee as past president for the year following their term in order to establish continuity. He and Luciana Duranti had discussed the issue and would likely present a resolution proposing to change the bylaws to accommodate this recommendation.

He complimented Dooley in her capacity as Chair of the Program Committee, and the committee itself, for an outstanding annual meeting program. He praised Debra Nolan for her work in organizing the annual meeting. The projected good attendance spoke well to the health of SAA. He asked Council to make every effort to welcome new members, not just at the annual meeting but all year long, as they need to be integrated into all activities. He said SAA needed to work especially to involve younger members and to make them feel welcome into the Society.

CONFERENCE CALL WITH THE ARCHIVIST OF THE U.S.

Lori Lisowski apologized for the absence of both John Carlin and his deputy, Lewis Bellardo, but extenuating circumstances prevented their participation. They would attend the annual meeting later in the week. Lori would answer questions in their stead.

Stout inquired about a recent letter sent to John Carlin Stout written by the President of the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) expressing concern over the Census 2000 image files and asking NARA to reconsider the appraisal decision. The letter cited issues such as the amount of work involved in preserving a significantly large number of records in various media forms, how many records were either duplicate information or blank forms, the extent of informational value of marginal commentary on a census questionnaire. MARAC also questioned the potentially major cost of making information accessible well into the future.

Lisowski said that NARA officials were working with the US Census Bureau and with Congress to sort out the issues, which had been under a microscope especially within the archival and genealogical communities. The genealogists were especially concerned about losing access to marginalia in the proposed schedule. The issue was still under discussion and unresolved.

Hickerson asked that SAA be kept apprised of the issue, because it was one of the tough public issues archival appraisal had to confront.

Eaton asked what SAA could do to help the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) budget authorization move forward. Lisowski said that she understood that some organizations in support of the authorization had written letters to Sen. Thompson's committee.

Hickerson asked about the ramification of the budget delay, especially if reauthorization failed. Lisowski said that the Commission was reauthorized for another year, so the immediate ramifications would not be profound. However, because it was an election year and NHPRC had strong supporters in Congress, it would be better to move the budget now rather than lose some of that support in the elections.

Hickerson inquired about recent discussions concerning the proposal to reorganize the International Council on Archives. Any comments on NARA's position?

Lisowski said that one of the reasons Carlin was coming to SAA's annual meeting was in order to attend the Friday session on "The ICA: 2000 and Beyond." He had had a long discussion with Ian Wilson and Joan Van Albada. NARA disagreed with ICA's proposal, but Lisowski thought it better that interested parties discuss the issue directly with Carlin, who was more familiar with the details of the matter than she.

Hickerson said he was very pleased that Carlin was coming to the meeting and especially that the ICA issue was important to Carlin. SAA wanted to become more involved with ICA generally, and wanted to do so in concert with NARA. He said he would discuss the issue with Carlin later in the week.

Hickerson thanked Lisowski for her time and said he and all of Council looked forward to seeing the NARA management team at the meeting.

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

Stout reported that he had completed 75-80% of his appointments and would complete all of the appointments by the end of the meeting. He reminded Council of the September 2 meeting, in which an important topic would be to address next steps on diversity. At that meeting Council would also begin discussion of when and where to hold the winter meeting and to conduct the vote on whether or not to have 100% Council participation in fundraising for the Society.

Harrison moved and Eaton seconded the motion to amend the agenda to include discussion of Council liaison assignments. PASSED.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Sink reviewed the year end results, which exceeded income projections by 4%. Expenses came in at 2.69% above budget. He then engaged in general questions and answers with Council.

Hickerson recommended shorter Council meetings to help contain costs. The \$11,000 contribution to the reserve fund was good, but still fell short of the goal for the year.

Sink said that while he recognized that Council was uncomfortable last June adopting an FY2001 budget which contained a \$35,000 deficit, the annual meeting attendance figures were high enough to net an additional \$25,000 in revenues. The net ultimately depended on annual meeting costs. Sink did not recommend, however, revisiting or voting again on the FY2001 budget.

Hickerson questioned the recommendation. Did the FY2001 budget misrepresent the statement to membership, of presenting a \$35,000 deficit when in fact Council knew that that would not be the case in the end? Sink said he did not normally discuss the upcoming budget in the business meeting, but would do so at this one and would present the information that the Denver meeting would help alleviate projected deficits.

Council engaged in a discussion regarding providing more information to membership and the usefulness of presenting the upcoming budget at the business meeting. Greene supported giving more information to the membership, and said there were various ways of disseminating information published after the annual meeting. Jefferson said that it would be good to provide more financial information as a way to help justify why SAA cost so much. Hensen issued the caution that since budgets vacillate there was a need to be careful in presenting data.

Sink discussed the reserve fund contribution. He said in 1990 Council adopted a policy to build up the reserve fund by 3% per year in order to establish a six month reserve. SAA had not always been able to make those annual contributions, but had made tremendous progress toward that goal. Nevertheless, there had been two strands of thought on the need for six months' reserve. On the other side, people argued that today's members were being denied services because of building the reserve fund, i.e. having the ability to put out a special issue of *The American Archivist*, etc. Sink polled former Treasurers, who were divided on the issue. He received an opinion from the auditors, who strongly endorsed a six month reserve, especially because of the highly variable revenues gained from the annual meeting, interest, and investment income. They recommended a \$600,000 reserve plus an additional \$200,000 to account for swings in annual meeting and investment income. Sink said that after taking all these recommendations into account, he did not see a need to change current policy.

Hensen said one of the purposes of establishing the Task Force on the Annual Meeting was to investigate the unpredictability factor of annual meeting attendance. Council should look into ways to make those swings less unpredictable.

Stout said that data revealed the best annual meeting attendance occurred in the northeastern quadrant of the United States, New York, Chicago, DC, but SAA also needed to circulate to all parts of the country. He suggested that a future Council meeting should discuss creating an annual meeting schedule which would incorporate a routine cycle into the northeast.

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Fox said that registrations for the 2000 annual meeting exceeded expectations by at least 100 additional participants, which should, as Sink noted earlier, go far to help eliminate the projected deficit. She said that she had just started advertising for a new Education Director and that she would form a search committee to help vet candidates. She hoped to have the search concluded as soon after the annual meeting as possible. She praised the work of Reneta Webb, who served as Interim Education Director over the course of the past 18 months. She did an excellent job in keeping the education program intact and operative during a transitional period and deserved high praise for her work on behalf of SAA.

Fox said she hired a new web master/graphic designer, Brian Doyle. She said Doyle was an extremely talented individual who had already proven his skill and worth while working with SAA over the last two years on a free-lance basis. She said having him on staff as a full-time web master would reap many rewards, not least of which when SAA began offering on-line education.

Debra Nolan joined the meeting briefly to discuss options for the 2004 annual meeting site. Council agreed that if a reasonable rate could be negotiated, that the meeting should take place in Boston in either the first or third week of August.

Fox then reviewed the annual meeting schedule of events which required Council attendance.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Greene presented redrafted goals as previously distributed on the Council listserv.

Hickerson said it would be important to develop a strategic statement about the Society rather than trying to come up with a full-blown strategic plan. He thought Council was moving in the right direction in creating a statement of priorities. He asked Council if they agreed that the idea of this kind of statement would be useful. It could provide a basis for Council decision-making and would help provide guidance to members.

Council consensus was that this was the direction to take and agreed to change the title of the document to Statement on Goals and Objectives. Council also agreed that the document needed minor editing but was essentially sound.

Stout volunteered to write the framing paragraph and to do the final edit. He said he would share his work on the Council listserv for final approval.

Sink expressed concern that Council develop a process that kept goals and priorities on the agenda. Stout agreed. They saw a need to have a mechanism in place that articulated goals larger than day-to-day concerns. They would like to see three good goals per year, which would represent solid progress. Hensen's experience was that Council members would be taking a look at the document and assessing progress along the way. The idea of mechanically revisiting the document every three years was not appealing, but it would be important to keep it vital. Greene favored placing focus on "action proposals" that represent a tactical approach and prioritizing on a sound basis. Such an approach could energize Sections and Roundtables.

Hickerson summarized the discussion by noting that it was important to retain resonance with basic values and goals and to become opportunistic rather than simply moving at an extremely rapid pace. Therefore it would be important to develop a separate statement from that of tactical planning, which was a separate issue and would require a different kind of vehicle.

Greene moved and Pearce-Moses seconded adoption of the Statement of Goals and Objectives for SAA, with minor editing to be executed by Stout. PASSED.

NEW BUSINESS

Council Business Meeting Resolution Committee

Hickerson discussed the mechanics and scheduling of resolutions from members to be presented at the annual business meeting. He recommended, and Council agreed, that the three sophomore members of Council serve on this committee.

SAA Trademark

Fox said that the SAA trademark was up for renewal, but expressed doubt about the cost involved, given that the SAA logo had been redesigned since the trademark was first established. Tousey said she would consult lawyers on a pro bono basis and report back to Council on the issues to be considered when deciding whether or not to continue to the trademark.

Organization of American Historians Adam's Mark Lawsuit

Willis presented information regarding the Organization of American Historians (OAH) lawsuit with the Adam's Mark Hotel chain. The Adam's Mark was suing OAH over breach of contract because OAH chose to conduct its annual meeting off hotel property during the time the Department of Justice charged the hotel with racial discrimination. One of SAA's members had inquired whether or not SAA would be contributing to the OAH defense fund.

Hickerson said that OAH had a contract with Adam's Mark, just as SAA did, and because they had no legal terms with which to violate the contract, they would be held to those terms. On the other hand, the sense was that perhaps all owed some certain debt to OAH's forceful response to the situation. He did not see it as a legal issue as much as helping OAH pay their costs. In some fashion those costs reflected a benefit to all.

Tousey pointed out that OAH knowingly reneged on the contract. When Council discussed the issue last winter it was with full knowledge that SAA would be legally liable to the Adam's Mark if SAA pulled out. Therefore, she agreed that OAH was not in a good position to fight the lawsuit. She was not convinced SAA was in any financial position to help OAH. Had OAH asked SAA for help or was it an inquiry from an individual SAA member?

Willis said the request came from an individual SAA member.

Hickerson said since SAA had not been asked for formal help in the position, the Society would not have an overt obligation. On the other hand, a member was concerned. He did not see it as a contractual issue, but if OAH had to pay, should SAA make some kind of contribution out of recognition of the position they took and the fact that it was of advantage to the Society?

Jefferson suggested telling the member that Council was monitoring the situation and should OAH reach out to SAA for support Council would consider the request. She said she would be willing for SAA to make information about the lawsuit and the fund available to members and issue a follow-up on the issue after earlier reporting on the issue. Unless OAH had a specific request for SAA she did not see the need to act because SAA did not know what OAH wanted.

Greene said he was not comfortable waiting for a direct request from OAH. Many national organizations may have benefitted from the OAH action. He was not sure it was reasonable or fair to assume that OAH would call every organization that received benefit from their action and ask for support.

Willis said some people saw the Adam's Mark suit as vindictive.

Hensen said it was his impression that the OAH annual meeting was also held at one of the more egregious properties in the Adam's Mark chain.

Sink said OAH started fundraising very early in the process. He supported Jefferson's suggestion of publicizing the OAH fund in Archival Outlook. He would also welcome a business meeting resolution regarding the lawsuit.

Greene suggested that SAA consider the suit against OAH as an expression of bad faith because it implied there was no reason for OAH to pull out.

Council agreed that SAA should publicize the Adam's Mark suit against OAH and the fact that OAH was seeking voluntary contributions to a defense fund.

Battle said that he was a member of both SAA and OAH and that he supported the OAH defense fund. He drafted language for a resolution, which Stout moved and Greene seconded:

Whereas, on August 8, 2000 HBE/Adam's Mark sued the Organization of American Historians for breach of contract pursuant to OAH's refusal to hold its Spring 2000 meeting at the St. Louis Adam's Mark hotel;

And whereas the OAH action resulted from a lawsuit brought against HBE/Adam's Mark in 1999 by the U.S. Department of Justice and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People for discriminatory practices against African Americans;

Therefore be it resolved that the Society of American Archivists expresses its continued support for the OAH's continuing efforts to resolve issues related to its differences with HBE/Adam's Mark. SAA further acknowledges OAH's moral courage which contributed materially to compelling HBE/Adam's Mark to settle the Justice Department/NAACP lawsuit with the largest racial discrimination settlement by a hotel in U.S. history.

PASSED.

NHPRC Reauthorization

Eaton presented a Call to Commissioners which requested support for NHPRC reauthorization. She asked Council how she should proceed.

Greene moved and Kenamore seconded that Council adopt a resolution asking the President to send letters to the Senate Government Affairs Committee expressing a sense of concern and urgency regarding NHPRC reauthorization and requesting that Congress act expeditiously. PASSED.

OLD BUSINESS

Council Liaison Assignments

Kenamore requested that incoming Council liaison to SAA units accompany outgoing liaisons as a way of easing the transition and of facilitating introductions to the units. Kenamore then read the list of liaisons for the current and coming year.

On-Line Course Proposal to NHPRC

Pearce-Moses said he drafted an NHPRC proposal in support of developing an on-line set of courses. He proposed six courses, and had secured agreement from content experts to participate in course development and delivery. He would discuss the proposal with the Committee on Education and Professional Development as well as other stakeholders, and report back to Council at the September 2 meeting.

Hickerson expressed concern about the timing of the proposal and the fact that Pearce-Moses and SAA had such a tight deadline to meet. He said Council was aware when reaching agreement to develop a proposal that it would be necessary to move quickly in order to adhere to the October 1 deadline, otherwise SAA would need to wait another year for the next funding cycle. This was a case of seizing an opportunity. Once submitted, SAA would receive feedback from the NHPRC staff, which would quite possibly result in further revisions. He asked how Council felt about proceeding.

The general consensus was to move forward and to work with NHPRC feedback on the draft.

ICA PROPOSED REORGANIZATION OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATION

Hickerson welcomed Karen Benedict, SAA's Representative to the International Council on Archives Section on Professional Associations, to the meeting. Benedict presented background information on ICA's proposed reorganization of regional representation. She also spoke to the need for additional funding to support SAA's involvement in ICA activities.

Archives List Terms of Agreement

Greene presented revised Terms of Agreement for the Archives & Archivist Listserv. He thanked Peter Hirtle for his suggestion that they review the HNET wording regarding copyright. The list manager was also working with John Harlan to create a technical means of blocking attachments sent to the list.

Eaton noted that two Council members would be rotating off the Council Archives List Advisory Committee. Stout said he would appoint two new members at the September 2 Council meeting.

SAA/ARMA

Willis presented the SAA/ARMA Joint Committee chair's request for direction regarding long-term thinking in the area of SAA-ARMA relations. Willis said she would attend the Joint Committee meeting and obtain further clarification of the request.

Sink read the To Do list.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.