

Society of American Archivists Council Meeting

Committee on Public Awareness (COPA) Annual Report

Prepared by: Angie Piccolo (Former Chair) and Claudia Willett (Chair)

Term: 2024- 2025

Current Rosters (Include full name, position title, and term end date for each):

Name	Role	Term
Angiola Piccolo	Ex Officio	2025-08-15 – 2026-09-01
Claudia Willett	Chair	2025-08-15 – 2026-09-01
Sidney Louie	Vice Chair	2025-07-15 – 2026-09-01
Felicity Knox	Committee Member	2023-07-15 – 2026-09-01
Sidney Louie	Committee Member	2023-07-15 – 2026-09-01
Sana Masood	Committee Member	2024-08-15 – 2027-09-01
Elizabeth Rivera	Committee Member	2024-08-15 – 2027-09-01
Dawn Schmitz	Committee Member	2025-07-15 – 2028-09-01
Amanda Plotsky	Early-Career Member	2025-07-15 – 2026-09-01
Cassie Reddick	Early-Career Member	2025-07-15 – 2026-09-01

Council Liaison: Selena Ortega-Chiolero

PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

(Please indicate all projects and activities that your component group has completed this year, continues to work on, or plans to implement in the following fiscal year.)

COMPLETED

- **Finding Aid to My Soul “For the Love of Archives”** hosted on February 14th 2025: COPA worked with a consultant, [Michaela Blei](#), to run, produce and host a storytelling workshop for archivists called a Finding Aid to My Soul. Five individuals were chosen to attend a workshop on October 30th and then presented a five minute story about how archives have impacted their lives. The event was [recorded](#) and the transcripts published on the [ArchivesAware blog](#).
- **Media Training Proposal:** Katherine Barbera and Claudia Willett completed a draft proposal which was presented to Council. Council informed COPA that there is no funding allocated for this project, therefore COPA is tabling this project until funds are made available.

ONGOING

- [ArchivesAware blog](#): COPA continues to be an online platform where professionals and students engaged in all aspects of archival work, can share their experiences of and

ideas for raising public awareness of archives and the value that archives and archivists add to business, government, education, and society as a whole.

Felicity Knox, the ArchivesAware editor, has done a great job re-publishing blogs of continuing interest. This year, COPA has added a new series called “So you Wanna Be An Archivist,” where individuals in the field can explain their professional timeline on how they came to be at their job. It is a way for new archivists or those wanting to become archivists to learn about the different pathways to the profession. Claudia Willett also had the great idea to use the blog to raise awareness to SAA’s stance on [current events](#), as well as inform readers about activities and events being put on around the country for [Archives Month in October](#). Additionally, we published 2 posts to the “There’s an Archivist for That” series.

- **A*Census II Data:** COPA continues to work with COPP and CORDA to develop messages directed at different audiences concerning the topics discussed in the A*Census II Data.
- **Develop Resources for Internal Advocacy:** COPA continues to plan and develop collaborative partners to create toolkits of resources for internal advocacy, more specifically small institutions and lone arrangers.

NEW

- **Redevelop the COPA microsite:** update assets and links to support the mission of the group.

SAA STRATEGIC PLAN

(Please review the current [Strategic Plan](#) and indicate below how the component group has or plans to contribute to one or more of the four main goals.)

Goal 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

The Committee on Public Awareness advocates for Archives and Archivists in a variety of ways.

- Through our blog, ArchivesAware, we create a space for individuals in the profession to tell their stories about the work they do. This in turn creates a resource for those new to the profession or the public who want to learn more about the profession.
- Events such as the “Finding Aid to my Soul,” in which COPA works with professionals in other fields to develop and put on events that celebrate the archival profession and demonstrate how far the impact of archives goes.
- Collaborative planning and implementation of a workshop with COPP, I&A, RAAC. Together we worked to offer insight into the work of our respective groups and offered a compelling and sequential set of presentations and workshops on archival advocacy for our joint business meeting. These short but important presentations gave the audience examples of what to advocate for and how.

COPA plans to contribute more to advocating for archives and archivists by providing more resources in the form of tool kits. One of our strategic plan tasks was to create resources for

internal advocacy. Our committee has started the work, but will continue adding to the list of resources and finding a way to best distribute the information to other archivists.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: 89

Link to meeting minutes: [2025 Joint Section Meeting and Program - Google Drive](#)

Summary of meeting activities and highlights

Over the course of 3 hours, including two breaks:

- Business reports for COPA, COPP, I&A, RAAC
- Presentation on using finances and compliance to justify archives and records management (RAAC)
- Workshop on writing an elevator pitch (COPA)
- Workshop on turning your writing into plain language (I&A)
- Presentation on talking to legislators (COPP)

SELF-ASSESSMENT

How would you describe the health or energy of the group, and how engaged are the members?

COPA has struggled over the past few years with a high turnover in members and keeping up momentum in projects. This year there seemed to be a small, but determined group who showed up to monthly meetings and participated. This year in particular had its challenges due to the political environment which greatly impacted archives, libraries, museums and information management worlds. While COPA members showed up to meetings, it was difficult to keep people engaged and motivated due to the ever changing political climate.

Did the component group's leadership encounter any challenges in achieving its goals for the year?

COPA management struggled to meet its three strategic plan tasks outlined by SAA because:

- Politics greatly impacting the archives profession and;

- Miscommunication and misunderstanding of SAA expectations.

In particular, COPA grew frustrated with the Strategic Plan task: **1.1 Media Training** (2 cohorts should be completed by FY 25). After reaching a point where more guidance and clarity was needed, COPA met with the SAA Council and Executive leadership; we learned that there was no longer any funding allocated for this project. COPA decided to set this project aside until there was funding reallocated or until SAA had a better understanding of what they wanted from this Strategic Plan task / project.

What suggestions do you have for the SAA Council and staff that might help address these challenges in the coming term?

There needs to be better communication and clarification of expectations from the SAA Council regarding the Strategic Plan tasks. Some of COPA's tasks were written too broadly and we weren't sure if this was done with the intention to give COPA flexibility or some other reason, however it often left us confused with how to proceed meaningfully to achieve these tasks.

What questions or concerns do you have for the SAA Council and staff?

This year was a very tumultuous time for the archival world, including within SAA leadership, due to political events. The constant changes left the archival professionals on edge and adrift. I know the SAA council and staff were doing their best, but there is room to grow in terms of communication. What is SAA planning to do in terms of communication in the upcoming year, given that the upheaval in politics will likely continue?