

Society of American Archivists Council Meeting Chicago, IL

Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group: Annual Report

(Prepared by: Kara M. McClurken, outgoing co-chair)

Year: 2024- 2025

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

<u>Chrystal Carpenter</u>	Co-chair	2025-07-15 – 2027-09-01	Virginia Commonwealth University
<u>Kara McClurken</u>	Co-chair	2020-12-01 – 2026-09-01	University of Virginia Shannon Library
<u>Rebecca Tinker</u>	Co-chair	2024-08-15 – 2026-09-01	Irving S. Gilmore Music Library, Yale University
<u>Konstantinos Arvanitis</u>	Working Group Member	2020-12-01 – 2026-09-01	The University of Manchester
<u>Erik Bauer</u>	Working Group Member	2024-08-15 – 2027-09-01	Diocese of Olympia
<u>Chrystal Carpenter</u>	Working Group Member	2022-07-15 – 2025-09-01	Virginia Commonwealth University
<u>Jennifer Coggins</u>	Working Group Member	2020-12-01 – 2027-09-01	Yale University Library
<u>Anne Deschaine</u>	Working Group Member	2023-07-15 – 2026-09-01	
<u>Katie Howell</u>	Working Group Member	2024-08-15 – 2027-09-01	University of North Carolina Charlotte
<u>Robin Hutchison</u>	Working Group Member	2022-07-15 – 2025-09-01	Texas A&M University Libraries
<u>Lori Myers-Steele</u>	Working Group Member	2020-12-01 – 2025-09-01	
<u>Vanessa St.Oegger-Menn</u>	Working Group Member	2024-08-15 – 2027-09-01	Syracuse University
<u>Mackenzie Spahn</u>	Early-Career Member	2024-07-15 – 2025-09-01	

<u>Michelle Ganz</u>	Council Liaison	2023-08-15 – 2026-09-01	Dominican Sisters of Peace
<u>Julia Pillard</u>	Staff Liaison	2023-02-26 –	Society of American Archivists

Council Liaison: Michelle Ganz

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:

The CDTRWG has had a very successful speaker series, bringing in international experts to talk about their experiences working in the areas of tragedy response. In order to more fully support this work, the CDTRWG submitted a [funding request](#) to Council to provide a small honorarium to speakers moving forward, recognizing the amount of time, energy, and expertise that goes into sharing their important work.

This year we held three talks:

- 6 February 2025 - Dr. Jennifer Douglas (University of British Columbia), “Planning for Love: Towards a Theory and Praxis of “Institutional Love” in Archives.” Dr. Douglas talked about her research on grieving and recordkeeping with both bereaved record creators and practicing archivists. The [recording](#) is available on SAA’s YouTube channel and has been viewed over 200 times.
- 14 May 2025 Karoline Hedstrom (Stockholm County Museum), “Connect to Collect: Preserving Social Digital Photography Through Collaboration and Community Engagement. “ Connect to Collect is a collaborative network of museums and archives dedicated to collecting and preserving social digital photography. Their current project emphasizes community engagement, employing citizen science approaches to address contemporary themes such as social and ecological sustainability, place, identity and sudden traumatic events (such as the 2017 Stockholm Terrorist Attack).The [recording](#) is available on the SAA YouTube channel, where it has been viewed 76 times. The session had 53 live attendees.

Feedback from participants in our programs regularly report that graduate school coursework did not prepare them for collecting in times of crisis. This year, the Working Group, spearheaded by Kostas Arvantis and Chrysta Carpenter, has created a 45 minute lecture to help archivists and cultural heritage workers at all levels with an introduction to the topic. We envision presenting this to groups and offering a slot in folks’ syllables. On the 11 July 2025, we did a dry run of the lecture at our 2025 annual business meeting, and in spite of some technological challenges, the comments were positive and we look forward to presenting it at future venues

Members of the Working Group also assisted Julia Pillard with compiling State Emergency Management Agency contact information so that SAA could send disaster-related emails to the agencies.

Ongoing:

The Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group (CDTRWG) continues to meet monthly and has maintained its three subgroups (Resource Kit, Crisis Collecting Assistance Team (CCAT), and Education and Outreach to fulfill the areas of its charge. Internally, we continue to work on more seamless integration of new members.

The CDTRWG continues to staff [CCAT](#) (a webform-based assistance network that provides support and guidance to archivists, other cultural heritage professionals, and organizations engaged in documenting crises in their communities). During the past year, CCAT has provided support to organizations and independent archivists seeking advice and guidance on recovering materials and religious artifacts in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene; and documenting events surrounded by significant political tensions. For this first time this year, we had an institution reach back out to us a second time with questions.

The Collaboration and Outreach subgroup continues to organize webinars related to the field, pulling speakers from allied organizations in the US and abroad engaged in crisis collecting work; and networking with regional, national and international bodies in archives, museums and libraries to support collaborative work.

The Resource Kit subgroup continues to maintain “[Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit](#)” through ensuring the continued functionality and relevance of existing resources. The group was primarily engaged in working on a translation pilot project with Claire Ziamandanis and her students at California State University Long Beach to provide Spanish language translations of key portions of the Resource Kit to provide greater accessibility to both cultural heritage workers and communities impacted by crises, disasters, and tragedies. We are currently soliciting SAA members to review the work for accurate translations of technical terms and hope to add these resources to our online Resource Kit over the next year.

The subgroup continues to review and discuss the creation of new resources for potential addition to the Resource Kit, with a particular focus on topics highlighted in our speaker series and requested through community feedback. We have also explored specific types of crisis, like crisis related to wildfire and smoke, how to handle sacred objects, items anonymously left, etc.

New:

- Explore how to leverage when others translate our content into other languages
- Share the 45 minute lecture on crisis collecting with subgroups within SAA (e.g. archival educators and others) and those outside our organization to promote more awareness and a basic understanding of the work
- Chrystal Carpenter and Kostas Arvanitis will talk about CDTRWG in a panel session at the International Council on Archives 2025 (Barcelona, October 2025)

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 CDTRWG addresses Goal One by providing resources, expertise, and assistance to cultural institutions and workers in need of support during and after a crisis through

- Documenting In Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit
- Crisis Collecting Assistance Team
- 45 minute lecture, "Collecting and Documenting Crisis, Disaster, and Trauma" for archival education classes and presentations

These resources help archives and archivists be better prepared to advocate for the historical and cultural significance of documenting crises and traumatic events in an accurate and inclusive manner, as well as to advocate for the resources (financial, staff, and personnel support services) necessary to conduct this essential work.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

The CDTRWG develops and provides access to resources, individual expertise, and professional networks of archivists and allied professionals in order to begin forming a community of practice around the needs and concerns of archives and archivists documenting crises.

The CDTRWG has found the inclusion of Early-Career Members to be a positive experience for both the member and the committee as a whole, specifically addressing Goal 2.1 while providing the Working Group with insights from new and emerging archives professionals. This year we added some more specific language related to the work so that individuals applying had a better understanding of both the areas the working group covers (and what it doesn't cover) as well as the meeting time so that early career members would have a better understanding coming into our meetings of the expectations and charge.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

- The CDTRWG addresses all points of Goal Three of SAA's strategic plan by marshaling the expertise and experience of SAA members, allied organizations, and individuals to create resources and shared understanding of how best to support archives and archivists faced with documenting a crisis.
- The CDTRWG will continue this work through the expansion, maintenance, and translation of "Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit," the continued growth of CCAT, and fostering collaborative partnerships with allied sections within SAA and external organizations, as well as with scholars in relevant fields.
- The continuation of our speaker series has directly contributed to advancing conversations pertaining to crisis collecting and trauma-informed archival practice in both the domestic and international archival field and among colleagues in allied fields.

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

- The Working Group has responded to requests for assistance forwarded from SAA staff and received through CCAT.
- We seek input on topics for the speaker series that are relevant to member interests and needs and created the lecture on "Collecting and Documenting Crisis, Disaster and Trauma" in response to member feedback.
- The CDTRWG is also committed to addressing Goal 4 of the Strategic Plan by providing mechanisms for feedback from colleagues and communities. The Working Group continues soliciting such feedback through the ["Documenting in Times of Crisis: A Resource Kit" Feedback Form](#).

SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: ~60, but there were technical issues that prevented folks from being let in initially.

Link to meeting minutes: Because this was a dry run of our new 45 minute lecture, this meeting was not recorded.

Summary of meeting activities and highlights:

The annual meeting slot provided an opportunity to share with the archival community our new lecture series and to demo it in real time.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

This is one of the most engaged and energetic SAA groups we have been involved with. We have worked on some infrastructure issues to support smooth transitions and succession planning and have created onboarding and offboarding materials to support member inclusion and lessons learned.

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

- Funding for EventBrite or other registration software would ease some of the challenges associated with our successful speaker series
- Although we know it's a token amount, we would like to support the speakers who we invite with an honorarium to acknowledge the work they put into sharing the expertise (often from experts outside the U.S. archival community.) This is why we have requested funding to support this incredible resource.
- The annual business meeting software for groups has given us trouble multiple years in a row. It is different than the software we use the rest of the time and it creates a stressful environment

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

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

We want to acknowledge the incredible support this working group has had with its current and past SAA Council Liaisons and staff. We could not be as successful or as informed if our Council rep and Julia was not so present and engaged with our work. THANK YOU!

