

Society of American Archivists Council Meeting Chicago, IL

Independent Archivists Section: Annual Report

Prepared by: Deb Eschweiler, immediate past chair

Year: 2025

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

- § Deb Eschweiler, Immediate Past Chair, full term: 2023-07-25 – 2026-09-01
- § Alan Stein, Chair, term: 2025-09-01 – 2027-09-01, Seat up 2027
- § Martha Diaz, Vice-Chair, term: 2025-09-01 – 2028-09-01, Seat up 2028
- § India Mallard, Member-at-Large, term: 2025-09-01– 2026-09-01, Seat up 2026
- § Mark Plaushin, Member-at-Large, term 2025-09-01– 2027-09-01, Seat up 2027
- § Rachel McLaughlin, Member-at-Large, term 2025-09-01– 2028-09-01, Seat up 2028
- § Kaitlin D'Amico, Member-at-Large, term 2025-09-01– 2028-09-01, Seat up 2028
- § Josiah Peralta, Web Liaison, term: 2024-08-19 – 2027-09-01, Seat up 2027

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: Held election, annual meeting, and submitted annual report. Hosted 5 coffee chats for section members, 2 general steering committee meetings, 2 committee meetings regarding participating in a roundtable discussion in conjunction with Arts2Work, Hip Hop Education Center, and the Alliance for Media Arts + Culture, 2 meetings of committee and section members to create a proposal for a panel presentation at the SAA 2025 Conference, and finally, 2 meetings to plan the annual program.

Ongoing: Chair Deb Eschweiler is transitioning to immediate past chair. Vice chair Liz Bedford needed to step down, citing too many personal and professional needs creating conflict for having sufficient time to serve as chair. Current committee member-at-large, Alan Stein, stepped up to run for chair, with another current committee member-at-large, Martha Diaz, choosing to run for vice-chair. The committee had two members whose 3-year terms were ending, and we had been working short a member-at-large for the past year. Additionally, one of our current members-at-large needed to step down, citing health complications. With two of our current members running for chair and vice-chair before their terms were over, we found ourselves needing to fill all of our member-at-large seats this year. Three member-at-large nominations came in, along with two write-in candidates for the second 3-year term. Due to the committee member who needed to step down for health reasons, we were able to offer the 2-year remainder of that 3-year term to the write-in candidate who received fewer votes. We still have one seat open, which is technically Alan Stein's member-at-large seat.

New: A new slate is now in place and the section is vibrant and motivated with Alan and Martha at the helm! As of writing this report, we have not yet had our first meeting called by the new leadership, so we do not yet know what Alan and Martha have planned for next year.

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

We see this section filling a vital role for archivists as the profession continues to morph with the times. With the changing landscape, including workforce reductions at the federal level, as well as all other facets of the field seeing potential job cuts due to the elimination of grants funded by federal departments, more archivists will be pivoting to free-lancing, contracting, and working outside of institutions. We want to support professionalism in these new growth areas.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

The new section is planning for a speaker series that will provide insights as to how to run a business as an independent archivist.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

This section has an opportunity to advance archival professionalism into more sectors as many businesses manage content that needs to be preserved and accessed for many years. We are advancing the field by providing business guidance that allows these members to thrive.

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

We also see this section as an important source of information and support for archivists who have found their staff positions eliminated at traditional GLAM institutions due to the change in funding due to federal cuts. Our programming should reflect the needs of the section expressed in surveys. We agree we should repeat our survey bi-annually.

SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: approx. 25

Link to meeting minutes: [2025 SAA-IA Annual Meeting MINUTES.docx](#)

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Wwf4h6Z81TgZdGKt7MRKRkqoWnq9pOnN/edit?usp=share_link&oid=113599671059451359936&rtopof=true&sd=true>

Summary of meeting activities and highlights:

We started a few minutes late while waiting for a significant number of attendees to log in. The first section lasted 30 minutes. After opening remarks, a reminder to vote in our section election, and an announcement of an upcoming live virtual event the following Saturday, we did Round Robin introductions of all attendees.

Next, to continue to introduce what the section is designed to bring the members, we went over Guiding Principles of IA Section, followed by a brief Year in Review of how the steering committee operated during the year. Then, the Digital Preservation Toolkit member-at-large and web liaison, Josiah Peralta, has been curating for the past two years was described. Unfortunately, Josiah was unable to attend, so Deb also led this section. After this report, we covered the roadmap of the first seven years of the IA Section, our mission statement, and finally, discussed our goals for next year.

The next 30 minutes was our panel: Independent Archivists, their journey and the issues they face today. Our panelists were Dominique Luster, Diamond Cronen, Liz Bedford, and Martha Diaz. Our moderator was Deb Eschweiler. After the 30 minute moderated Q&A, the floor was opened to 30 minutes of Q&A

from the attendees. Alan Stein took the last 5 minutes to give more information and answer questions regarding his upcoming virtual event on Saturday. We concluded the meeting exactly on time.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

- A mostly new slate was elected, and the section is now vibrant and motivated with Alan and Martha at the helm. Alan's recently vacated member-at-large seat remains open. We will discuss with SAA Governance and Michelle Ganz regarding an off-cycle election to see if we can fill the seat.
- The section contributes to the SAA's Strategic Plan by advocating for archives and archivists that work outside of traditional institutions, enhancing professional growth, advancing the field, and meeting members' needs for community and business acumen.
- The annual section meeting had approximately 25 attendees and the section's health or energy is assessed through member engagement.
- The section will make continued efforts to establish a rotation for the speaker series and coffee chats. The intention to have informational or educational programs every other month, filled in with a coffee chat to ensure that members are heard, supported, and able to get their needs met.

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

- The largest struggle we have is the unpredictability of all the committees' work schedules. Being independent means we each have our own scheduling challenges and many steering committee members need to prioritize work when there is work, sometimes leaving steering committee business on the back burner. Not everyone can be available at the same time. Finding monthly common times for meetings and events has been one of our continual challenges since this steering committee configuration came to be.
- We did not make as much progress on our Speaker Series as we had initially planned. We discussed alternating our section virtual gatherings each month between Coffee Chats and Speaker Series. Getting the Speaker Series off the ground and into the regular rotation was not as easy as the less-planning intensive Coffee Chats.
- It was determined that twelve monthly events plus the Annual Program plus regular steering committee meetings was a lot to ask of a volunteer committee with unpredictable schedules.

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

- Guidelines or a list of suggestions of what steering committees can do versus what is required to maintain section status. Help steering committee members understand what other groups are doing that they feel are successful. It felt a little like being in a vacuum not knowing what was reasonable to expect from a section steering committee and what could be considered a "stretch"

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