

# **Society of American Archivists Council Meeting Chicago, IL**

## **Issues & Advocacy Section: Annual Report (Prepared by: Holly Rose McGee, Chair, 2024-2025)**

Year: 2024-2025

Current Rosters as of August 2025: Holly Rose McGee, chair, 2025; Jacqueline Devereaux Asaro, co-chair, 2026; Marissa Friedman, Steering Committee member, 2025; Terri Hatfield, Steering Committee member, 2026; Jennie Rankin, Steering Committee member, 2026; Jennifer Gathings, Steering Committee member, 2026.

Council Liaison: Krystal Appiah

### **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:**

- Creation and distribution of Advocacy opportunities contact list. At the 2024 Annual General Meeting, we conducted a survey of our membership and asked what they wanted from our group. Several respondents requested some way to find others who shared their advocacy interests and to find advocacy opportunities. We created a spreadsheet that included name, contact information and advocacy interests. The spreadsheet was shared with membership and ultimately saved to our Library section of our discussion board page. <https://connect.archivists.org/viewdocument/advocacy-meetup-sheet-2024-2025?CommunityKey=b1b4fc71-48d6-4a7b-ac5f-9d671041a7c2&tab=librarydocuments>
- One joint program with COPA, COPP, and RAAC (details under Annual Meeting)
- Several in-depth blog posts (details under Ongoing)
- Successfully held monthly steering committee meetings for 10 out of 12 months
- Held a joint meeting with COPA, COPP, and RAAC to share our work and see where we can collaborate.
- Consultation with Council leaders on potential "Future of the Profession Presidential Forum" webinar series. We were the only section initially contacted by SAA President Tomaro Taylor in November to consult and begin working on planning and coordinating this new series that would be open to all SAA members. We spent time during all monthly meetings from then on, discussing our involvement and potential topics that we could bring to the table. After President Taylor resigned in February, we paused on our work on this project. We were informed by our liaison in April 2025 that the series was put on hold per Derek Mosley.
- Supported a Disclose and Divest proposal on ethical sponsorship and fiscal management within SAA created by one of our members to Council, as did several other sections. Council accepted the proposal in early 2025.

### **Ongoing:**

- Managing and creating relevant content for the I&A Section Wordpress blog site. Posts over the past year included our “Steering Committee Share” posts, where we profile one of the members of the steering committee, to familiarize our members with their leadership, and an insightful post on the intersection of archives and climate change. <https://issuesandadvocacy.wordpress.com/>
- Clean up of our SAA microsite. Vice Chair Jacqueline Devereaux Asaro (now Chair) led this work, and chose at least one section of the microsite for the Steering Committee to review during our monthly meetings. This work included checking the health of the links (in the initial review we found that a lot of the links were over 10 years old and many do not work), adding or changing links where they were appropriate, and updating information that was well over 10 years old, including new content in the News & Actions, Elevator Speeches, Elections, and Advocacy Blog pages, and adding a direct link to our discussion board.
- Documentation migration from Google Drive to Microsite. Google Drive has been the hub for our group for the past few years. All of the files are well organized, assigned to hierarchies, and dynamic. We have not seen a way to maintain these qualities or a good space in which to save our documents on our microsite and have asked for assistance, but nothing has been resolved as of the writing of this report.
- Sharing out of advocacy opportunities. This past calendar year has seen a riot of shocking, unprecedented, and in some cases illegal moves by the White House to disrupt archival work both in the federal and state governments, such as firing both the Archivist of the National Archives and the Librarian of the Library of Congress, as well as defunding granting agencies such as the IMLS and the NEH, and even dismantling the State Department’s Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation. As we learn about archival issues and advocacy opportunities for SAA archivists to speak up and fight for our jobs and our archives, we share that information with our membership, whether just to inform or for opportunities to act. We expect to continue to need to keep a keen eye and ear on the news out of Washington over the next year and continue to support our fellow archivists all over the country.

### **New:**

- We have been invited to send a representative of our group to speak at webinar Navigating Challenges in the Public History Workspace, which is sponsored by the National Council on Public History.
- We aim to review and potentially revise our Standing Rules this 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**

Of SAA’s four main goals, the I&A Section contributes most to this one. As a member-driven group affiliated with but separate from SAA advocacy committees such as CoPA, CoPP, and

RAAC, we can engage with those Committees' issues and SAA's other relevant activities through providing support and/or a broader platform of discussion through our blog and listserv being open to Section member submissions. Our blog, listserv, and Annual Section meeting also provide forums for bringing up and discussing other issues affecting archives and archivists that may not be the current focus or remit of CoPA, CoPP, or RAAC. Our recent Annual Section meeting focused entirely on ways to advocate within the workplace, no matter the size of the organization, and advocating for the archival profession on a municipal and federal government level.

## **Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth**

The I&A Section enhances professional growth in two ways. First, our blog and listserv—open to all to submit posts on—provides our Steering Committee and all other Section members the opportunity to improve their professional writing and communication skills. Our blog is a very accessible venue for anyone to submit a post to share about one's research or work related to archival issues and advocacy. And for those of us who read the blog and listserv posts, we've provided the chance to stay in the know and learn more about Section-related professional issues and events. Second, membership on our Steering Committee (open to all SAA members), whether in the positions of Vice Chair / Chair-Elect or Committee member, provides a low-pressure way to be involved in advocacy work. It is an especially valuable training ground for folks who are just beginning to get involved in advocacy work and may continue on to other SAA leadership positions from there. We welcome archivists of all professional levels to join the Steering Committee and contribute to the blog.

## **Goal 3: Advancing the Field**

Our various outreach methods (namely our I&A blog and SAA listservs) communicate professional knowledge and updates and allow space for members to share and connect with each other about archival issues. Our Annual Section Meetings are an especially good opportunity to showcase recent developments or publications around a certain archival issue that focus members' attention and enhance the conversation in a way that goes beyond announcing them on our listserv or a blog post.

## **Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs**

We are a very accessible SAA group in which members can easily get involved, with multiple ways to share archival issues: through our I&A listserv, blog, as well as reporting archival issues directly to our Section leadership via a link on our Microsite and Wordpress site. We are transparent about our activities and meeting minutes posted to our microsite, our Section elections are open to all members to self-nominate, and recently our Annual Section Meeting has been virtual with no SAA membership required to register to attend. We are perhaps more approachable than higher-up or more formal SAA advocacy committees, but we are also connected to and communicate with them through the biannual joint advocacy calls we convene and by keeping in regular communication with our council liaison. In these ways, we are an important conduit for member voices to hear one another and to be heard by SAA.

## **SAA ANNUAL MEETING**

Number of attendees: 56 (88 registered)

Link to meeting minutes: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/17FEME1Ue71ex-LCbTatM2AfIK20SNPqj/view>

Summary of meeting activities and highlights: We held a unique combination business report session and mini-conference program on archival advocacy, jointly hosted by four archival advocacy groups: Committee on Public Awareness, Committee on Public Policy, Issues & Advocacy Section, and the Regional Archival Associations Consortium. The first half hour was dedicated to introductions to the groups and why they might be of interest to other attendees and each group's annual business report. We then commenced with our archival advocacy program, split into the following topics: Using finances and compliance to justify archives and records management, in which we shared typical processes of records management and shared ways in which to speak about our work with our administrators to show the worth and value of archives in our organizations. After a break, we returned with a mini-session on how to write an elevator pitch and included active time to try the methods out on our own and then share our results and thoughts with each other. This was followed by the third mini-session in which we took those elevator speeches one step further and discussed how to use "plain language" and the ways in which we could answer the questions "what are archives" and "what are archivists" to family, friends, and non-archivist people who ask those questions. We wrapped up the program with a session on talking to legislators: why to reach out to them, how to reach out to them, what to say, and what to do next. We left time during each mini-session for feedback and questions, and we got lots of positive feedback, including that registrants felt empowered and confident in using what they learned out in the world.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

The health of the leadership is good, but the energy of the membership seems to be lacking. It is not surprising, given the amount of shocking news we hear each day. But it was disappointing to survey our membership for what they wanted from the group, deliver it to them, and then not get any response to it. Hopefully, as we adjust to some of the new challenges we face, people will gather more energy to get more involved in advocacy issues and what they can get out of the group. As for the steering committee, we had a great relationship with our council liaison and she was able to attend almost all of our monthly steering committee meetings. That healthy relationship helped us feel more informed and also able to get answers from council when we had questions.

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

Our biggest challenges were and seem to continue to be with our microsite. There is a lot we can do there, but sometimes what we do results in a "unknown node type" notification, and it seems to take a while to get those corrected. And we still need supportive, hierarchical records storage and directory systems in place if we are to save our documents on our microsite. No solution has yet been proposed for that issue.

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

I know that Drupal is a user-friendly base for websites, but in my experience with SAA and at former jobs where we were Drupal based, it also seems to have a lot of technical issues.

Because much of SAA's activities have moved towards virtual and hybrid accessibility, our members and groups are leaning more heavily on the website. Because of that, we probably need more technical support staff to address the myriad issues that come with higher site traffic and activity.

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

I have noticed that membership and conference cost has become more of an issue for membership. We are not technically in a recession, but we know that people are feeling the pain of inflation more, and many of our employers have lost sizable amounts of financial support, which often affects supporting their employees in professional association membership and continued education. Even as the chair of a section, I could not afford to attend the conference this year, only one hour drive from my residence, after my employer told me that they couldn't pay my way. I already donated many hours of this past year to leading this section. It would have been nice if it were easier financially for me to attend the conference, especially when it was geographically close to me. I know I am not the only one who finds the SAA membership and conference costs to be prohibitive. Perhaps in the future we could reintroduce one-day attendance or at least vendor hall-only passes at a reduced price. It feels like there is a better way than making the membership (and volunteer group leaders) choose to either pay \$500 or not have any conference experience at all.