

## SAA Membership Committee

### Minutes

August 29, 2007  
11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.  
Chicago, IL

In attendance (**incomplete**):

#### *Membership Committee:*

Meg Phillips (Chair)  
Diane Kaplan (Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect)  
Emily Rafferty (District 3)  
Janet Carleton (District 5)  
Tanya Zanish-Belcher (District 6)  
Adriana Cuervo (Incoming Mentoring Program Coordinator)  
Jennifer Meehan (Career Center Coordinator)

#### *Ex officio:*

Elizabeth Adkins (SAA President)  
Mark Greene (SAA Vice President)  
Lee Miller (Council Liaison)  
Dr. Thomas Battle (Chair, Diversity Committee)  
Scott Schwartz (Past Chair, Membership Committee)  
Jane Rosario (Former Member, Membership Committee)  
Brian Doyle (SAA Staff)  
Jeanette Spears (SAA Staff)

Membership Committee Chair Meg Phillips called the meeting to order at 11:05, facilitated introductions, and presented the meeting agenda.

### **Reports**

Doyle reported on recent membership figures that reveal continuing growth among higher-earning ID5 and ID6 members. A notable change from recent years is the slowing of growth among student members which may suggest that SAA has reached a saturation point with this group. Therefore a high priority in coming years will be to focus on retention of student members and conversion to full individual membership.

Schwartz inquired about the current retention rate among student members. Doyle reported that that information wasn't available at the time but that he would work on providing it to the committee.

Jennifer Meehan provided an update on Career Center activities.

Doyle notified committee members about two motions that would come to a vote at the General Membership Committee. One was a constitutional amendment that would allow institutional members to designate a “primary contact” person who would be able to vote, hold office, and serve on appointed committees. The other was a 10% dues increase. (Both motions subsequently passed.)

### **Discussion Items:**

#### *Composition and Charge of the Membership Committee*

Phillips presented a number of questions to SAA Vice President Mark Greene regarding the composition of the committee, specifically in relation to the Diversity representative described in the [committee bylaws](#), as well as a prospective Student representative.

In recent years, a “Native American” representative has been appointed to the committee in lieu of a Diversity representative, per se. Phillips asked whether those two positions were one in the same and whether there remains a need for a formal liaison with the Diversity Committee. In addition, Phillips raised a question concerning the roles of both of these representatives (i.e., Diversity/Native American and Student). In past years, there has not been a clear charge for the Native American representative. It has been suggested that they could serve as special Key Contacts to those member constituencies.

Greene spoke to the importance of recognizing student members as a significant constituency as well as the need to highlight their participation in SAA, provide a means for representation, and facilitate their becoming full members. As for the confusion over the Native American/Diversity representative, he suggested that this was simply a case of the Council not recalling what it had decided in past years.

Battle supported the need for either a formal or informal liaison relationship between the two committees, noting that the charge and composition of the Diversity Committee itself is still evolving. One area that is ripe for greater collaboration is the Mentoring Program.

SAA President Elizabeth Adkins remarked that she had identified in her presidential address a number of unfinished recommendations from SAA’s 1999 Task Force on Diversity and was suggesting these tasks as action items for various committees. The items for the Membership Committee (copied from a draft copy of Adkin’s address) are as follows:

1. With input from the Diversity Committee, review introductory membership materials and revise them as necessary to directly appeal to specific groups that are underrepresented.
2. The Task Force recommended that the Membership Committee be charged with focusing on mentoring efforts for underrepresented groups. At the 2004 annual

meeting, former Pinkett Award winners were featured in a session that reinforced the importance of mentoring. The presenters expressed appreciation for the financial support from the award, but presented a mixed assessment of the effectiveness of the award as a recruitment tool, and expressed a need for something more as they moved onto the next steps in their careers. The fact that many of them are no longer SAA members speaks to the extent of this problem. Students from the UCLA program have echoed these concerns as they shared some feedback with me in preparation for this address. Many of them want to figure out ways to serve the archival needs of their communities, but find that the low percentage of nonwhites in the profession makes it difficult to find anyone who can understand where they are coming from in their approach to their communities. As one UCLA student told me, "Representation acts on a visceral level; there's something very affirmative about just seeing a person of color who has been successful in the profession, and being able to talk with them about their experiences in getting to those points of achievement."<sup>1</sup> SAA has a mentoring program which is meant to address this issue, but it has not been entirely successful. The Membership Committee has been considering ways to address this problem.

3. The Task Force encouraged SAA to conduct public relations on behalf of the profession to the college/pre-employment population, as well as to underdocumented ethnic and racial groups as a strategy for raising interest in the profession and highlighting the need for documenting their groups. We are trying to address this through the work that is being done to promote American Archives Month, but much more needs to be undertaken in this area. In her analysis of the A\*CENSUS results, Brenda Banks provides numerous ideas for how to reach out to young people in a way that might influence them in their career choices. She talks about casting the net broadly, and points out the importance of reaching out to children between the ages of ten and fifteen, when we might be able to make a difference in shaping their career choices.<sup>2</sup> I am asking the Membership Committee and the Diversity Committee to review the ideas raised by Brenda in her A\*CENSUS article, and to bring some recommendations to the Council for action. Kathryn Neal's 1996 *Archival Issues* article on "The Importance of Being Diverse" includes a discussion of the impact of archivists' public image (or lack thereof) on recruitment of people of color to the profession. Her article also should be reviewed by these two committees.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Email from Andrew Lau to the author, August 3, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Brenda Banks, "A\*CENSUS: Report on Diversity," *American Archivist* Volume 69, Number 2, page 405.

<sup>3</sup> Kathryn M. Neal, "The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment," *Archival Issues*, V21N2, 1996, pp. 145-158. When providing me feedback in response to a draft of this article, Deborra Richardson provided the following ideas for reaching out to children between the ages of 10 and 15: "We have made suggestions about reaching this audience through National History Day activities. I see that we have a link to NHD on our website. Perhaps we can somehow formalize this relationship, by encouraging teachers to bring archivists into their classrooms or by arranging for local schools to have field trips to local archives at the beginning of each contest each year. Additionally we could work with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts through the various history badges or insignia such as "Heritage Hunt" or "Digging Through the Past" using genealogy or a favorite historical event as a hook. Badges such as "Museum Discovery" and "Understanding Yourself and Others" could also be used as avenues through which we could reach the Girl Scouts. And the Boy Scouts should have similar insignia. Since we have the link to NHD, perhaps our new website could feature ways that teachers can interact with and get referrals to interested local archivists. A similar page might be set up for the scouting organizations." Deborra Richardson in an email to the author, August 7, 2007.

Phillips suggested the possibility of reviewing the committee structure in order to allow subcommittees to be created on the fly to address specific tasks (e.g., review membership materials, etc.)

Schwartz offered a comment on the historical development of the committee, remarking that the group has functioned well when it has specific tasks to execute. Therefore, a clear charge from Council is necessary to successfully fulfill any responsibilities.

Zanish-Belcher remarked that there is a need to more fully integrate diversity into the charge of the committee. Perhaps there is a need to engage in some strategic planning.

Cuervo reiterated the need for an official purpose (for the Mentoring Program?), perhaps involving greater participation of section and roundtable leaders.

Phillips suggested that perhaps facilitating mentoring should be the specific charge to the Membership Committee relating to diversity.

Battle remarked that he has been talking with Adkins about some of these issues. He expects that a number of formal changes to the Diversity Committee, explication of finite expectations, and clarification of roles and relationships will be forthcoming. The Diversity Committee as it exists today may change.

Phillips emphasized again that a specific charge to the Membership Committee would be helpful.

Adkins affirmed this need and recommended that the committees do some brainstorming and make recommendations to Council.

Greene added that the process of creating a charge is iterative and dialogic—not always top down. Part of this is because of the way that leadership terms work. For instance, he suggested that, as incoming president, it would be very presumptuous of him to dictate to the committee what its charge should be.

Phillips thanked Adkins, Battle, and Greene for their time discussing these issues and suggested that the committee conduct a number of focused conference calls in coming months to address these questions.

### *Key Contact Program*

Phillips introduced the topic, noting that that the recent migration to SAA's new membership database brought to light a number of questions concerning procedures for the Key Contact Program. Specifically:

- How often and to whom should Key Contacts send notices? And
- What should the SAA Offices's Key Contact lists look like?

Doyle provided a brief report/review on current dues administration and invoicing procedures, emphasizing the timeline for various communications sent to members:

- 2 months prior to dues expiration: 1st renewal notices sent via mail and email;
- 1 month prior to dues expiration: 2nd notices sent via mail and email;
- On dues expiration: 3rd, final notices sent via email only. (Start of grace period)
- 1 month after dues expiration: Memberships cancelled if unpaid.
- End of quarter: Key Contact lists generated and distributed to committee.

Based on this schedule, one important aspect to note is that the quarterly generation of Key Contact lists effectively prevents Key Contact from receiving names while members in their states are still in their grace period. Lists are for new members and lapsed (cancelled) members.

Phillips subsequently presented the question of whether Key Contact procedures should be modified. A “straw man” proposal was put forward that procedures be maintained as is and that lists of new and lapsed members be generated on a quarterly basis. Phillips then opened the floor for discussion.

A number of committee members expressed a concern that Key Contacts might simply drop out of the program if the frequency of mailings was increased to a monthly basis. Schwartz also pointed out that the purpose of the Key Contact Program is twofold—to welcome new members and to follow up with lapsed members. The former function, which he argued is the more important priority, may be less timely.

However, other argued that they would be more impressed as new members to receive a personal letter sooner. And, if retention is truly a pressing need for SAA, then it would benefit SAA to facilitate more frequent and timely contact with members.

Schwartz suggested a compromise, experimental solution—that Key Contact lists be generated every two months. This would allow for an easier transition.

The motion was then put to a vote:

THAT, as an experiment, Key Contact lists for both new and lapsed members be generated and distributed every two months, effective January 1, 2008.

PASSED.

### **Subcommittees:**

As the meeting came to a close, the formation of a number of subcommittees was discussed, including:

- Mentoring Subcommittee: Teresa Yoder (Chair), Adriana Cuervo, Tanya Zanish-Belcher, Diane Kaplan, Thomas Battle (ex officio). Doyle to provide

subcommittee with list of technical options as to how SAA's new membership database can support administration of the Mentoring Program.

- Career Development Subcommittee: Jennifer Meehan (Chair)
- Key Contact Report Subcommittee

Finally, Phillips reminded meeting attendees of the Membership Committee wiki, which is another tool that the group can use in discussing issues. The wiki is available online at <http://www.membershipcommittee.pbwiki.com> (Password: keycontacts).

**Note: Could not find wiki!**

### **ACTION ITEMS:**

1. Doyle to provide report of student member retention rate.
2. Doyle to include more specific language regarding member dues "timeline" on renewal invoices (e.g., expiration date, grace period, lapsing, etc.)
3. "Diversity" tasks identified by Elizabeth Adkins:
  - a. Work with the Diversity Committee to review introductory membership materials and revise them as necessary to directly appeal to specific groups that are underrepresented.
  - b. Work with the Diversity Committee to focus mentoring efforts on underrepresented groups
  - c. Work with the Diversity Committee to:
    - i. Review Brenda Banks article, "A\*CENSUS: Report on Diversity," *American Archivist* Volume 69, Number 2, page 405;
    - ii. Review Kathryn Neal's article, "The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment," *Archival Issues*, Volume 21, Number 2, 1996, pp. 145-158; and
    - iii. Bring some recommendations to the Council for action.
4. Brainstorm on committee's diversity change and present recommendation to Council.
5. Establish subcommittees and schedule initial meetings via teleconference.