

Interim Report on Mentor Program

By Michelle Gachette

Impressions of the Program:

The New England Archivists (NEA) Diversity Task Force hosted a table at the fall meeting of NEA on Saturday, November 3rd, 2012. About 10 to 15 meeting attendees (a handful of them non-NEA members!) stopped by our table from about 10 am to 4:30pm. I had the newly created flyer (in color!) on our table promoting SAA's Mentoring Program and asked people for their impressions of the program.

Success: A fellow NEA board member came to me and said that Gregor Trinkaus-Randall had mentioned and promoted the SAA Mentoring Program in a session that the board member attended on archives management.

Room for improvement: I received the following questions and comments. It reflected the need for greater advocacy and marketing about mentoring in general, and SAA's program. I also got a lot of glazed looks as if to say "Who **me**?" I am sure this sounds very familiar to both of you as well.

- I already mentor. (I responded, but have you mentored in a formal program before like SAA?)
- Do you have to be a member to have a mentor (or to be a mentor)? (I responded "I don't know" (wink, wink) and forced the person to go to the web site and see for themselves the benefits of joining SAA overall, in addition to learning about the mentoring program--rather than get into the debate of the high membership costs for many)
- What am I supposed to do--What does an SAA mentor do? (I responded that its a commitment for one year, and what happens is determined by you and your match--how often you meet, where, and what the level of interaction is for both of you)
- People who were silent seemed to be holding back opinions and were polite, but I can sense that they wanted to know what was in it for them. (I responded that mentoring is a relationship that benefits both parties where each person is validated and supported)

Recommendations so far:

Based on what I have experienced so far, I would like to suggest the following:

1) That Mentoring in the Society of American Archivists becomes a **strategic priority**, and that all members are educated about the program, and are surveyed about their needs for mentoring and/or opportunity to serve as a mentor, at least once a year.

For example, upon joining or renewal of one's dues, perhaps members are asked through online registration or renewal,

- if they have heard about the program: if yes, choose among a list of options

- if they would be interested in finding out about the program
- if they have already served as protegee or mentor? when? and thanks
- how can institutional members participate as mentors? perhaps mentoring doesn't have to be between individuals only? Or, can there be targeted recruitment of staff who fall under institutional membership?

2) That the recommendations put forth by the mentoring task force in 2008 serve as the basis for organizing the goals and vision of this proposed strategic priority, and the recommendations assigned as measurable activities with a timeline.

3) That a survey be given annually and at the 6 month mark to protégés and mentors (In a separate email, I will submit feedback about the current survey Alison recently created.)

Research so far:

In my research so far, I discovered that shortly after the mentoring program was established in 1994, that the Task Force on Diversity in SAA was established (1996). I am eager to know if there is a connection at all between these two milestones. My attention right now is on what was the level of involvement of component groups (diverse roundtables, in particular) in the beginning, and how did that change over time? Ultimately, I want to know if one **can tie the issue of involvement from certain groups and the pool of mentors during certain periods of time in SAA's history? Or, maybe not? Could the level of involvement in the mentoring program be tied to the culture of SAA and reception to its diverse membership?**

Steven Booth, co-chair of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable will be sending me photocopies of records from the roundtable that he requested from the SAA Archives at UWM, and I hope to look through them, as a way to understand why there are so few mentors of color? Was this always the case? If not, how do we get them back?

I will be focusing on just the first five years after the program started, as I mentioned during our conference call.

Lastly, I am casually looking at other programs for ideas:

The Academy of Certified Archivists waives your membership fee if you decide to mentor (??? heard about this at the annual meeting in San Diego, but can't find documentation online about this yet)

The Society of Georgia Archivists Mentoring Program: <http://soga.org/involvement/mentoring>

The Association of Canadian Archivists: <http://archivists.ca/content/aca-mentorship-program>

Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL, a division of ALA:

http://www.rbms.info/committees/membership_and_professional/mentoring_program/index.shtml

ALA <http://www.ala.org/nmrt/oversightgroups/comm/mentor/mentoringcommittee>

Northwest Archivists: <http://weblib.lib.umt.edu/faculty/mccrea/NWAMentoring.htm>