

Society of American Archivists
Publications Board Meeting
Chicago | January 28–30, 2016

MINUTES

In attendance: Chris Prom (Chair), Mary Caldera, Jody DeRidder, Krista Gray, Nicole Milano, Lisa Mix, Tawny Ryan Nelb, Colleen McFarland Rademaker, Michael Shallcross, Margery Sly, and *ex officio* members Amy Cooper Cary (Council Liaison), Greg Hunter (*The American Archivist* Editorial Board Chair), and SAA staff members Teresa Brinati, Abigail Christian, and for parts of the meeting Peter Carlson and Nancy Beaumont.

I. REPORTS

A. Chair of the Board – Chris Prom:

- The issuing of publishing agreements to authors in the Archival Fundamentals Series III is moving forward and feedback from our peer-review process has been positive.
- Four clusters in Trends in Archives Practice are on schedule to be published in calendar year 2016. *Teaching with Primary Sources* and *Digital Preservation Essentials* should be available for the Annual Meeting.
- A cluster of three modules on public programming and archives, working with the media, and internet outreach strategies is being developed. We are waiting to confirm an author for the third piece. The Board brought up a concern that all university archivists are writing these. It was suggested the editor partner with author or contribute to the module to bring in a voice outside academia. Within the next month, there will be a proposal for the Board’s consideration for these modules.
- The *AMIA Moving Image Cataloging Manual* project has stalled as the editor has changed jobs and removed herself from the project, plus we are waiting on external feedback from a reviewer.
- The *Religious Archives Reader* is tabled indefinitely.
- A contract will be issued to the author of the book on Harold T. Pinkett as soon as he submits—and the Publications Board approves—his first two chapters.
- *Visual Culture and Archives* is considered dormant.
- Translating the brochures (donor + deeds of gift) into Spanish has been stalled, but a new SAA member is interested in coordinating the translation.
- TS-DACS continuous revision process has implications for print sales of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard*. Demand from the membership for a print copy of the standard has been steady even though it is available for free online.

TO DO #1 (Prom): Continue to monitor TS-DACS developments.

TO DO #2 (Brinati & Prom): Get in touch with the Association of Canadian Archivists to confirm its interest in co-publishing *“All Shook Up”: The Archival Legacy of Terry Cook*.

B. Publishing Program Overview – Teresa Brinati

- New marketing initiatives, such as the coloring book catalog at the Annual Meeting and the Archives Short Fiction Contest, were highly successful and gave us an opportunity to connect with members in a fun and whimsical way. The contest should be done again.
- We continue to make inroads globally as we explore partnerships with Sao Paulo Archivists and have had another book translated—*Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* into Korean.
- The Publications program successfully collaborated with the Education program for a 90-minute webinar in June based on *Module 2: Processing Digital Records and Manuscripts*. Fifty-one sites registered for the webinar. Since then, the webinar has been downloaded 43 times. Both translate to book sales. We would like to do this again, if the Education program is interested as it does require more work on their end. Other modules may lend themselves better for webinars and for reducing the Education program’s workload.

TO DO #3 (Prom): Contact Anna Perricci for developing webinar(s) and TAP modules on web archiving, social media archiving, and email archiving.

TO DO #4 (Brinati, Christian & Nelb): Contact SHRABS and AASLH to market *The Lone Arranger: Succeeding in a Small Repository*.

TO DO #5 (Brinati & Christian): Market *Module 8: Becoming a Trusted Digital Repository* via the Lone Arrangers Roundtable.

C. Four-Year Analysis of Units Sold, FY 2012–2015 – Teresa Brinati

Rights in the Digital Era, which was published February 2015, has met sales expectations and even outpaced *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*, a perennial best seller, this past year. About 11 books account for 70% of sales. The Board discussed what to do with older books that aren’t selling and if print on demand would be a good alternative. Electronic books seem to have plateaued in the industry in general. Publishers are skewing away from making electronic copies cheaper with the idea of “selling content not format.”

D. Dictionary Working Group (DWG) – Margery Sly

DWG is increasing the number of new terms defined each week beyond one Word of the Week and are set for launching a new *Dictionary of Archives Terminology* this year. SAA is on the verge of signing a contract with IDM for software that would facilitate building the new dictionary.

TO DO #6 (Sly): Share with DWG these ideas for raising awareness about the dictionary during the Annual Meeting: generate a crossword puzzle using Words of the Week and get ribbons that say “Word Nerd” to generate conversation.

E. Council Update – Amy Cooper Cary

The referendum recently passed to increase member dues. Council is committed to strengthening the Publications program as well as other programs and activities, particularly in support of achieving strategic priorities.

F. Financial Report – Peter Carlson

- SAA has been in a year of transitions: The office is fully staffed after several personnel transitions. The Annual Meeting in Cleveland was the first time SAA used a convention center, which was a very positive experience. Re-evaluating and in some cases switching vendors has decreased costs. The new website is about to be released.
- In the last six months, SAA has been within budget in every area, though the majority of revenue is driven by membership, the Annual Meeting and the Education program. Membership almost doubled within a 10-year period.
- Publications sales are \$13,000 below last year's sales. The good news is that we're 3% below budget. Factors that could contribute to lower sales are low student sales because students access content through university accounts instead of student memberships, faculty assign chapters instead of books, and an artificial spike in student numbers a few years ago as people sought career changes in the recession.

G. *The American Archivist* – Greg Hunter

The Fall/Winter 2015 issue was the first to be produced online and in print with the new vendor, Allen Press. The end product looks great, although there were a few bumps along the road in terms of production. We've set earlier timelines for the next issue, which will help with efficiencies, although it is slated to come out a month later than is typical—June instead of May. We will begin implementing PeerTrack (for manuscript submission, tracking, and peer review) within the next month. We are also reconnecting staff from the National Archives and Records Association with the journal, which was produced for the first several decades of its existence by the National Archives. Fifteen of the peer reviewers are associated with NARA.

II. PROPOSALS

- A. Developing book Archives for the General Public:** The benefits of such a book would be to raise brand awareness and increase sales as the market for it would be broad. Envisioned as a thin volume—between 45 and 60 pages, with lots of illustrations/pictures, at a cost of \$10—the book will offer other resources for readers who want to delve in further to archiving. Potential partners for distribution include NARA, National Parks Service, AASHLA, and Amazon.

TO DO #7 (Prom & Brinati): Whip up a formal proposal for the archives book for the general public, then invite Laura Millar to be the lead writer.

- B. *Volunteers in Archives: Management and Ethical Case Studies* (Speirs and Freeman):** Volunteers in the archives is a sensitive topic as archives relying too much on volunteers limits archivist jobs. The narrowness of the topic is a concern, and a set of case studies without inferring best practices from them isn't as interesting. The writer behind the Ask a Manager blog is already doing similar work, providing professional

advice for nonprofit human resources. Specific case studies within this manuscript could be included in other case study series, categorized about government records, ethics, college and university archives, etc., rather than devoting a book to volunteer case studies.

TO DO #8 (Prom): Contact Speirs and Freeman to respectfully decline the proposal, suggest alternate ideas (e.g., ethics case study, article in *The American Archivist*).

III. GROUP BRAINSTORMING: REIMAGINING THE PUBLISHING ENTERPRISE

A. Refining the Business Model

The Board discussed options of different publishing models that would maintain fiscal responsibility and meet the needs of the association. Alternative publication models were presented which supported different kinds of reading, navigation features, page-based vs. section-based reading, commenting, and annotating features.

The Board also discussed if the goal was to simply break even or to make money. The Publications budget is one piece of the larger SAA's budget. As an association, SAA is breaking even and has even had significant net gains in the last several years. *The American Archivist* and SAA's books are strong reasons why people value their membership. Publications establish a baseline of professional practice and offer intellectual capital to SAA. A balance should be established between publishing bestsellers and work that is important and necessary to the profession even if it is not bestselling.

Press runs are predicated on selling out in a year. The Board discussed giving away older books when people purchase new releases, but the cost of picking, packing, and shipping books is higher than the cost of warehouse storage. A print on-demand model still wouldn't eliminate the cost of developing the book.

SAA pricing is very competitive compared to other publishers. The Board's goal is to provide members with core intellectual content and with as much access to the literature in a way that does not undermine the financial well-being of SAA.

A new or different model should maintain the Board's commitment to high quality (i.e., as in our review process), reasonable pricing for members, and feeding the bottom line of SAA.

An emerging goal is to engage people more: using technology to provide interaction with books and with other readers, and by facilitating interaction among members.

This brought up the need for knowing more specifically the needs of the community through a survey, which has not been done for several years. Questions would include: What would people want within a digital subscription? What topics are people looking for? If content were available in a cloud-based system, would readers sign up? What devices are people using to read content? How do they want content delivered to them? Would readers appreciate online annotation features and the ability to share notes? What value do they place on different publications? What time do they have for reading books?

The Board discussed the pros and cons of using Amazon as a distributor, where we did pilot one book:

- Cons: SAA would not be able to deliver a two-tiered pricing system for members. We would not have 100% of profits. Amazon is outward looking so cannot help us serve SAA's members and needs.
- Pros: Amazon could connect our books with non-members who identify as archivists and could benefit from our publications. Amazon increases marketing and exposure and may promote awareness of SAA.

With sales is a downward trend, the Board discussed why our core members are not buying SAA Publications in as great of numbers. Declining use of purchased content in Education Programs is a key element here. Limited reading time or recession effects may be contributing factors. Members often talk about creating community, which we do have around SAA; we need to educate members on how to support it.

One model is to build a new service for members, funded by grants initially, but a sustainable yearly cash flow over the long term, which offers a digital subscription to electronic books. Out-of-print titles are already available in the HathiTrust, but readers cannot interact with the text in a meaningful way. The Board discussed how to use staff time to achieve this—if this task fell within Publications or elsewhere—as well as how to advocate for the profession beyond members while realizing that the operational reality is that members are our core.

B. Alternative Publication Model Proposal

The Born-Digital Access Research Team proposed a hybrid publication model for a “Research Series” to publish in-progress research with community feedback and engagement. The Board discussed whether the team is presenting a publishable series or raw data in this platform with needs that may be met in others way. Would this entail a new format for delivery or would it be formatted similar to existing modules or case studies? How do we maintain quality peer review in this environment? The Board would like to support the idea without putting a technological burden on SAA to publish and maintain new websites and/or platforms. There is also a concern with privileging and branding certain kinds of research over others. Existing channels such as the SAA Research Forum may be a better outlet and may give the Research Forum year-round visibility. Later, research may develop into a proposal for publication within one of our series or *The American Archivist*, but this brings Publications in too early to the process and is not within our scope.

TO DO #9 (Prom): Respond to the Born-Digital Access Research Team and connect them to SAA Vice President Nancy McGovern, who is a founder and principal organizer of the Research Forum, or suggest developing an article for *The American Archivist* around the experience.

IV. NEXT STEPS

A. Top 10 Goals of the Publications Program:

1. Understand and serve our audience's needs and topics of interest
2. Increase access of content to members, broader archival community and allied professionals
3. Shape best practices
4. Build professional community
5. Serve as reliable/authoritative avenue for authors to publish and share intellectual output
6. Maintain and strengthen quality with peer reviews, etc.
7. Increase engagement
8. Maintain topical relevance
9. Keep up with trends
10. Promote diversity within the field

B. Action Items: To meet these goals, the Board will explore ways to reduce distribution costs, increase sales, enhance marketing efforts, maintain production efficiencies, engage great authors, leverage collaborative opportunities, and find synergies within SAA.

C. Specifically, the Board would like to:

1. Seek member feedback through a survey to be conducted this spring and a focus group at the Annual Meeting this summer.
2. Research and explore print on demand as a model, book publishing options with Allen Press, open access options besides HathiTrust, and new technologies and partners.
3. Continue to prioritize content development and production of Trends in Archives Practice and Archival Fundamentals Series III.
4. Refine our financial business model.

TO DOs FOR PUBLICATIONS BOARD SUBCOMMITTEES:

1. Acquisitions and Content Development (Caldera [Chair], Prom, Mix)

- a. Within Trends in Archives Practice, develop modules that address Born Digital Access, Web Social Media, and Engagement Strategies.
- b. Develop a volume on "Accessioning & Deaccessioning" that would become the eighth book in the Archival Fundamentals Series III; consider Audra Yun of UC-Irvine as a potential author.
- c. Develop a publication on "community archives."
- d. Explore management gaps in the literature: personnel, strategic planning, career management, change management.

2. Marketing and Member Engagement (Milano [Chair], Rademaker, Shallcross, Nelb, DeRidder, Brinati, Christian)

- a. Create and administer a survey.
- b. Conduct a focus group during the 2016 Annual Meeting.
- c. "One Book, One Profession": Launch an association-wide book club at the Annual Meeting using the TAP cluster *Teaching with Primary Sources*. Schedule a brown

- bag lunch discussion with study guide questions. Market this activity to the regionals for their fall and spring meetings. **(Sly):** Create study guide questions.
- d. Look into existing podcasters for conducting author interviews. Check out the possibility of podcasts sponsored by AV Preserve, Wisconsin Historical Society or George Blood audio.
- e. Collaborate with the Education Committee and propose a joint winter meeting for 2017.

3. Publishing and Business Models (Cary, Gray, Sly, Brinati, Christian)

- a. Wait for survey results.
- b. Review *The American Archivist's* Online Content Working Group Final Report (prepared by Paul Conway, November 2014).
- c. Explore Illinois "play-space" options and open access options for HathiTrust content, in partnerships with University of Illinois Publishing w/out Walls Project.
- d. Explore book publishing and distribution options with Allen Press and University of Chicago (BiblioVault).
- e. Gather print on demand costs, specs, and samples.
- f. Refine financial plan and budget.

V. Member Feedback: Prospective Survey Questions

- A. The Board will create a survey on Survey Monkey, offering an iPad with electronic books from SAA as an incentive to participate. Target date: March 1.
- B. Possible Survey Questions:
 1. Fill in the blank about Publications: _____ is intended to _____.
 2. Price Question: Is the price too high, about right, too low. How likely would you be to pay for a book in [list price ranges].
 3. Would you find a digital subscription service to all of our books valuable? How much would you pay for it?
 4. What is your preferred format to receive books: a) print b) digital subscription (accessible on any device) c) ebooks
 5. How many books have you purchased for yourself in the last 12 months (1–5), (5–10) (10–15) (15+)
 - a. How many electronic books? How many print books?
 - b. How many books within each genre (professional, trade, technical, nonfiction, fiction)
 - c. How many SAA publications have you bought? Which ones have you bought (AFS, Trends, etc.)
 - d. How many SAA publications have you read but not bought?
 - e. How have you learned about SAA publications?
 6. How do you get info about the profession (blogs, books, etc.)?
 7. How can SAA Publications help you with the changes in your profession? (Books, Case studies, AFS, Trends)
 8. How can we best keep you notified of upcoming publications?

9. In the next 12 months, are you likely to buy a book on _____ (offer choices of upcoming topics such as accessioning,). Check all that apply.
10. Open ended question about the gaps in literature.
11. Are you satisfied with previous publications?
12. If you would like to be part of a Focus Group at the Annual Meeting, please give us your email address.
13. Demographic questions about the type of institutions, student status, salary range, years of experience, age.