

**Minutes of the Museum Archives Section Meeting**  
**August 15, 2018**  
**Washington Marriott Wardaman Park**  
**Washington, D.C.**

- I. Welcome
- II. SAA Council Liaison update
- III. Election results and recognition of outgoing officers
- IV. Officer reports
- V. Report of Standards and Best Practices Working Group
- VI. New business from floor
- VII. Announcements
- VIII. Standards and Best Practices Working Group break out

Attendance: 75

- I. Chair Greg Jackson called the meeting to order and welcomed attendees.
- II. SAA Council Liaison Update (Kris Kiesling)  
Introduced the section's new Council Liaison, Melissa Gonzales, and provided an update from Council's August 13 meeting:
  - Endorsed *Protocols for Native American Archival Materials*, a document that had been considered by previous Councils, and issued a [statement](#) about the endorsement concluding that, "The SAA Council acknowledges that endorsement of these Protocols is long overdue. We regret and apologize that SAA did not take action to endorse the Protocols sooner and engage in more appropriate discussion."
  - Agreed to form a six-member task force to develop guidelines for staff use in considering vendor exhibits, sponsorships, and advertising. The task force will be appointed by September 1 and will have a final report due for consideration at the November 2018 Council meeting.
  - Approved revisions to its "Principles and Priorities for Continuously Improving the SAA Annual Meeting" that include the addition of two bullets:
    - "We will strive to meet in locations governed by laws, regulations, and practices that support the values and ethics of SAA" and
    - "We expect panels to be diverse and inclusive. This includes bringing balance to the panels, such as *individual* diversity (gender, race, age, length of time in profession, ability, access to financial resources), *institutional* diversity (academic, government, corporate/business, non-profit, large, small), and *geographic* diversity."
  - Decided to send "Best Practices for Internships as a Component of Graduate Archival Education," for review and revision to archival educators.
- III. Election Results and Recognition of Outgoing Officers (Greg Jackson)
  - Recognized outgoing members of section leadership: Newsletter Editor Katrina O'Brien and Web Liaison Rachel Panella.
  - Announced incoming leadership: Katrina O'Brien, Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect; Tara Laver, Recording Secretary (continuing); Catherine Peebles, Newsletter Editor; and Shannon Morelli, Web Liaison.
  - Thanked Megan Schwenke and Rachel Chatalbash, Chairs of the Museum Archives Section Standards and Best Practices Working Group, and its members Stephanie Chace, Ryan Evans, Jessica Gambling, Marge Huang, Tara Laver, Katherine Meyers, Katrina O'Brien, Rachel Panella, Cate Peebles, Sara Seltzer, Dawn Sueoka, Peggy Tran-Le.
  - Thanked speakers at the Best Practices Symposium (see below).
  - Encouraged section members to run or volunteer for section leadership positions.

#### IV. Officer Reports

Secretary Tara Laver called for approval of the minutes from the 2017 business meeting, which had been distributed electronically. The meetings were approved as written.

#### V. Report of Standards and Best Practices Working Group (Megan Schwenke)

##### **2017/2018 Project**

Megan Schwenke, Co-Chair of the Museum Archives Section Standards and Best Practices Working Group, gave an overview of the group's project for 2017/2018 to investigate the role of the museum archivist in the care and stewardship of permanent records held outside of the archives. Group members conducted 19 interviews with 11 non-archivists and 8 archivists. Transcripts of the interviews are available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hsOT59uzyMAcNOMOG1D7eCjk-nQ4cdHf/view>.

The interview responses suggest that, consistent with the Working Group's hypotheses at the outset of the project, there is no broad standard for the division of permanent records between archives and other museum departments, nor for the management by non-archivists of permanent records in those other departments. However, most non-archivists report that they either already have a collaborative relationship with an archivist or would welcome consultation around their record-keeping work, with the museum archivist on staff or, when there isn't one, from an external source such as a neighboring institution or professional organization. Non-archivists have long been responsible for the management of permanent records at some museums, but this finding suggests a remaining need for archivists to proactively share expertise in the management and care of these records. In particular, there is an opportunity for archivists to assist their colleagues with digital preservation activities. The interviews indicate that most non-archivists are not implementing digital preservation strategies for the records permanently in their care, in contrast with the routine digital preservation work of a museum archivist. Archivists can also assist with post-custodial record keeping, supporting colleagues' management of their own departmental records in place by sharing the basic tools and procedures of the archival profession.

##### **2018 Annual Symposium**

- When: August 15, 2018, 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
- Attendance: approximately 120

Schedule:

9:00 – 9:15: Welcome: Rachel Chatalbash, Yale Center for British Art

9:15 – 9:45: James Moske and Angela Salisbury, The Metropolitan Museum of Art:

Collaboration with Curatorial Staff to Manage Archives at The Metropolitan Museum of Art

9:45 – 10:15: Rebecca Morgan, American Museum of Natural History: Field Books

and Other Important Boundary Materials: Archival Collections in Science Museums

10:15 – 10:30: Break

10:30 – 11:00: Cate Peebles, Yale Center for British Art: Stepping Out of the Archives: Proactive Practice for Born-digital Art Collection Documentation

11:00 – 11:30: Tali Han, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum: Dissemination and

Access of Complex Records: Panza Collection Initiative, Phase III

11:30 – 12:00: Roundtable discussion with speakers, moderated by Tara Z. Laver,

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, and Katherine Meyers Satriano, Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

##### **2018/2019 Project**

The Working Group's project this year will be a review and update of the "[Museum Archives Guidelines](#)." This project was suggested by incoming Chair Hillary Bober. The guidelines were first developed in 1998, and approved and endorsed by the SAA Council in 2003, 15 years ago. The guidelines, along with the book *Museum Archives*, are the only SAA-endorsed protocols detailing

what museum archives should be and do; the Working Group will be looking at the guidelines for our 2018-2019 project with an eye to how our profession has grown and changed over the last 20 years. Responses from workshop groups during the section meeting will provide the basis for that work.

VI. New business from floor  
None

VII. Announcements

- Yayoi Tsutsui announced and made available brochures about the International Committee on Museums meeting in Kyoto, Japan, September 2019 and relayed the progress of a project to translate *Museum Archives: An Introduction* (2004) into Japanese.
- Kathleen Williams, National Gallery, announced her institution has paid summer internships, including in the archives, and requested members share with potential applicants. She also announced the upcoming advertisement of a new position for Media Archivist at the National Gallery, a GS12 position starting at \$82,000.

VIII. Standards and Best Practices Working Group break out

As noted above, the Working Group will review and revise "[Museum Archives Guidelines](#)" this year. To gather feedback from members about what those revisions should address, attendees broke up into small groups to discuss and report back on the following three questions:

1. How can these guidelines be more useful, or more practical? Please consider their structure as well as the content
2. What's missing from these guidelines?
3. What's included that is outdated, and should it be updated or removed altogether?

Responses are summarized in the appendix to these minutes.

## Appendix A. Responses to Questions about the Museum Archives Guidelines

### Group 1

More concise in general and provide links in the relevant section to examples rather than grouping the linked examples at the end. Consider adding or changing to checklist form. Clarify or discuss in the text whether these are aspirational—what is the purpose? Define some terms, such as what is an archival quality container. Generally needs more language about digital materials and digital preservation.

### Group 2

Point to supporting documentation. Make it more accessible to non-SAA members. Regarding section 4, a professional archivist is ideal but smaller institutions don't often have those resources. Emphasize the difference between museum collection management systems and archival collection management systems.

### Group 3

Better promote their existence and use. Possibly acknowledge/reflect that museums are often jointly housed with libraries and how their functions overlap. More emphasis on digital preservation, copyright and rights/re-use. More examples of retention schedules. Point to existing standards like DACS.

### Group 4

Vagueness of some of the wording. More discussion of digital and how to preserve in a museum archives setting. Add language to bridge the gap for those without a museum background, for example, more details about what's included in an object file. Review the use of the phrase "not in current use records" because a lot of records are in continuous use—change to "non-active." Typo in the mission statement: "define" not "defy". More emphasis on digital preservation. Upgrade ideology that it reflects—museum's today are less structured and hierarchical and more inclusive and collaborative.

### Group 5

Now that the Native American protocols have been adopted, what are implications for this document—have something about cultural sensitivity. Incorporate recommendation to consult with legal counsel (ex. retention schedules).

### Group 6

Make them more useful and practical. Define for whom the guidelines are written. Incorporate language regarding electronic and born digital records, archives role in managing the life cycle of records, dealing with objects. Update language to reflect more collaborative relationship with museum. Tweak language on access so it is coming from a place where openness is the default, not just focus on restrictions.

### Group 7

It's a bit long, so consider breaking into parts for various audiences rather than one document for all: stakeholders, archivists, resource allocators. Who is the audience? Consider recommendations for non-archivists (ex. those who wear multiple hats like at house museums). Reference to digital is missing. Add guidelines for managing born digital such as tools and education/skills. Address access via website and DAMS. Language about collaboration with other departments on such things as metadata, rights and reproduction, open access. What about General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) privacy concerns?

### Group 8

Who is the audience? Suggest a bullet point version for senior executives. It is very skewed to institutional records so need to incorporate manuscript language/perspective. Does not reference digital. It looks like a Wikipedia entry.