

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

**Oral History Section: Annual Report**  
Prepared by: Cyrana Dowell, chair

Year: 2024-2025

Current Rosters (Include full name, position title, and term end date for each):

Cyrana Dowell, Chair, ends July 2026  
Anu Kasarabada, Vice Chairs, ends July 2027.  
Kristen Morris, member, ends July 2026 (re-elected to her seat in July 2024)  
Patrick Daglaris, member, ends July 2026  
Rebecca Kuske, member, ended July 2025

Council Liaison: Jillian Cuellar

## **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:**

From September 2024 to April 2025, we hosted four speaker events on a nearly bi-monthly basis.

David Olsen, "Community Chat on Oral History Release Forms," September 2024.

Kristen Morris and Natalie Milbrodt, "Is Oral History Right for You?" December 2024.

Yolanda Hester and Kopana Terry, "Preserving Voices: A Community Conversation on the Oral History Transcript Lifecycle from Creation to Preservation," February 2026.

Gillian Goldberg and Elisa Villalpando, "Community Chat on Student Involvement in Oral History Projects," April 2026.

### **Ongoing:**

The steering committee will continue to organize bimonthly events.

### **New:**

The steering committee is considering opportunities to revive and/or complete the SAA oral history project.

## **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**

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

2.2 Provide content, via education and publications, that reflects the latest thinking and best practices in the field.

The OHS steering committee provides content through our community chats that reflects the latest thinking and best practices in the field. Our community chat topics selected by the steering based on recent conferences or workshops in the field or proposed to us by our membership through our 'contact us' google form.

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

3.2. Foster and disseminate research in and about the field.

The OHS steering committee through our community chat events fosters conversations among members and disseminate research and practice in the field of oral history. For example, this year we held a community chat on the history of release forms and informed consent with speaker David Olsen shortly after the publication of his article (Olson, David Amel. "Forms, Formations, and Reforms." *The American Archivist* 87, no. 1 (2024): 70–106. <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-87.1.70>.) Another example of the steering committee's commitment to disseminating research and practice in the field of oral history was our community event titled, "Preserving Voices: A Community Conversation on the Oral History Transcript Lifecycle from Creation to Preservation," which shared how to best handle oral history transcripts.

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

4.1. Facilitate effective communication with and among members. 4.2. Create opportunities for members to participate fully in the association.

The Oral History section steering committee circulates announcements via the discussion form to put our members in contact with each other. Through our community chat events we offer members the opportunity to share their research and experiences.

## SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: 82 registrants

Link to meeting minutes: [View the agenda here.](#)

Summary of meeting activities and highlights:

The business meeting opened with Chair and Vice Chair remarks. The OHS steering committee organized a panel titled, "Not Even in Death Do We Part." Speakers shared how death, grieving, and legacy concerns inform their work managing oral history projects and collections. Sara Jane Ruggles, Public Historian at Auburn Crest Hospice North Idaho, presenting a case study on providing person-centered care while conducting interviews with Auburn Crest Hospice patients; and Patrick Daglaris, Archivist and Assistant Department Head at the Oklahoma Oral History Research Program at Oklahoma State University, presenting on the unique role of oral history archivists in navigating the life, death, and legacies of their narrators. The meeting closed with announcements on how to propose a community chat topic and a reminder that the OHS steering committee will hold special election for a vice chair.

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

The section is healthy. We have focused on providing events for our members and the membership seems to be engaged. Some of our events have at attendance in the 90s, while others have registration of only 30-40 members. This seems to have a lot to do with time of year than to the relevance of topics as many members request access to the recordings.

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

The challenges include offering consistent programming during spring months. These events have low turnout. Additionally, it is difficult to recruit steering committee members. Although we get interest, many interested parties are not members of SAA and do not wish to become members due to the high fee.

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

Membership dues are high. This creates an obstacle to professional engagement and participation. One solution could be a special category of membership for steering committee members at a much-reduced rate that excludes access to the journal and membership rates for the annual conference.

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

None currently.