

Society of American Archivists Council Meeting Anaheim, CA

Public Library Archives & Special Collections: Annual Report (Prepared by: Erinn Barnes)

Year: 2024- 2025

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

Erinn Barnes, Co-Chair. Term ends August 2026

Charmaine Conner, Co-Chair, Terms end August 2025

Jill Tominosky, Secretary. Vacated position in March, 2025 due to schedule conflicts

Catherine Tremblay, Member at Large. Term end August 2025

Heather Lowcock, Member at Large: Term ends August 2026

Aimai Reporter, Webmaster. Term ends August 2025. Will return for 2025-2026 term.

Council Liaison: Eira Tansey

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:

1. Conducted a membership poll to identify priority topics for programs and the annual section meeting. Top-ranked areas of interest were: Public Library Programming & Archives, Information Activism, Digitization Projects, and Certifications.
2. Launched our first-ever virtual Coffee Chat, centered on programming in public library archives. The event drew 71 attendees and sparked an engaging exchange about the successes and challenges of various public programs. While the discussion was lively, participant feedback indicated a preference for a more structured, presentation-style format rather than an open-ended “coffee chat.”
3. Hosted the annual section meeting, which featured two outstanding presentations on description remediation.
4. Continued to update our section blog, *The Finding Aid* (<https://publiclibraryarchives.wordpress.com/>).
5. Expanded the section microsite to include all meeting minutes from 2023–2025.
6. Added a dedicated resources section on web archiving to the microsite.

Ongoing:

Ongoing activities included holding monthly steering committee meetings, maintaining and updating resources on the section microsite, sharing news and updates via the listserv and microsite, and continuing to develop fresh content for the PLASC blog by inviting guest contributors.

New:

1. The Steering Committee is exploring the launch of a comprehensive survey of public library archives to gain deeper insight into how these unique collections operate. Potential areas of focus include staffing, public service hours, services offered, available resources, size of the library system, and digitization and digital collections.
2. Plans are underway to expand our Coffee Chat series to two sessions annually—one in the fall and one in the spring—in order to provide members with additional opportunities for learning and engagement.

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

PLASC continues to advocate for the profession and highlight our vital role through the ongoing blog series *Demystifying DIY Digitization*. This year, we featured a guest post by Chelsea Clarke of the Midwest Genealogy Center at the Mid-Continent Public Library, who shared the process of establishing a robust Memory Lab and the many ways patrons are digitizing and preserving their family memories. The post has received more than 190 views and continues to draw reader engagement.

Goal 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

In July 2025, PLASC hosted a panel session on reparative description titled *Description Remediation in Action*. This topic—covering both information activism and reparative description—ranked highly in our annual member survey.

Katie MacKendrick (Cataloging Supervisor) and Laura Ruttum Senturia (Archives Access Supervisor) from the Denver Public Library Special Collections & Archives shared their experience conducting a diversity audit of nearly 6,000 manuscript and photograph collections between 2020 and 2022. They presented key findings from the audit and described ongoing reparative cataloging efforts resulting from their work.

From the Boston Public Library, archivists Margaret Peachy and Kim Reynolds, along with rare books curator Viv William, discussed their project remediating descriptions in collections related to indentured servitude and Haitian manuscripts. Their work combined batch scripting with manual methods to address harmful or outdated language.

Both presentations offered practical, hands-on approaches to reparative description, illustrating what public library archivists can achieve while highlighting the complexity and time-intensive nature of this important work.

Goal 3: Advancing the Field

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs

PLASC continues to support our members by maintaining regular communication through the listserv, microsite, *The Finding Aid* blog, and Facebook via the Archivists Think Tank account.

While these channels provide important outreach, we recognize that more work is needed to ensure we are fully meeting member needs. Initiatives such as posting monthly meeting minutes to the microsite aim to increase transparency and keep members informed.

Participation in the PLASC Steering Committee has offered new members a unique opportunity to connect with fellow public librarians working in special collections—an experience not provided by any other national association. At-large members often join to learn about this network and SAA section membership more broadly, with many later advancing into senior leadership roles within PLASC and other sections. Steering Committee members also help spread awareness of the section's resources among colleagues and regional partners. Our monthly committee meetings serve as a forum where members can bring questions, share solutions, and receive recommendations, drawing on the collective expertise of librarians and archivists from small to large libraries across four time zones.

SAA ANNUAL MEETING

Number of attendees: 45

Link to meeting minutes:

Summary of meeting activities and highlights:

A general overview of the year's activities was presented, along with the introduction of our newly elected steering committee members. Our council Liaison Eira Tansey was present to provide timely updates on SAA Council activities.

An excellent panel presented major reparative descriptive work happening in public library archives. Our members engaged with the presenters with astute questions and comments.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

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

The PLASC section can be described as both healthy and engaged. Our members show strong interest in content specifically tailored to the needs of public library archivists. While there is some overlap with academic or other types of archivists, public library archivists often wear multiple hats—ranging from genealogy research to social media management and programming. Members look for practical examples and strategies they can adapt to their own work, reflecting a clear desire for connection and peer learning.

At the same time, as noted in previous annual reports, conversations on SAA Connect remain largely one-sided, consisting primarily of announcements and news. Requests for advice or examples of how others have addressed particular challenges often go unanswered. While the Steering Committee makes an effort to respond to all posts, overall engagement remains limited.

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

Our chief challenge was the loss of our secretary in Spring of 2025. This made the keeping of accurate minutes challenging, but we were able to cobble them together each month. Schedules in four different time zones remained a challenge to having one steering committee

meeting that worked for all. We ended up with two monthly meetings to accommodate everyone's schedule. This was not ideal.

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

I would like to see increased training and engagement opportunities for section leaders provided by the Council and/or council liaisons. Beginning as a member-at-large and later serving as section chair often felt unclear, particularly regarding the duties of the steering committee and how our section aligns with SAA's broader strategic vision. While clarity has developed over time through direct experience in leadership roles, more structured guidance and connection would be valuable.

At the recent annual SAA meeting, I felt somewhat isolated from the broader leadership community. Additional support for section leaders—such as dedicated meeting time or spaces at the annual meeting—could help foster stronger connections and collaboration. Providing resources for informal section gatherings during the meeting would further encourage engagement and peer networking.

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