Society of American Archivists (SAA) Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment (CORDA)

SAA Research and Innovation Roadmap, beta version 1.2

Updated April 2023

The SAA Research and Innovation Roadmap identifies critical research needs and gaps in the archival profession. The roadmap is an active and evolving document, developed by the SAA Committee on Research, Data and Assessment, and represents research interests that have been identified by members across the profession. The roadmap reflects an analysis of current and emerging research, assessment, and data needs, to frame and inform the work that the profession might undertake. Key among the goals of the roadmap is to articulate the profession’s research priorities. Those priorities can help funders, conference organizers, publication editors, and leaders within the profession allocate the necessary attention and resources to support research and innovation. The agenda will also help individual archivists and allied practitioners identify research topics that will advance the profession in priority areas. The agenda may also influence graduate school course development.

Archivists throughout North America are actively engaged in research, assessment, and evaluation related to the archival profession. A multitude of independent and SAA section-based research activities are conducted every season and those research results and data subsequently appear in just as many venues and outlets. The goal of the roadmap is to be inclusive of these efforts, and to frame larger themes that research within the profession seeks to address. As in any other applied field, practice leads to research questions and research leads to improved practice. The roadmap has been inclusively developed, and yet is necessarily bound by time and place. To address inclusivity, the design of the document is flexible to allow for continued contributions, and to position it as representative of professional needs and priorities at any given time.

History of roadmap development:
Initial goals, topics, and themes of interest to SAA and the archival profession were identified during interviews that the Task Force on Research/Data and Evaluation conducted for the purpose of a persona needs analysis in 2017-2018, and from key literature sources concerning archival research. These themes have been further analyzed through facilitated discussions with CORDA, SAA Section and Committee Chairs, and through a period of open membership feedback. Select examples of past research, existing resources, standards, and guidelines for collecting data are annotated in this document. The roadmap further incorporates priority
areas identified in the SAA 2020-2022 strategic plan and the 2020-2021 DEIA plan. The gathering of topics has been inclusive rather than exclusive. Where possible, research efforts have been identified by title, with an active URL, and date, if known. We have intentionally emphasized ideas, projects, and initiatives and have deemphasized individuals. The research identified includes reports, surveys, papers, and projects.

**Principles for this Living Document:**
The roadmap is collaboratively developed and has the deliberate goal of promoting data-informed innovation and reuse of data about archives, aided by the [SAA Dataverse](https://www.dataverse.org). NB: CORDA urges that all research be undertaken ethically and with appropriate approvals. Researchers with topics that intersect with SAA committee expertise can engage with SAA groups for advice and counsel. For example, researchers approaching diversity-related research topics can consult with the SAA Diversity Committee or Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section, depending on the nature of the research.

**I. Theme: Demographics**

**Scope:** Information about archivists reveals broad trends as well as detailed insight into the profession. Research will enable cross-sectional and longitudinal studies and analysis, and the ability to identify trends over time, as well as surfacing professional gaps. Insights will strengthen the profession and will lead to educational, development, training, diversity, and inclusion efforts.

**II. Theme: Metrics and Institutions**

**Scope:** It is critical that archivists have information and data to support efforts to articulate explicit value propositions for special collections and archives and be able to measure change over time. Business analytics enable research-based practice and practice-based research. The goal is to transition from descriptive data to actionable goals through performance measures and service benchmarks. Repository-level information will create a baseline for understanding the costs and resources allocated to the ecosystem of collection formats, as well as their use. Benchmarking can also help break down where resources are allocated, along the spectrum and life cycle of stewardship (donor negotiation, accessioning, processing, digitization, researcher use, donor stewardship, outreach, etc.) to support planning.
III. Diversity and Inclusion

**Scope:** The beneficiaries of research include practitioners, archival users, as well as society and culture. Research will inform archivists who wield significant power over who society documents, as well as establish policies governing access. A research-informed practice is critical at a time of racial reckoning. Research-informed practice in areas that include recruiting, retention, professional development and mentoring, collections acquisitions and care, access decisions, and policies are essential. Research in this area promotes justice and advances greater accountability within the archival profession. It encourages the adoption of reparative descriptive practices and supports the analysis of the costs of, and impact of, reparative description.

IV. Theme: Ethical Stewardship, Maintenance and Sustainability

**Scope:** Research in this theme supports public investment in archives’ public services and stewardship. Caring for collections, tracking environmental impact, and justifying an archival activity over another is clearer when there is data to inform decisions and assess the costs and impact of archival activities. What is worth doing over time?

V. Theme: Radical Collaboration and Convergence

**Scope:** Collaboration is a necessary research theme, as archivists act within broader political and economic systems. Archivists enhance value and impact through collaboration and partnership with allied and complementary organizations and their practices. Research in this space will enable archivists to evaluate benefits, outcomes, and affordances of collaborative efforts. This research focus is in the spirit of the SAA Guidelines for Programs of Academic Study (GPAS) curricular component of “complementary knowledge” to expand research with allied organizations.

VI. Theme: Audience Building

**Scope:** What is the effectiveness of archival efforts to build audiences? What efforts – positions dedicated to outreach or partnerships with journalists and media – build audiences? Elevating archival awareness and advocacy for archives is advanced through many levels of partnership and funded efforts – at the national, regional, local, institutional level. This research theme seeks to ground practice with research.
VII. User Centered Design and Discovery

**Scope:** How do users approach, find, and use archives? Principles like *respect des fonds* can prejudice the archives to center the records in designing systems for archival use and engagement. If we invert the model to center users, how would we design systems for discovery, access, and archival transfer? Research in this area centers users and has the potential to alter current modes of archival practice.

### SAA Research & Innovation Roadmap Table

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| 1.a. Longitudinal and Demographic Data about Archival Profession (A*CENSUS, etc.) | - A*CENSUS and A*CENSUS II\(^1\)  
- CoSA “Year in Review” reports, 2013– | - Salary reporting and inclusive job description  
- Effects of term employment  
- SAA component group surveys and projects  
- Mobility: (1) upward within profession, (2) in and out of the profession. What and where are barriers to job growth and satisfaction? Why do people leave the profession? What role does burnout play? | - Strategic Plan 2.1.e, DEIA workplan 1.5 | Diversity & Inclusion, Inclusive Collaboration |
| | - SAA Facts & Figures  
- “Research and Learning Agenda” by OCLC (2017)  
- NEMPN Salary Disclosures (2022) | | | |

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\(^1\) **Example:** There is wide acknowledgement that the A*CENSUS, fielded in 2004 by the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), was the first comprehensive nationwide study of the archives profession. It was a landmark research study that obtained important and original insights about the nature of archival work, archival education (graduate and continuing), and demographics. A*CENSUS II, the second iteration, received funding from National Leadership Project Grant from IMLS for a survey project from September 2020 - February 2023 to capture new demographic data from individuals and administrators with an eye towards diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA). A*CENSUS is an example of a key demographic study.
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<tr>
<td>1.b. Educational Program Impact and Outcomes</td>
<td>● 1998 KALIPER Project (see 2001)&lt;br&gt;● The Archival Education and Research Initiative ([AERI])&lt;br&gt;● Career Satisfaction of Young Archivists: A Survey of Professional Working Archivists, Age 35 and Younger (2010)</td>
<td>● Impact/outcomes of SAA education courses/tracks (e.g. Management Track)&lt;br&gt;● Mentoring Program impact/outcomes&lt;br&gt;● Recruitment of diverse students into profession&lt;br&gt;● Data on graduate student majors, retention and career paths.&lt;br&gt;● Practitioner vs. managerial/leadership education.</td>
<td>● Strategic Plan 2.1.d.&lt;br&gt;● Strategic Plan 2.1.b&lt;br&gt;● Strategic Plan 2.1.g, DEIA workplan 1.5</td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</td>
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|       | ● Association of Research Libraries: ARL Statistics  
       | ● Repo Data (A project to identify, gather, standardize, and make publicly accessible United States archival repository location data)  
       | ● College & University Archives Landscape Survey (2021)  
       | ● Resources: SAA Standards Committee  
       | Resource: SAA Standards Committee | ● Sharing usage metrics (standards already exist)  
       | ● How do we measure and track the impact of public service?  
       | ● How do we move beyond the heartwarming stories towards more quantitative data about use | | Audience building |
       | ● “Importance of State Archives” (CoSA 2013)  
       | ● Resource: SAA Standards Committee | | | |
| II.c. Collection Formats: Evolution and Impact on Repository | ● Email access (TOMES, RATOM, Email Archives: Building Capacity and Community)  
       | ● “Archives and Artifacts” editorial (2019)  
       | ● “Visualizing archival appraisal” (2017; see also RAMP study with sound recordings, 1987)  
       | ● “Managing acquisitions and appraisal in a music archive” (2016) | ● Surveying institutions on archival activities (appraisal work, accessioning work)  
       | ● What document formats and work processes are most challenging to repositories?  
       | ● How do we identify and break significant logjams to better performance? | | Ethical Stewardship, Maintenance & Sustainability |
| II.e. Impact of Community-Based Archives | ● Community-Driven Archives Team (CDAT, 2017-2021)  
<pre><code>   | | ● How to develop partnerships between differently-resourced repositories to increase sustainability | | Diversity &amp; Inclusion |
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| II.f. Costs of Digitization for Patrons and Income for Repositories | ● Mass digitization surveys (see also thread) | ● Sources/stability of funding for repositories  
 ● How are archives spending their budgets? | | Audience Building |
| Theme III: Diversity & Inclusion | | | | |
| III.a. Accessibility and Disability | ● Guidelines for Accessible Archives for People with Disabilities (2019)  
 ● “A quick guide to accessibility and archives” (2011)  
 ● Archives are Accessible: Map (2020)  
 ● Disability Archives Lab: Preserving Disability  
 ● Forthcoming edited book “Preserving Disability: Disability and the Archival Profession”  
 ● Understanding the Unseen: Invisible Disabilities in the Workplace (2022) | ● Disability representation in archival profession  
 ● Accessibility of archival collections/spaces/websites  
 ● UX research into the accessibility of digital spaces (exhibits, websites, etc.) as well as physical spaces  
 ● Metrics about reparative description work (language accessibility) | ● Strategic Plan 1.3.b  
 ● Strategic Plan 2.3.f, DEIA Plan 2.7 | Demographics |
| III.b. Non-custodial / Reciprocal Relationships | ● Documenting the Now social media content  
 ● Nomadic Archivists Project: NAP  
 ● Archiving the Black Web  
 ● Roaming Center for Magnetic Alternatives: RCMA  
 ● ReConnect/ReCollect: Philippine Collections at UM | ● Archives’ uses for social change | ● Strategic Plan 1.1.a,  
 ● DEIA Work Plan 1.6, 3.1, 4.2 | Inclusive Collaboration & Convergence |
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<td></td>
<td>● How to do archives in the Anthropocene (MITH’s Advocacy by Design)</td>
<td>● Workplace diversity/inclusion ● Assessment of publications ● DEIA in archival graduate education programs</td>
<td>● SAA Strategic Plan 2.2.h, DEIA workplan 3.1 ● SAA Strategic Plan 3.3.b, 4.3.b; DEIA Work Plan 3.4</td>
<td>Demographics, Metrics &amp; Institutions</td>
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<td><strong>Theme IV: Ethical Stewardship, Maintenance and Sustainability</strong></td>
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| IV.a. Costs of Archiving | - Total Cost of Stewardship OCLC white paper | - What are the costs of processing? How much does it cost to steward a cubic foot of 20th century paper records or one oral history interview, or one film, etc.  
- Transparency of archival decision-making.  
- How faithful are archivists to good archival practices of their own records? | | |
- “Levels of Born-Digital Access” (2020 by DLF BDAWG)  
- Collections As Data  
- Archival Linked Data landscape (2022)  
- Born Digital Design Records Society of American Archivists (2022) | - Affordances of artificial intelligence and computational data  
- Preservation documentation  
- Impact of enabling across-collection analysis  
- What are the costs or processing? How much does it cost to steward a cubic foot of 20th century paper records or one oral history interview, or one film, etc. | | Metrics & Institutions |
- Resource: SAA Cultural Heritage Working Group (2010-2018) | - Native American relationships to heritage and land acknowledgments  
- Post-custodial collecting | | Demographics, Metrics & Institutions, Diversity & Inclusion |
- Member surveys of Museum Archives Section (2010, 2014)  
- Member survey of PLASC: Public Library archivists (2013) | - User-centered and data-informed research studies to support public investment in archives’ public services and stewardship  
- Some members are also interested in understanding components of archivists’ work, like practices (description, VIP tours, management scope, recruitment criteria), collection surveys, and facilities. Often to | | Metrics & Institutions, Demographics |
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|       | ● Member survey of then-Acquisitions and Appraisal Section (2011)  
      | ● Member survey of Preservation Section (2011)  
      | ● Women Archivists Section Salary Survey (2017 and post)  
      | ● Advice for prospective (2012) and curious (2012) archivists  
      | ● “So You Want to Be An Audiovisual Archivist” (2015)  
      | ● Art + Museum Transparency | make a stronger case to upper administration but also for professional development and educating/training others. | | |
| IV.e. Environment and Sustainability | ● **Data Refuge**  
      | ● Resource: **Project ARCC**: Archivists Responding to Climate Change  
      | ● **Repo Data**: Climate change and archives  
      | ● Green Archivist primer (2012)  
      | ● **Green Facilities** / Green Economy,  
      | ● From Gray Areas to Green Areas (GAGA): Developing Sustainable Practices in Preservation Conference (2007)  
      | ● Material Memory: S2 E2 “Archivists against the climate crisis” podcast (2020) | ● Impact of climate change on archives  
      | ● Disaster planning and preparedness | | Inclusive Collaboration and Convergence |
      | ● Survey of Civil Rights Movement-era archivists (2017)  
      | ● PII-handling case study (2021)  
<pre><code>  | ● “Intellectual property and audiovisual archives” Keynote (2000) | | | |
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<td>Theme V: Inclusive Collaboration &amp; Convergence</td>
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| V.a. Teaching with Primary Sources: K-12 and Higher Education | - **Case Studies**: Teaching with Primary Sources, 2017–
  - Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Collective
  - An archival ethnography of classroom teachers (2017)
  - SOURCES Conference | - Impact of school library partnerships
  - Integration of archives into K-12 curriculum
  - Spotlighting archives in Home Movie Days
  - National History Day competitions | | Audience Building |
| V.b. Structures that Encourage Collaboration or Convergence Across Intersecting Professions Repository Types | - Resource: **RAAC**: Regional Archives Association Consortium
  - ACRL Digital Scholarship Section seeks SAA Liaison | - SAA Research Forum as venue
  - Impact of structures that encourage collaboration or convergence across intersecting professions.
  - How do emerging academic discourses affect and influence archives? Feminist ethics, critical race theory, etc.
  - How does archival theory influence other disciplines? | SAA Strategic Plan 2.3.f, DEIA Work Plan 2.6 |
  - OCLC Collaboration among Libraries Archives and Museums research and publications
  - Research Library Issues (RLI 296) 2018 on radical collaboration including from an archives and archivist lens
  - CALM (till 2017) and Collective Wisdom exchange 2016 (white paper 2017)
  - ARL-CNI-Miami Summit (2016) | - Evidence of user and resource affordances through shared infrastructure and services
  - Cost and efficiency savings through shared storage infrastructure like high density storage facilities, shared digital storage, and other shared infrastructure. | Ethical Stewardship, Maintenance & Sustainability |
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<td>● Mellon GLAM Fellowships in Oregon, 2018–</td>
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<td>● Closure and transfer of American Textile</td>
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<td>History Museum collections to Cornell</td>
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<td>and Simmons universities</td>
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<td>● <strong>SUCHQ</strong>: Saving Ukrainian Cultural</td>
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<td>Heritage Online</td>
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<td>Theme VI: Audience Building</td>
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<td>● <strong>Accountability</strong> and transparency</td>
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<td>“ICE Seeks Permission to Destroy Records</td>
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<td>of Sexual Assaults and Deaths”</td>
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<td>VI.b. Archival Leadership: Promoting Leaders in the Archival and Memory Professions</td>
<td>● SAA 75th Anniversary <a href="#">trading cards</a></td>
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<td><a href="#">SAA Oral History Interviews</a> Project</td>
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<td>Harold T. Pinkett’s legacy</td>
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<td><a href="#">Mosaic Scholars</a> community</td>
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<td>“Unsung Heroes” in the history of STEM</td>
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<td>VI.c. History of Archival Thought</td>
<td>● “Archival Thinking: Genealogies and Archaeologies” in <a href="#">Archival Science</a></td>
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<td><a href="#">Archives in the Ancient World</a> by</td>
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| VI.d. Effectiveness of Archival Outreach Initiatives | ● Resource: Jump In! initiative by Manuscripts Repositories Section (2013-15)  
● Campus Case Studies  
● Resource: #AskAnArchivist | ● Multilingual corporate marketing and sources of revenue-generation  
● Analyze impact of #AskAnArchivist social media posts | | |
| Theme VII: User Centered Design and Discovery | | | | |
| VII.a. Finding Aids and User Behavior | ● Lighting the Way IMLS Project  
● The Value of a Note: A Finding Aid Usability Study | ● User behavior and archives | | |
● OCLC ArchiveGrid  
● Repo Data (A project to identify, gather, standardize, and make publicly accessible United States archival repository location data)  
● College & University Archives Landscape Survey (2021) | ● What is the impact of aggregated archival description on user engagement with archives?  
● Research into use of aggregated digitized | | Inclusive Collaboration, Audience Building, Ethical Stewardship, Maintenance & Sustainability; Audience Building |
| VII.c. Open-Source and Open Access Collections Management and Development | ● Resource: Greg Eow’s plenary SAA 2017  
● EAD aggregators: Building a National Finding Aid Network: NAFAN  
● “Archiving research data” editorial (2007) | ● Develop a broad-scale study of user behavior to inform design of archival discovery systems | | Metrics & Institutions |
Appendix


SAA Section Feedback. (2017). Excel file provided to TF-CORDE by SAA Staff.


Software Preservation Research Framework
RLI 296 Radical Collaboration Special Issue of Research Library - Research Data Management

**Prior Member Feedback Received at SAA 2018:**
Figure 1. SAA 2018 attendee comments on the TF-CORDE Research Agenda. Available at https://drive.google.com/open?id=1kfZ9Bx2IBttnrMeqVD55V6pRBxS9KKTL

The comments received from attendees at SAA 2018 on the TF-CORDE’s research agenda provide important feedback on each of its five major categories. Below, Sarah Buchanan summarizes comments beside the category most relevant to the attendee’s concern.

- **Diversity and Demographics:** Institutional types. Mid-career progressions & entries (consider ageism). How many lone arrangers work without professional staff? Supporting small organizations (shifting statistics) per CLIR Hidden Collections; include government archives explicitly.

- **Metrics and Institutions:** Best teaching practices (for lone arrangers). “I’d like the ability / standard / benchmark to assess impact in a way that is also used by peers.” Impact metrics. Look at imbalances in approaching different domains of the archival profession. Clarify from measurement to action; what do our current descriptive standards miss and how does that affect our analysis? Redo
A*CENSUS, “sustainable” data about archives and archivists. Consider Data Rescue inventories and grants.

- **Maintenance, Sustainability, and Ethics**: The committee’s model (volunteer or paid staff? Source of funding). Data repositories for past surveys. Climate change.

- **Inclusive Collaboration**: Job descriptions and skill sets needed. Study archival users of traditional and digital data. Core competencies of accrediting agencies, distinguishing the archival uniqueness. Address the views of museum & library workers (and stop separating); use shared language and acknowledge shared goals. Build interdisciplinary work relating to the diversity, in which we are the experts. Comparative analysis of US, Canadian, UK, African, Slavic, Latinx archival practice (de-silo US theory). Computational archival science. Opportunities for public participation and engagement.

- **Audience Building**: Start archival high school & vocational technical programs. Advocacy. Record creators’ donations. For colleges & universities: think beyond the humanities. Publication trends, textual analysis of society’s public communications.