

SAA Standards Committee
Conference Call Minutes
March 31, 2009

Meeting started at 1:04 p.m. EST

In attendance: Lisa Carter, James Cassedy, Laura Drake Davis, Doris Malkmus, Mark Matienzo, Aprille McKay, Cory Nimer, Polly Reynolds, James Roth, Michael Rush, Gerald Stone, Sibyl Schaefer, Autumn Reinhardt Simpson, Margery Sly

I. UPDATES

- a. Annual meeting: Tuesday, August 11, 9am-5 pm (if additional time needed, Wednesday, August 12, 8-11 am).
- b. TSDS updates (Mike Rush):
 - i. Revised EAC working group charge--Council does need to vote. Mike will work on formal report to submit to Council for June report.
 - ii. Mike trying to get in touch with Kris Kiesling re: EAD revision in light of EAC-CPF. Margery suggested placing this update (if there is anything to report) in report for Council's June meeting.

II. REMISSION

- a. BACKGROUND. Polly brought the group up to speed on the remission efforts:
 - i. Conference call in December – went over roles and duties of the Standards Committee.
 - ii. Based on conference call feedback, Mike Rush and Polly Reynolds narrowed down the roles and duties and created two alternatives to propose to Council: a reactive mission statement and an active mission statement.
 - iii. January—circulated draft to Standards Committee and TSDS for review.
 - iv. In January, SAA Council referred several projects to the Standards Committee for review: Functions Thesaurus, Orphaned Works: Statement of Best Practices, and Deaccessioning Guidelines (See table). These proposals came at a good time because it brought up a number of questions about the Standards Committee mission and overall role in regard to various projects.
 - v. Submitted three reports to SAA Council for February meeting:
 1. Recommendation to Approve the Facilities Guidelines as an Official SAA Standard.
 2. Review of Standards Committee Mission and Procedures (summary: we feel it is important for the SC to have a more active role – but would need additional support from SAA).
 3. Standards Committee/TSDS Activities Report; EAC working group revised charge. And, outlined the three

different project proposals presenting Council with the issues: Who defines what a standard is? Who makes that determination? Procedures for non-standards? (i.e. best practices, guidelines)—should there be procedures? If not a standard, who supports/sustains such projects?

- b. COUNCIL REPORT. Margery Sly detailed the outcomes from the February Council meeting.
- i. First, SAA Council approved the Facilities Guidelines as an official SAA standard. Margery let Tom and Michele know that it was approved. The facilities guidelines will be published prior to the 2009 annual meeting. Decisions about working groups and ongoing maintenance have been tabled while the Standards Committee reviews its mission and procedures.
 - ii. Margery also discussed Council's decisions regarding the Standards Committee remission report: Essentially, Council supports a more proactive Standards Committee and would like more concrete details about a proactive committee in a report for their August meeting (report due in mid-July). Updates on our progress will also be necessary for Council's June meeting (report due in early May).
 1. Definitions of standard, guideline, best practice, thesauri. What is the Standards Committee responsible for? How should non-standards projects be handled?
 2. Proposed structure of the Standards Committee: Should there be groups by standard or by topic/subject (i.e. description, preservation).
 3. A process to maintain any standard (or best practice, guidelines, etc.) SAA adopts.
 4. Financial implications of expanded mission of committee and maintenance of standards adopted.
 5. Should we be called a Board or a committee?
 6. Any other issues as appropriate.
- c. DISCUSSION. Polly asked the group for broad discussion regarding some of these above issues to get a sense of the direction we are headed for the remission process. Her thought was to have a SC member or two assigned to each "issue" and report back to the group.
- i. Definitions of a standard, best practice, thesauri. The group indicated that definitions for these items would be needed before deciding where the Standards Committee's responsibilities would fall. Several individuals felt that the Standards Committee should have *some* line (i.e. we cannot take on every project that comes our way). We need to define that line clearly.
ACTION: Autumn Reinhardt Simpson volunteered to research the definitions. She will look at various sources including, the SAA Glossary of Archival Terminology, the Standards Committee website, other organizations, and other archival publications. Jim

Cassedy will look into the pros/cons of taking on other non-standards projects, like guidelines, best practices, etc. and research how other organizations handle non-standards.

- ii. Jumped into a discussion about our name: are we a board or a committee? Currently, SAA has two Boards: The Publications Board and the American Archivist Editorial Board. According to Margery, SAA does not have any clear definitions on the differences between the two, but a board might imply something more authoritative. Gerald Stone remarked that the internationally, standards organizations are referred to as committees, but the Canadian Standards Board is very formal (operating more like ISO or NISO). Many individuals felt that a Board would imply that we have a final say or have a role in the vetting and review process, which we do not (and is not something we are proposing to do). A quick vote was taken with the majority of conference call attendees voting for “committee” and a few attendees “on the fence.”

ACTION: it was concluded that we would report to Council that the general feeling was to remain a committee but would consider renaming to a board if it was decided upon further examination of our remission. Mike Rush will research definitions for committee and board.

- iii. The group also discussed the proposed structure of the Standards Committee with no real consensus on how to structure the committee. The group felt that descriptive standards are so broad and wide-reaching that working groups were necessary and should be kept. That is, it would be difficult to just have a broad description section that would be responsible for all of the descriptive standards. A couple of considerations were raised: 1. If we were going to be more proactive, perhaps subject-oriented groups would be able to better identify standards-related needs? 2. Financial implications of individual working groups. Also, some of these working groups have no turnover. Several individuals felt that some working groups should have an expiration date (perhaps working groups for best practices and guidelines with no long-term intent).

ACTION: Mike Rush volunteered to sketch out the Standards Committee structure. He will work with Polly and then we will pass the proposed structure to the committee for review and comment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:02 p.m. EST

Minutes submitted by Polly Reynolds, Chair, Standards Committee