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Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable

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Final version of mission statement?

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Renee_D View profile More options Aug 19 2009, 5:04 pm

Hi all--
I pulled together the ideas which were offered up, and this is what I've come up with:

"The Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable serves to encourage advocacy for and education about collections within public libraries of all sizes; to create an arena to discuss practice; and to foster relationships with other local cultural organizations."

Thoughts?
(If no one absolutely hates it then I'll go ahead and see about getting the petition set up.)
-Renee

Reply to author Forward

Judith Turner View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 1:13 am

Hi, Renee --

I'm guessing this was hammered out at SAA. If so, I wasn't there so I've no idea how the discussion went, or if there a length limitation I apologize if I'm retreading old ground and you're welcome to reject this suggestion.

However since I'm reading it as someone who's not been involved in any prior discussion, I'm like most people who'll see this once it's published. I think there needs to be a specification of the types of collections in the body of the mission statement.

For the sake of clarity I suggest adding : "archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy and other special" before the word collections. Public libraries have children's, YA, map, dvd, games, periodicals, maps and many other types of collections within their holdings. As the mission statement now stands readers will have to puzzle out which collections from the RT's name (and RT names don't always stay the same -- for example, 2 or 3 years after it was created, SAA's WPAIR became WAR.)

Otherwise, I think the mission statement is a good one -- concise and informative.

Judy Turner
Whitefish Bay, WI

Blogging at: http://alms-jact.blogspot.com/
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"The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning."
- Mark Twain in a letter to George Bainton, 10/15/1888

--- On Wed, 8/19/09, Renee_D <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

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Mary Koegel View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 8:35 am

I agree with you there, Judith. The part about the "collections" jumped out at me, as well, when I read it. Though, just to cover all grounds (and any given titles, including digital areas), perhaps it should read:

"...archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy, special and other related collections"

Just one more word to cover our butts - unless that makes it too broad (in my opinion, I think it's still distinguishable from all the other areas/collections/departments, and doesn't give the chance to potentially leave someone out now, or in the unforeseen future.

Otherwise, I like the mission statement!

~Mary Koegel

--- On Thu, 8/20/09, Judith Turner <judy53...@yahoo.com> wrote:

From: Judith Turner <judy53...@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: Final version of mission statement?
To: plasc_rt@googlegroups.com
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2009, 1:13 AM

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--- On Wed, 8/19/09, Renee_D <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

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Reply to author Forward Report spam Rate this post:

Renee DesRoberts View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 10:40 am

Hi all,
I actually wasn't at SAA, so I don't know if there was any discussion that went on there or not. (I'd like to think there was!) There had not been any other ideas or postings for a while so I just took the ideas that had been posted on this group and tried to smush (is that a word???) it all together in a way, just to keep things moving forward.

I totally agree that detailing the collections part is a great idea, so here is what it looks like at this moment:

"The Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable serves to encourage advocacy for and education about archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy, special and other related collections within public libraries of all sizes; to create an arena to discuss practice; and to foster relationships with other local cultural organizations."

What does everyone think?

Reply to author Forward

Mary Koegel View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 12:01 pm

I just had another thought (and I don't want to make this exceedingly complicated; I'm just a bit of a perfectionist at times) - but, in everyone's opinion - are "practice" and "application" the same thing? Specifically, I am referring to: "to create an arena to discuss practice" and wondering whether it should be "practice and application" (perhaps "practical application"?) or simply "application", or if "practice" is sufficient for our purposes?

Along those lines, do we even want to get INTO the issue of theory? I'm going to presume this is not a particular issue, since most of us seem to be focused on advocacy - but a thought.

One other quick thought, this mission statement seems sort of self-contained within practitioners (i.e. archivists, historians, librarians, et al.), and doesn't mention any concern for the patrons, or our relationship to/our concern for them. I guess the "relationships with local cultural organizations" sort of implies this, but it still seems a little more....ummm...institutionalized, I guess (I'm lacking a better word - sorry). Any thoughts?

~Mary Koegel

--- On Thu, 8/20/09, Renee DesRoberts <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

From: Renee DesRoberts <rdesrobe...@gmail.com>
Subject: Re: Final version of mission statement?
To: plasc_rt@googlegroups.com
Date: Thursday, August 20, 2009, 10:40 AM

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What does everyone think?

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Renee DesRoberts View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 2:35 pm

Could we not then just change it to say: "to create an arena for discussion;" ?

I'm not sure how to fix the other stuff your talking about. What do you propose?

Reply to author Forward

Valerie_W View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 2:59 pm

Hello everyone:

I wasn't at SAA so I can't comment on the prior discussion. The revised mission statement is coming along great with everyone comments. To answer your question, I did a quick thesaurus search and "practice" can mean perform, put in practice and apply. "Application" may also mean purpose, relevance. So the terms are not alike.

I would think that the roundtable would not want to get to theory because we are dealing with real time situations in the the public libraries.

One other comment. I'm not to sold on relationships with other cultural institutions. Shouldn't our focus remain on the special collections within the public libraries? Isn't this what SAA/ALA/AAM does?

I agree with Mary's comment about patrons. After all, we are here for them!

On Aug 20, 12:01 pm, Mary Koegel <ny2ky2h...@yahoo.com> wrote:

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Renee_D View profile More options Aug 20 2009, 3:10 pm

Well said, all. So how do you propose we say this?

(Also, I was looking at other roundtable mission statements, and they are all very brief. Do we have to follow that model or are we allowed to go where we want with it? Anyone know?)

Reply to author Forward

Judith Turner View profile More options Aug 21 2009, 12:10 am

Personally, I like the term practice, as in best practice or recommended practice. It bridges the area between theory and the local or individual applications. One major activity of the Roundtable will be to hold a meeting during SAA's Annual Meeting. Part of the allocated time is for a a business meeting but most is for a mini-workshop or panel presentation on a timely topic of interest to the RT membership. In practice these are often RT-proposed sessions that were turned down by the Program Committee.

Unless the SAA guidelines specifically set a limit on the number of words in a mission statement, I think the group is free to write as much or as little as needed. Some statements are quite short but those often belong to older RT's that probably did not have a mission statement until SAA began requiring them. SAA got more business-like about roundtables as a result of a late 90's task force report that criticized the informal and haphazard nature of all the parts of the organization. Since then SAA leadership has reinforced existing guidelines, instituted new ones and began enforcing them more rigorously.

Newer RT's like Records Management have fairly long mission statements (I found theirs under About Us on their web site.) Interestingy, there does not seem to be a standard place where the mission statements appear. Some are on the SAA web site under Groups - Roundtables but others are on the RT's own web site.

As far as services to patrons go, that could certainly be the focus of workshops, conference sessions, newsletter and web-site articles but since all archives provide services to patrons, it's not necessary to spell it out in this group's mission statement. Also there are units specifically involved with Reference and Outreach which are open to members working in any type of archives. The mission statement needs to focus on what makes the public library archives roundtable unique.

SAA's guidelines for roundtables detail what must be in the mission statement. Each of the headings indicated by a capital letter must be addressed, the paragraphs under each explain what the headings mean :

Guidelines for SAA Roundtables

I. MISSION STATEMENT

A. Serve as Advocate for Interest Around Which the Roundtable Is Formed

Roundtables focus attention on and give voice to the concerns that form the Roundtable's particular areas of interest. Roundtables function as communities of interest engaged in generating ideas and meeting the intellectual interests of the membership in areas of topical interest. They focus expertise and interest in the professional functions and responsibilities to carry out the archival profession's mission to identify, administer, and promote the use of records of enduring value.

B. Encourage and Provide Communication

Roundtables provide a forum for members to discuss matters of interest within the body. They also provide channels of communication from the Roundtable to the membership of the Society and to the Council on matters of concern to the Roundtable. As Roundtables may exist as online communities, communication may take place in the form of Roundtable electronic discussion groups.

C. Perform Work

Roundtables provide mechanisms for members to initiate activities of common

interest and also review material referred to them by the Council for comment or action. Roundtables can formulate specific projects, for which task forces would be created to execute the projects. Roundtables give and institutionalize opportunity for members to focus, on a longer term basis and in a national forum, on specific matters of practical interest.

D. Integrate New Members

Roundtables provide a vital mechanism for new and prospective SAA members to become active in the work of the Society and for meeting members with common interests. Roundtables provide new members a chance to participate and to contribute to the work of the group and the Society.

Although it is expected that the core of a Roundtable is composed of Individual members of SAA, anyone may belong to a Roundtable. Because of this, Roundtables play a unique and significant role in recruiting new members to the Society. Roundtables are therefore required to compile records of attendance at the Annual Meeting on forms provided by the SAA Executive Office; these will be used by the SAA Executive Office for outreach purposes and to monitor the overall effectiveness of Roundtables in attracting new members to the Society.

E. Develop Leadership

The Roundtables offer opportunities to their members to take leadership in working with and for their colleagues. Through the years, a considerable number of the elected and appointed positions within SAA have been filled by persons who began their leadership roles in Roundtables.

Judy Turner
Whitefish Bay, WI

Blogging at: http://alms-jact.blogspot.com/
and
http://judyct.wordpress.com/

--- On Thu, 8/20/09, Renee_D <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

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Discussion subject changed to "SAA 2009 meeting and PL Archives RT" by Judit

Judith Turner View profile More options Aug 21 2009, 1:01 am

Was anybody at the proposed get-together at SAA? I ask because the comments on the mission statement have all been prefaced by the disclaimer that the respondent wasn't there.

It would be very helpful if someone could share notes of what was discussed. Assuming a group of people got together and talked about organizing this RT, I think we need to hear from them before finalizing anything.

If the get-together fizzled in Austin's heat or people found more compelling things to do, it would be good to know.

Judy

Reply to author Forward Report spam Rate this post:

Mary Koegel View profile More options Aug 21 2009, 9:20 am

I concur - it does seem that, if anyone was there, they either aren't acknowledging it, aren't participating online, or haven't gotten through all their emails yet since

they got back. I mean, I know I couldn't make it to Austin, which is why I can't keep my mouth shut. ;)

Thank you for posting the guidelines, Judith. I didn't think to look at those. But reading over those, I guess maybe serving patrons and their involvement is sort of inherent, as it would me in the great majority of sections & RTs. To be honest, I mentioned that because it was something that popped into my head, but I wasn't really sure how to address it.

As for the "relationships with other cultural institutions;" in my mind, that speaks to something I mentioned earlier on (and goes beyond, as well; though perhaps we could hone it a bit if it causes confusion...) - that not all public libraries have a special collections, local history, genealogy section, or [fill-in-the-blank] department, so perhaps we should seek to foster relationships (i.e. awareness) between those types of public libraries & available local resources. It doesn't always happen when a patron goes looking for something - again, like genealogical resources or other similar "old stuff" - and the reference staff may or may not point them in the right direction (i.e. the special collections located at local university; historical society; or even just the local courthouse/county clerk).

Anyway, this was just my stint at explaining the rest of the questions I missed (and I felt involved me) overnight. But, I agree, I'd definitely like to hear/see discussion of the meeting - even an casual layout would be okay for me, if formal minutes haven't been all typed up & prepared yet. It might shut me up a little ;)

Thanks.

~Mary

--- On Fri, 8/21/09, Judith Turner <judy53...@yahoo.com> wrote:

From: Judith Turner <judy53...@yahoo.com>
Subject: SAA 2009 meeting and PL Archives RT
To: plasc_rt@googlegroups.com
Date: Friday, August 21, 2009, 1:01 AM

Was anybody at the proposed get-together at SAA? I ask because the comments on the mission statement have all been prefaced by the disclaimer that the respondent wasn't there.

It would be very helpful if someone could share notes of what was discussed. Assuming a group of people got together and talked about organizing this RT, I think we need to hear from them before finalizing anything.

If the get-together fizzled in Austin's heat or people found more compelling things to do, it would be good to know.

Judy

Reply to author Forward Report spam Rate this post:

Discussion subject changed to "Final version of mission statement?" by Noah Ler

Noah Lenstra View profile More options Aug 21 2009, 9:24 am

Hello,

Sorry for not chiming in earlier - I just wanted to give some context to this discussion. At the SAA 2009 meeting Council decided to change the ways roundtables operate. Henceforth, roundtables will be given a very large degree of autonomy in how they function and organize. The idea is that roundtables will largely self-organize with a modicum of institutional support. I don't disagree with what Mr. Turner has said

- I am just reporting on what I heard from a council liason at the SAA 2009 meeting, indicating that perhaps the balance has swung back to a more informal, haphazard age of roundtables in SAA. Furthermore, SAA abolished the member requirement for roundtables. You no longer need 50 active members to maintain a roundtable - although you still need the same number as ever on the petition to get the roundtable going. In other words, I would say don't sweat the details!

Noah

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Renee_D View profile More options Aug 21 2009, 11:38 am

Thanks, Noah, for filling us in.
I feel like we're getting a little off track by debating this stuff so intensely before we even exist.
Can't we have our preliminary, basic statement just to get things moving, and then folks interested in doing so can refine it if/when we actually get off the ground?

-Renee

Reply to author Forward

Judith Turner View profile More options Aug 23 2009, 1:42 am

The guidelines currently posted on the SAA website were revised in June 2009 -- they haven't been changed to reflect whatever Council approved during the Annual Meeting in Austin. Getting the PLA roundtable established may be stuck in neutral right now no matter how much enthusiasm there is for proceeding.

A petition to be recognized as a roundtable is more pressing than finalizing a mission statement. However, as the guidelines currently stand a mission statement is succinct way of expressing much of the information that can be explained more fully in the petition.

So the question is, how much have the latest revisions effected the petition document. Noah said the process is still in place. A person could keep checking the SAA website for a revision dated August 2009 (which is all I can do since I'm no longer a member of SAA). Another possibility is for an SAA member to contact the SAA Office and request a copy of the Aug. 2009 revision of the Guidelines for Roundtables. A third way is to assume SAA is not going to change its requirements for information in and accompanying the petition.

In any case I think it would be a good idea to contact a few roundtables created under the older guidelines and request copies of their petitions to use as models. Two recent RT's that I know of are the Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Archives Roundtable and the Records Management Roundtable. With those two petitions as a guide, the PLA roundtable petition should be able to meet all the requirements specified in the guidelines.

Once Brian Doyle posts the petition on the SAA site, everybody in the group should be ready to pitch in and contact their friends and colleagues who are SAA members and ask them to sign it (signatures are verified by SAA membership numbers unless that's changed, too.) People who sign the petition are not necessarily committing to join the RT, they are just agreeing that it is needed.

And thanks to Noah for the info from Austin -- it's good to hear SAA Council has returned to a more reasonable stance towards roundtables. I chuckled when I read hi message because it only took a couple of minutes of perusing the various RT pages on the SAA site to realize that Council hasn't been enforcing its guidelines for things as basic as mission statements and leadership structure. I wonder how they intended to enforce the requirement about active members, a much less objective measure, imo. (BTW, Noah -- in you last message I hope Mr.

was a typo? For the record, it's Ms. or Mrs., my son and my husband are the Mr. Turners. But I prefer the informal Judy and find it easier to remember first names and spell them correctly than last names.

In any case, I best go back to being an observer whose role is to share info with public librarians and others. However, I also know a fair number of SAA members locally and around the U.S. so I'll be happy to nudge people to sign the petition once that's ready.

Judy Turner
Whitefish Bay, WI

Blogging at: http://alms-jact.blogspot.com/
and
http://judyct.wordpress.com/

"The difference between the almost right word & the right word is really a large matter--it's the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning." - Mark Twain in a letter to George Bainton, 10/15/1888

--- On Fri, 8/21/09, Renee_D <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

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Noah Lenstra View profile More options Aug 23 2009, 12:02 pm

Hi all

Good points! I actually dug up the agenda frmo the SAA 2009 meeting. Here is the relevant part about roundtables/section governance:
http://www.archivists.org/council/Council0809/0809-1-II-G-SectRTGov.pdf

As you can see, it's not a full-fledged return to a "wild" approach to roundtable governance, but as the language shows -- "Section X.V.D. of the Council Handbook establishes that “it was never the desire in creating Roundtables to establish bodies that spend more time on the structure of doing business than on the discussion of archival issues within their fields of activity” -- there was a desire behind this council decision to give roundtables more autonomy in how they self-organize. A council member told me more informally that the decision extended to consider aspects of meeting location, with some council members advocating for roundtables to meet off-site (both to save costs and to make the roundtables more informal).

Second, here is the statement of purpose for the Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Roundtable, I believe the newest roundtable in existence:
http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/laccha/pdfs/LACCHAstatementpurpos...

This is a good model, because according to the Council bylaws roundtable applications require: a petition to include signatures of at least 50 SAA members, a publishable statement of purpose and goals of the Roundtable, and a statement indicating why a separate Roundtable would be advantageous to the Society. (see http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section10.asp)

I guess, then, one way I would recommend moving forward is instead of concentrating on the details of the mission statement we instead focus on the goals statement and a statement on why there is a "gap" in the SAA organization that our roundtable will fill. Then we could go back and tighten up the details on the mission statement proper based on the goals and gap we've identified. Just a thought....

Here are some goals I would like to see the roundtable take on:

1) To establish liasons with the Public Library Association (and related sub-committees) within the American Library Association to advocate for the need for archives and special collections within American public libraries.
2) To create a forum in which public library archivists and related professionals can share best practices, job openings and related questions and concerns through:
a) the establishment of an open listserv advertised not only to members of SAA but to members of ALA, AASLH and related professional bodies
b) annual meetings with programs and speakers relevant to public library archives and special collections
3) To publish an annual newsletter featuring news from the field. The goal of the newsletter will be to create a shared community around public library archives and special collections
4) To serve as a voice for public library archivists within the Society of American Archivists by working with extant sections, committees and roundtables to ensure that the knowledge, concerns and opinions of public library archivists are incorporated into SAA annual program meetings, publications and research.

Noah

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Carolyn View profile More options Aug 25 2009, 9:40 am

Hello,

This is an interesting topic and discussion and speaks right-on to the kinds of considerations that a modest local history archives, like the one for which I am the volunteer archivist (150+ linear feet), must be making as we consider the future. There are always present the challenges of limited funds, volunteer staffing, and archivist succession. At the same time, we continue the mission of collecting and preserving important local history (it's still being thrown out!), following best archival practices, and making the collection available one day a week and by appointment to the public for research, study and our own exhibits. The town (of 2000 inhabitants) has begun a long-range planning process to expand the town hall and enlarge the public library and has asked the archives for input of our needs.

We had responded to the town (before seeing this discussion) that a dedicated space for our entire collection in the library would have significant advantages for both the archives (space and access) and the library (related and expanded services to patrons). However, any splitting of the collection between locations, in order to gain some space, would adversely affect both efficiency of management and the integrity of the archival collection. Even if the entire collection was housed in the library, we are concerned about the differences in central purpose and in management and operations between the archives and the libraries. I think that a special collection/ archives would have the more difficult time maintaining its institutional standards and style than would the public library.

Thus, at the very least, "special" should be added before "collections" to signify that integration or co-locating is not a simple act but rather needs very careful consideration of advantages and disadvantages. Better yet, at this stage, to keep the range of potential consideration on the table, a more complete list of the types of special collections that we know exist should be added before "collection" along the lines of Julie Turner's suggestion.

I have just discovered the roundtable. My apologies if these comments are going over already covered ground in your discussion.

Carolyn Bacdayan
Lyme, CT

On Aug 19, 5:04 pm, Renee_D <rdesrobe...@gmail.com> wrote:

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Reply to author Forward Report spam Rate this post:

Valerie_W View profile More options Aug 25 2009, 6:50 pm

Hello everyone:

Thanks Noah for getting us the information so quickly. It does appear that we have enough information to start working on a statement of purpose. We are going to need this to generate enthusiasm for the Roundtable and to get those 50 signatures! It would be a very good idea to establish a working relationship with other roundtables. The following could be added to our statement of purpose. Taking a cue from the Latin American and Caribbean Cultural Heritage Roundtable:

To serve as a strong complement to two established SAA roundtables: Lone Arrangers Roundtable and the Security Roundtable
a.
To fully support and participate in the work of the Lone Arrangers Roundtable and the Security Roundtable

b.
To create collaborative projects among the three groups.

Carolyn, you have provided an excellent example of the challenges an institution faces as it seeks to establish a Special collections within the public library environment.

So, what's our next step?

Valerie

On Aug 23, 12:02 pm, Noah Lenstra <nlens...@gmail.com> wrote:

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End of messages

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