

**Society of American Archivists
Council Strategic Planning Session
January 24 – 25, 2013
Chicago, Illinois**

Member Comments on Strategic Priorities / Directions
(Compiled by Nancy Beaumont)

The following Call for Member Comments was issued to the Leader List on November 30 and December 12, 2012, and to all members via *In The Loop* on December 4 and December 18, 2012, and January 3, 2013. Council members also referred to this call in their contacts with Sections and Roundtables to encourage their direct participation and/or re-distribution of the call.

SAA Leaders:

During our January 23–26 meeting the Council will spend about eight hours discussing the external environment for archives and archivists and the capacities of our community and professional organization(s) to deal with the challenges and opportunities presented by that environment – all as part of our review and revision of SAA’s strategic priorities. Although we plan to provide several opportunities for member feedback after our strategic planning session (including a forum at the 2013 Joint Annual Meeting), we know that we would benefit significantly from ***your*** feedback in advance of our initial planning session.

To that end, we invite your ideas, comments, suggestions, etc., and particularly your responses to one or both of the following questions:

- What are SAA’s major opportunities over the next 2-3 years and what major challenges must we address to take advantage of those opportunities?
- Where should SAA focus its time and resources to be as effective and useful as possible?

To view SAA’s current strategic priorities: <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/strategic-priorities>.

You’re welcome to provide your feedback to your group’s Council liaison, to me (dooleyj@oclc.org), to Nancy Beaumont in the SAA office (nbeaumont@archivists.org), or by “replying all” to this Leader List. The important thing is that you **share your ideas by January 15, 2013**, so that we can consider them during our planning session.

We hope to hear from you. Happy Holidays!

Jackie Dooley
SAA President, 2012-2013

12/3/12: Colleen McFarland

Thanks for your invitation to submit ideas regarding SAA's strategic priorities. What I have to say will not be news to you, I am sure, but I do appreciate the opportunity to contribute.

SAA's greatest opportunity and threat are one in the same: the entry of the millennial generation into the profession. These young archivists bring tremendous energy and passion to the profession. Unfortunately, they are also bringing tremendous anger and resentment with them. How can SAA harness that energy and passion to promote archives and the work of SAA? Recent discussions on the blogs and on twitter reveal hostility levels that could very well rip SAA apart and prevent the organization from functioning.

It seems that a sense of powerlessness is fueling the hostility, and in many respects the young generation is powerless against the economic climate in which they find themselves. However, the young folks also seem to have an unrealistic idea of the power of archivists anywhere, anytime, at any stage in their careers. I can't tell you how many times I've thought of returning to a career in librarianship because librarians have much more clout than archivists! Anyway, one of our biggest challenges will be to convince the millennials that we really are all in the same boat, and that we need to work together to advocate for archival programs.

As for practical ideas on how to reach this goal:

- (1) Change the SAA bylaws so that SNAP is able to appoint one member to SAA Council to represent students and new professionals.
- (2) Offer reduced conference and workshop fees for the unemployed and underemployed. This would have to be means tested, which always gets a little ugly (nobody likes to document that they are indeed poor), and there would have to be a good definition of underemployed, but I think we could work that out.
- (3) Work really, really hard to counter the "rock-star archivist" mentality that seems so popular with SAA members right now. We are all rock stars, or none of us is a rock star. Unfortunately, the millennials really seem to like the celebrity archivist concept, even though it fundamentally opposes efforts to make SAA more of a community rather than a place to see and be seen with the rock stars.
- (4) Invite SNAP to develop a "So you want to be an archivist" guide for students for the SAA Web page. My hope is that they would temper their comments and write about what is good and bad about the profession in a professional and mature way when asked to represent SAA and take responsibility for what they write. This could, of course, backfire and get really ugly, and I don't know the SNAP folks well enough to gauge what their response would be.

As for the focus of SAA in the coming years, advocacy, advocacy, advocacy!

[Colleen McFarland, Director of Archives and Records Management, Mennonite Church USA]

12/3/12: Jennifer Schaffner

Hands down, I believe the most important thing SAA will do in the next four years will be to work with the ICA on data models and the conceptual model of archival description. As was said in the last session in San Diego, this is the great work to be done, especially for discovery: the change from document-based

presentation to description and discovery based on data. Four years because that is the time frame for the ICA committee leading this work internationally.

Thanks for asking, Jennifer [Jennifer Schaffner, Program Officer, OCLC Research Library Partnership]

12/7/12: Mott Linn and Sheryl Williams (in response to message to Archives Management RT Steering Committee):

Mott Linn: To me, the advocacy area should be the top priority. Given the economy, now more than ever archives need to prove their value to their parent organization/stakeholders. SAA needs to help with this in any way it can (I know this is not always easy, but it is critical).

Sheryl Williams: I agree with Mott.

[Dr. Mott R. Linn, Jr., CA, Head of Collections Management, Robert Hutchings Goddard Library, Clark University]

12/10/12: Tim Gladson (in response to message to Science, Technology, and Health Care Roundtable Steering Committee)

Just a few thoughts on the Strategic Planning:

1. Education/professional development is hidden in the Strategic Priorities (digital curation in #1 and Mosaic scholarships in #2); please encourage offering more workshops, on more topics, in more geographic locations, at more times of the year.
2. I'm all for public advocacy and awareness. However, I'm always afraid that SAA might eventually start issuing policy statements on tangential or non-archival issues, like some other organizations. I encourage Council to ensure that all SAA policy statements really are about archives, and reflect a true consensus within the profession.

Thank you. [Tim Gladson, Librarian, Geothermal Resources Council]

12/12/12: Jody DeRidder

What are SAA's major opportunities over the next 2-3 years and what major challenges must we address to take advantage of those opportunities?

SAA has the opportunity to become THE professional organization and educational source for those in libraries, museums, and cultural heritage institutions who manage digital content, whether born-digital or digitized, on limited resources and with limited training. This includes digital librarians, an audience you have not yet fully tapped.

Where should SAA focus its time and resources to be as effective and useful as possible?

Realize the gamut of limitations of your audience, and the tremendous challenges before them. A huge number of your members need support and solutions ranging from what can/should be done with no technical expertise and no funding, to tremendous technical expertise/support and plenty of funding. All areas of special collections are impacted, from acquisition through processing and description on to preservation and conservation. The digital realm is confusing, overwhelming, and unstable.

I would strongly recommend a series of free online training webinars addressing different levels of expertise, different levels of funding/resources, for managing digital content. Do surveys to ensure the focus and level of the webinars will meet the needs of as many of your members as possible. Each webinar should address one area, such as accessioning. There is no way that the majority of your audience is going to get most of their needs met from an annual meeting or training they can't afford. Record the webinars and archive them, allowing free access to members later as well. Follow up each webinar with discussions on listserves of related sections and roundtables.

[Jody L. DeRidder, Head, Digital Services, University of Alabama Libraries, Tuscaloosa]

12/12/12: Maija Anderson

What are SAA's major opportunities over the next 2-3 years and what major challenges must we address to take advantage of those opportunities?

--Address generational change in the profession. SAA needs to support archivists in each generation, at every stage of their careers. In the past year or two, I've seen well-intentioned efforts to reach out to young/early-career archivists, but for SAA to remain relevant, this should become a strategic priority, not just an outreach effort. I think that the needs of the elder generation of archivists who have not yet retired (whether by choice or necessity) are similarly overlooked.

--Adjust to the reality that members have dwindling opportunities to participate in traditional professional activities, such as attending national conferences. Recognize that this isn't just a financial issue, but also relates to our membership's changing demographics and values. To be relevant, inclusive, and diverse, SAA needs to support archivists who can't participate in traditional professional development activities.

Where should SAA focus its time and resources to be as effective and useful as possible?

--Strengthen relationships with local/regional archives organizations, and with student organizations/chapters.

--Work with SAA leaders to create inexpensive (free?) and accessible professional development programs

--Promote and support the idea that there are many ways to participate in SAA, and that full participation doesn't require attending the annual meeting.

--Make annual meeting content more accessible to those who can't actually attend.

-- Continue to reach out to emerging archivists and students. Ask them what they want from SAA, rather than just informing them of what SAA can do for them.

[Maija Anderson, MA, MLIS, Head, Historical Collections & Archives/Assistant Professor, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland]

12/18/12: J. Gordon Daines III

I thought I'd take a couple of minutes to pass my ideas on what SAA's strategic priorities should be for the next several years while I have a few free moments. I believe that SAA should have the following strategic priorities:

1. *Education/Publication*

- a. Archivists are confronted with a rapidly changing environment and many of us have been out of school for several years. SAA needs to focus on developing more continuing education offerings that will help practicing archivists deal with the challenges they face. The DAS program is an excellent model and I believe that similar programs should be developed on: Management, Advocacy, and Descriptive standards to name a few. This is an area where SAA should take the lead.
- b. I also believe SAA needs to be more proactive in helping to define the graduate archival curriculum. It is time to take the bull by the horns and invest time and energy in accrediting archival programs.
- c. The Publications program needs to continue to innovate and look for new ways to deliver content to archivists. They also need to be integrated with the continuing education offerings.

2. *Technology*

- a. This will continue to be an ongoing challenge and SAA needs to continue to lead out in providing archivists with information about how to deal with new technologies.

3. *Diversity*

- a. SAA is slowly becoming more diverse and this is a good thing. We need to figure out how to accelerate the process because diversity brings new perspectives and forces us to think deeply about what we do and why.

I hope these quick thoughts are helpful. I'll let you know if I think of anything else. I feel really strongly about SAA making Education a priority.

[J. Gordon Daines III, University Archivist, Assistant Department Chair, Manuscripts, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University]

12/21/12: Alison Harper Stankrauff

Basically I was stressing – in addition to the current Strategic Priorities (which I think are all key and important) – that I felt that considerations for the annual meeting were important. Namely:

- Location: The idea of SAA holding its annual meeting in so-called 'second tier' cities. To be open to having the annual meeting at a conference center that has hotels around it; that this would allow SAA members to have a greater choice as to price point and also to avoid any potential labor dispute issues that any one hotel might be struggling with.
- Time: That earlier in the Summer – rather than the late August that has been used in several of the most recent years – is most likely in everyone's interests. And that late August is very inconvenient to academic archivists – and we comprise such a heavy set of the SAA membership.

[Alison Harper Stankrauff, Archivist and Associate Librarian, Franklin D. Schurz Library, Indiana University South Bend]

1/3/13: Leigh McWhite, Chair, Congressional Papers Roundtable

I believe the lack of response to SAA's earlier query about strategic planning derived from a typical rush on everyone's part to complete normal business activities before the holiday break. In addition, CPR just completed a multi-year strategic planning process of its own, and we may be suffering from a bit of fatigue on the subject!

Perhaps the place to begin any discussion on SAA/CPR should begin with our 2012 CPR Strategic Plan

document: <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/CPR%20Strategic%20Plan%202012.pdf> .

One of the obvious points of interaction noted in the document under Strategic Priority: Advocacy as Desired Outcome #1, Measurable Activity A is the Government Affairs Working Group. However, we have already worked with you on this matter, and I am pleased to report that a representative of GAWG will be part of a CPR advocacy program in New Orleans.

Perhaps Strategic Priority: Diversity, Desired Outcome 1, Measurable Activities A & B offer other opportunities for SAA assistance by helping us to determine diversity composition across the board in the organization's roundtables and sections.

With regards to Strategic Priority: Technology, SAA could provide help by offering training and other resources on managing electronic records. It could also put some effort into helping us advocate with NHPRC, NARA, and the Library of Congress to create grant opportunities or programs that will help repositories acquire needed equipment, labor, and training to support electronic records in congressional collections (Desired Outcome #3, Measurable Activity C).

Aside from our strategic plan, the Steering Committee responded late last year to a query from the SAA Annual Meeting Task Force with the attached document which includes the statement that "CPR would benefit greatly if SAA could provide accommodations for our more extensive programming beyond the business meeting."

Of course, these are only my own thoughts, and I certainly invite others on the Steering Committee to share theirs as well.

[Leigh McWhite, Political Papers Archivist and Associate Professor, University of Mississippi]

1/4/13: Jack Kormos

I'm writing because I read about SAA's strategic priorities in the most recent "In the Loop" e-mail, and I thought I'd share my ideas about them, as the e-mail requested. Having looked at the current strategic priorities, the two things that I thought could supplement them are: a focus on

education of the archives community - not only with respect to electronic records, but across all areas of the profession. I think it's crucial that archivists continue to be up-to-date on changes in the field and be aware of what their colleagues are doing throughout the profession.

The other thing that I thought would be useful as a strategic priority is a focus on the management of the ever-increasing volume of records that are being created. From my experience, archival collections are not what they used to be, and it seems like archivists need to adjust how they do things to accommodate this increase in volume. This includes not only methods of appraisal and processing, but also issues involving access, storage and de-accessioning.

[Jack Kormos, CA, Wisconsin Historical Society]

1/14/13: Brett Carnell, Chair, Visual Materials Section

Hi, Michelle,

Sorry for waiting until the last minute to get back to you. For some reason it is always hard for me to answer "how can we help you" questions though it is really nice to be asked. It seems like most of what we do in the Visual Materials section is directed to the section membership and as a whole they are fairly pleased.

In early December I emailed each of the almost 700 members of the section individually to ask them what our section could do for them and to ask them to volunteer to serve on committees, help with projects, etc. I heard back from just under 100 of them and what the respondents said is that they are quite happy with Section activities. One thing that came up a number of times was some members wanted more help for students and unemployed archivists to attend annual meetings. This response may have been elicited from some language in my email asking people whether we should have a committee to look into funding various initiatives including help with travel to SAA.

A few other thoughts from me and the VM Section steering committee members:

SAA has some helpful information about teleconferencing on its website but if SAA could set up, fund and maintain a teleconferencing protocol for section and roundtable meetings, for steering committees, standing committees, appointed committees and midwinter meetings that would be helpful. It appears that for now each group that wants to teleconference has to figure it out for themselves.

Several sections have initiatives related to electronic records underway. A central framework provided by SAA to coordinate and facilitate the work would be helpful, especially if it provided a means of networking documents and ideas. Right now this work is fragmented.

Additional financial and logistical support from SAA to help conduct annual and midwinter meetings would be helpful.

SAA could provide some templates to help describe various types of volunteer work that could be adapted by sections. For example, every time a Section chair wants to create a working group or committee or appoint a liaison or committee member s/he needs to write some sort of mission statement or job description so that people know what they are supposed to do. In the past the VM Section did not have such documents but would have some generic language in the three-year plan, but usually not enough and committees frequently floundered because it wasn't clear what they could/should do. We appointed liaisons but we didn't have a written statement of what the liaisons were supposed to do. We are working on this now but it would be good if SAA had a way that we could "bank" these for adaptation by other Sections. This would also help sections know what kind of work the other sections are doing. (This should be an optional activity for Sections, not mandatory.)

One of SAA's initiatives is to increase diversity but as far as I know there is no way to tell how diverse the section membership is. It would be good if SAA came up with some strategies that sections could use to increase their diversity. It's possible that by working through Sections with more directed interests the sections could help draw a greater diversity of people into SAA.

Hope these suggestions help.

[Brett Carnell, Visual Materials Section Chair]