

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS

AMERICAN ARCHIVES MONTH

OCTOBER 2009



Celebrating the American Record

PUBLIC RELATIONS KIT

"THE MYSTIC CHORDS OF MEMORY, STRETCH . . . FROM EVERY . . .
LIVING HEART AND HEARTHSTONE . . . ALL OVER THIS BROAD LAND."

~ ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS,
MARCH 4, 1861

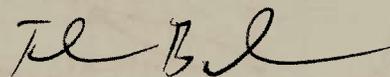
CELEBRATE THE AMERICAN RECORD!

President Lincoln's eloquent reference to "the mystic chords of memory" resonates today as we celebrate the importance of archives. The American record has enduring value and America's archives—in all their diversity of form and function—serve as its memory.

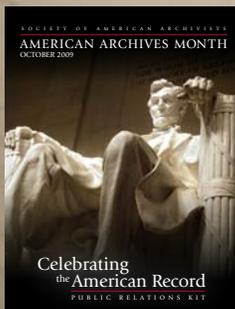
AMERICAN ARCHIVES MONTH is an opportunity "all over this broad land" to raise awareness about the value of archives—and archivists. This *2009 American Archives Month Public Relations Kit* provides basic materials that we hope you will adapt to make your own archives program more visible and more appreciated.

There is strength in numbers and our collective voice can be more powerful than individual voices. Set aside time throughout October—and throughout the year—to "Celebrate the American Record" using the tips and tools provided in this kit (and online at www.archivists.org/archivesmonth).

Just imagine the impact that our combined efforts can have on public awareness about the *mystic* power of archives!



Frank Boles
SAA President, 2008–2009



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SAA gratefully acknowledges Declan McCullagh for the use of his beautiful photograph on the cover of this kit and on the 2009 American Archives Month Poster; the Cincinnati Museum Center (<http://library.cincymuseum.org/lincolnoriginals.htm>) for use of the images of the two presidential ballots and the Lincoln mourning ribbon on page 6 of this kit and on the 2009 American Archives Month Poster; the Council of State Archivists for its commitment to maintaining the Archives Week/Month directory and poster gallery on its website (www.statearchivists.org); the Archivists Roundtable of Metropolitan New York and the New England Archivists for their early work to launch Archives Week; the SAA Reference, Access, and Outreach Section; SAA's American Archives Month Task Force; and the many archivists who have taken the time and expended the energy to help make an impact on the public's awareness of archives and archivists.



Go to www.archivists.org/archivesmonth
for more ideas, tips, and resources.

COMMUNICATION PLANNING 101

Your initial steps in celebrating the American record involve developing a communication plan. Here are three simple questions that you should answer in the process of preparing your plan.

Who?

The **target audience** (the “who”) is the group of individuals whose thinking or behavior (or both) you want to influence. Most archives have a range of potential audiences. You could decide to mount a broad effort to make American Archives Month reach as many people as possible, or you could select a cluster of individuals (e.g., policy makers, resource allocators, high school students, or even staff within your own institution). Begin by identifying all potential audiences, then narrow your list to one or two priorities. Be as specific as possible, because this improves the chances of creating a meaningful and powerful message that is likely to catch the attention of your target audience.

What?

The **message** (the “what”) is the key information or idea(s) that may serve to influence the target audience’s thinking or behavior. This is the hard part—and it’s all about keeping it simple. A simple message is more likely to be memorable. For more ideas to get you started, see “Say What? Talking Points on the Value of Archives” at www.archivists.org/archivesmonth.

How?

And the **medium** (the “how”) is the method used to communicate the message to the target audience. Consider what will be the most effective way to present your key message(s) to your key audience(s). When thinking of mediums, consider how your repository’s website, blast email, wikis, blogs, Facebook, Twitter, and FlickrR can help you get your message out to broader, newer, and younger audiences. And don’t forget about the potential impact of traditional media (newspapers, newsletters, magazines), as well as paid ads, a good old-fashioned letter, a keynote address or session at a community or professional meeting, or a presentation to a local high school class.



Say What? Talking Points on the Value of Archives

Imagine yourself on an elevator with a friendly stranger who innocently inquires what you do for a living. You say with enthusiasm, “I’m an archivist!” The stranger gives you “that” blank look and you know she’s thinking, “Say what?” Seizing the opportunity to evangelize, and knowing there are precious few seconds left before the elevator arrives at your floor, you eloquently explain your professional calling....

Lisa Lewis took her boss’s advice and entered SAA’s “Best Elevator Speech” Contest conducted in celebration of American Archives Month 2007. The associate archivist for the Catholic Diocese of Baton Rouge says it was easy to compose her 28-word entry because she had already developed a simple explanation to help anyone who is unfamiliar with the profession to understand what she does for a living.

Her winning entry:

“Archivists bring the past to the present. They’re records collectors and protectors, keepers of memory. They organize unique, historical materials, making them available for current and future research.”

Honorable mention honors went to Jacquelyn Ferry of the Wisconsin Historical Society for her entry:

Archivists acquire, manage, preserve, and help patrons identify and use historically significant collections of unique materials, such as government records, manuscripts, photographs, films, and sound recordings.

Your repository probably already does outreach. But does it tell the broader story of archives and archivists? Add to your ongoing efforts some

simple language that describes what an archivist is, who uses archives, why archives are important, and what archivists do.

Lisa and Jacquelyn give you permission to use their “elevator speeches” for starters!

Here are some other talks:

- In the course of daily organizations, and keep information: Archivists are professional collectors, organizers, and provide a this information: Archivists keep value as reliable they help people information.
- These records are kept, are records, take corresponding documents, recordings.

How To Know If Something Is Newsworthy

If you would like to pitch a story to a news outlet, you need to know what makes a story newsworthy. Here are some guidelines to help you decide if your story is newsworthy.

• The story is generally considered important by the community.

• The story is of a significant nature.

Photo Op:

Keep in mind that a picture can trigger “the mystic chords of memory” and help you deliver a powerful message! Consider using image(s) from your collection as a critical element in your communication plan.



GET READY...

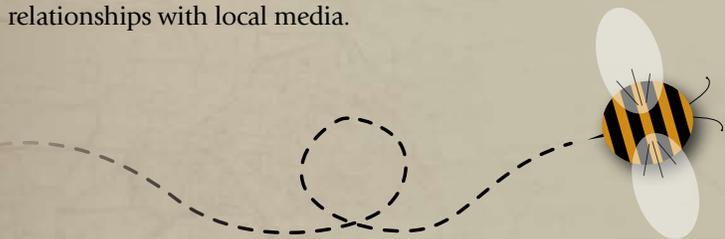
Memory is a mystical, powerful thing. You can make your American Archives Month a memorable experience for all who encounter your repository's collections through some good old-fashioned planning together with some new-fangled use of media. Check out these online resources.

ORGANIZE YOUR AMERICAN ARCHIVES MONTH EVENT

The key to any successful special event is planning. As soon as possible, determine the goals of your project, the target audience, the costs, the number of volunteers needed, and the event location, among other details. For the full scoop on planning your celebration of the American record, visit www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/EventPlanning.pdf.

CREATE "BUZZ" IN THE MEDIA – AND USING NEW MEDIA

You know you should take advantage of the media to promote your celebration of the American record. But where do you start? How can you create "buzz" about your collections? Here's some straight-up advice about how to make your American Archives Month activities newsworthy and how to develop or strengthen relationships with local media.



How to Know If Something Is Newsworthy – If you'd like to pitch a news story or interview to a particular editor or reporter, it helps if you've thought through why your story is newsworthy. See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/Newsworthy.pdf.

Sample Press Release – No need to reinvent the wheel. Just connect the dots using the sample at www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/PressRelease.pdf.

Creating and Maintaining Good Media Relations – You and your institution may already have developed relationships with one or more reporters as part of your repository's outreach efforts. If so, American Archives Month is another opportunity to take advantage of your contacts. See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/Good_Media.pdf.

PROCLAIM IT FROM THE ROOFTOPS

Your repository's collections are full of treasures that deserve to be proclaimed from the rooftops! Ask your governor or mayor to proclaim the month of October as "American (or State/City) Archives Month." Here's how to request a proclamation, as well as a sample proclamation:



- **Sample Proclamation Request Letter** See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/RequestLetter.pdf
- **Sample Proclamation** See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/Proclamation.pdf

You won't need a town crier to make this announcement public. Just follow the advice below and create your own "buzz"!

GET SET...

Tips for Media Interviews – So you're going to be interviewed? See tips for preparing for your interview and getting your point across: www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/MediaTips.pdf.

New Media:  **Twitter** and  **Facebook** –

Social media and networking sites, such as Facebook and microblogger Twitter, allow you to instantaneously connect and share information with a pre-selected circle of colleagues and "friends." These sites typically provide easy, step-by-step instructions on how to set up an account. Registration and use are free for basic services and it takes only a few minutes to join. Consider how such new media can assist you in creating "buzz" and can be integrated with more traditional media to ensure that you're reaching your target audience(s). For more on new media, see "Changing Channels" at www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/NewMedia.pdf.

World Wide Web – Don't overlook the obvious: Your repository's website is a front-line communication tool for creating buzz about your repository and American Archives Month. Provide a spot for the media to learn more about your repository. Celebrate the American record and your collections with a virtual exhibit. Send out blast emails, provide  RSS feeds, and blog all about it! (And be sure to collect information about number of unique visits and page views. These measurements will help you refine your online presence.)

GO BACK TO SCHOOL!

Include young people in your celebration of the American record. It's never too early to introduce them to the wonderful world of archives—as well as the possibility of becoming an archivist.

Classroom Visits and Field Trips. By informing students of the value and power of archives, you can:

- Help educate young people about the importance of preserving their own cultural heritage—thus contributing to the completeness of America's documentary record;
- Help expand your repository's user base; and
- Help “refresh” the graying archives profession by stimulating an interest in archives as a career.

Contact your local elementary, middle, and high schools to arrange for a classroom visit. Or get in touch with area history teachers and invite them to plan a field trip to your repository. Make sure you have prized items from your collections to show off. For more information about planning a classroom visit or field trip, see www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/YoungPeople.pdf.

Indispensable Handouts. For any interaction with the school-aged set, be sure to download “Celebrating the American Record with Young People” (www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/YoungPeople.pdf) and “What Is An Archives?” (www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/WhatIsAnArchives.pdf).

National History Day (NHD). This highly regarded national competition for elementary and secondary school students provides an ideal opportunity for archivists to be involved. Students choose historical topics related to a theme and conduct primary and secondary research in archives, libraries, museums, and historic sites and via oral histories. They present their analysis and conclusions in original papers, websites, exhibits, performances, and documentaries that are entered into competitions at the local and state level, culminating in a national competition each June. Consider how your repository might partner with local schools on a National History Day project. Or consider volunteering to be an NHD judge. For more information about National History Day, see www.nationalhistoryday.org/. For more ideas about what archivists can do, see the SAA Reference, Access, and Outreach Section's website at www.archivists.org/saagroups/rao/hday.asp.

THEN CELEBRATE!

MARK—OR MAKE—AN ANNIVERSARY

Every day is the anniversary of something, as Oscar Wilde once observed. Is your repository, organization, or company celebrating a significant “something” in its life? If so, consider using American Archives Month as a means to promote the anniversary and draw attention to your collections. An anniversary celebration doesn't have to be exclusively about the past; it can also celebrate the present and look to the future. This year the National Archives and Records Administration and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission are marking their 75th anniversary with a variety of activities that celebrate the American record. See www.archives.gov/75th.

TRIED AND TRUE

Ideas for Reaching Out to Your Community – Borrow these successful ideas from your colleagues' experience! See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth.

The Council of State Archivists maintains a directory and poster gallery of state archives' celebrations of Archives Month and Archives Week. See www.statearchivists.org/archivesmonth.

Lasting Impressions: Tips for Preserving Your Family's Photos

If you've visited your local historical society, state archives, or even the National Archives in Washington, then you know that archivists – and the professional archivists who work at them – make sure that all important records are preserved and made available for research by generations to come. These records are the treasured memories, which are a rich source of information about our individual heritage and collective history.

Your family photos are part of that heritage, too. So don't put off storage. Here are some helpful tips to help your photos last.

- **Light causes it** can't get these back, so avoid bright light. Store photos in a dark, cool, dry place. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from light.
- **Water damage** is a common problem. Store photos in a dry place. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from water.
- **Acidic paper** can cause photos to turn yellow. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from acidic paper.
- **Physical damage** can occur. Store photos in a safe place. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from physical damage.
- **To print as good** as you can. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from fading.
- **When showing photos to an album**, use “acid-free” or archival quality materials from professional suppliers. “Acid-free” means that the album pages are made from materials that do not contain acids that can damage the photos. Check the album's pH level. Regular change should be made when the album's pH level is above 7.0. To find more about the pH, see <http://www.archivists.org>.
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- **Make multiple backups of all digital photos** and other electronic records. Use photo storage boxes to protect them from digital damage.

For more information, contact your local historical society, a college or university, or your state archives. Or visit the National Historical Publications and Records Commission's website at www.nhrp.gov. These tips are based on the National Archives and Records Administration's “How to Store Your Family Photos” guide.

GET WITH THE PICTURE

“Celebrating the American Record with Photographs” will help you make a lasting impression with the public using photos in your collection, as well as assist others in preserving their own family's “treasures.” See www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/Photographs.pdf.

WWW.ARCHIVISTS.ORG

Go to www.archivists.org/archivesmonth for more ideas, tips, and resources.

THE IMPACT

"IF WE COULD FIRST KNOW WHERE WE ARE, AND WHITHER WE ARE TENDING, WE COULD THEN BETTER JUDGE WHAT TO DO, AND HOW TO DO IT."

~ ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The archives profession faces both public awareness and advocacy challenges. Establishing the impact of archives can become an important part of the messages that we use—both individually and collectively—to raise public awareness and support and to advocate for issues on behalf of archives and archivists.

Statistics can be a powerful tool because they provide a quantitative snapshot of archives services that decision makers, donors, the media, and the public can grasp quickly.

How can we measure the impact or value of archives – how can we “first know where we are” – more objectively?

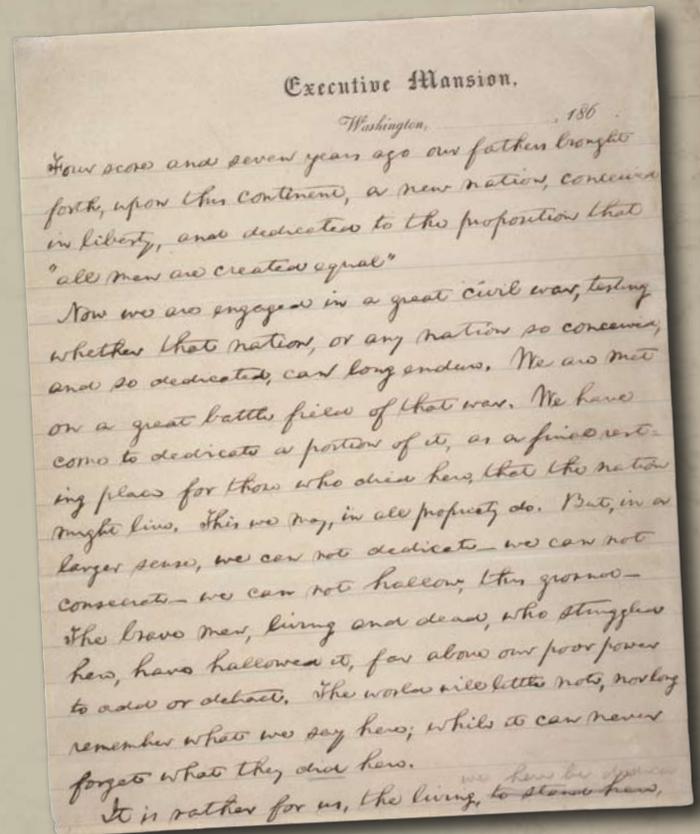
In the proverbial ideal world, the archives profession would have the resources to do the primary and secondary research, at national, state, and local levels, that would help us calculate the return on investment of archives (and archives personnel) nationwide. The profession doesn't have the resources—but you may have information that we can pool....

Do you collect statistics about visits (both actual and virtual) to your repository?

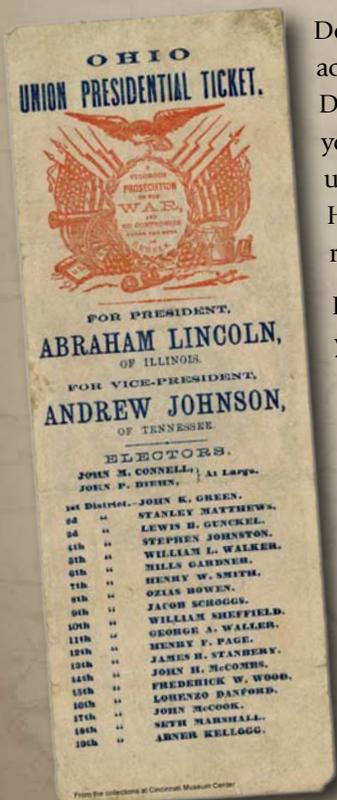
Do you know how many people visited your repository last month? How many unique visitors clicked on your website?

How many phone calls or email requests you logged?

If you collect statistics, how do you use them to your repository's advantage?



The Georgia State Archives used a simple 12-question Zoomerang survey to demonstrate the value of archives as a tourist destination. According to State Archivist David Carmicheal: "Our simple survey helped to capture the attention of the state's tourism agency. Tourism officials were aware that people will travel great distances to visit historic sites, but more than one said that she never thought of archives as a tourist destination. Our figures suggested that out-of-state visitors to the Georgia Archives alone add some \$1 million to Georgia's economy each year, enough to intrigue the tourism agency and prompt them to offer assistance in our efforts to attract others.... The tourism agency became involved in the Friends of the Georgia Archives and began placing the archives on its itinerary when tour operators visited the county." (For more on the Georgia Archives experience, see www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/MeasuringImpact.pdf.)



OF ARCHIVES

Because SAA believes there's strength in (BIG) numbers, we'd like to collect the BIG statistic that tells us how many people—nationwide—visit an archives during October 2009. Please help!

Without getting too technical, we'll compile the statistics that you provide to create a national profile of archives use. You can contribute by completing a brief online survey that asks you to provide any of the following stats (by week, month, or year) that you may collect:

- Number of onsite visits
- Number of unique website visitors
- Number of email requests
- Number of mail requests
- Number of phone requests

And if you collect additional measures, you can enter those into the survey form and we'll begin tracking them as well. For example, do you know how many copy inches of editorial coverage your repository received in the past year?

All compiled information will be made available on the SAA website. Your input will make it a BIG deal!

To complete the Visitors2Archives Survey, go to www.archivists.org/archivesmonth. Deadline: November 30, 2009.

Statistics can be a powerful tool, but it's real-life stories that illuminate the stats....

You see the impact of archives every day:

- You see it in the eyes of the elderly woman who needs to document her citizenship in order to receive Medicare benefits...
- You hear it in the voice of the caller who has just learned that you have an oral history of the grandfather whom he never met...
- You read it in the note of thanks from the man who, as a child, was placed in an orphanage with his brother, was separated from him when they were "indentured" to families in different parts of the state, and was reunited with him many years later because of the records in your repository....

These are subjective measures whose value cannot be overstated. Whoever your key audience(s) may be, keep in mind that people—prospective donors, reporters, legislators—love stories. Tailor your story to your audience, demonstrate passion and enthusiasm for your archives and your work, and you'll make a positive impact on awareness!

Look for an opportunity to tell your story, to comment on articles appearing in your local media, to talk to a group of 6th or 8th or 10th graders about what archivists do. And let SAA know when you make a presentation or get some press.

We keep a clips file, and we'd like to share your success and ideas with others on the American Archives Month website.

For more on telling your story, see "National Treasures: How to Use Prized Items in Your Collection to Tell Your Story," at www.archivists.org/archivesmonth.



**SOCIETY OF
American
Archivists**

MAKE AN IMPACT! CONTEST

Is your 2009 American Archives Month or Archives Week poster a design sensation? Do you have a great idea for an American Archives Month activity? SAA wants to hear from you! If you're willing to show off that poster or spread the word about your idea—you could win a prize!

BEST POSTER TO PROMOTE 2009 ARCHIVES MONTH/WEEK

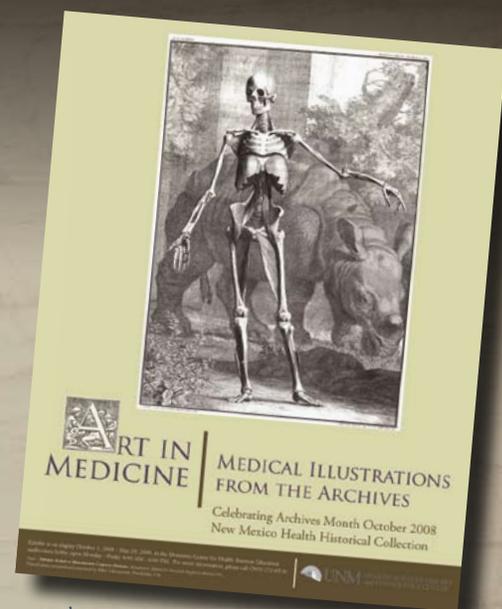
What to submit: Send your 2009 poster as a web-ready PDF along with information about the intended audience, the quantity printed, and your distribution plan (also a PDF).

For examples of past Archives Month / Week posters, visit the Council of State Archivists' website at www.statearchivists.org/archivesmonth.

BEST SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED CAMPAIGN

What to submit: Show us what you did! Your submission may be formatted as you like, but must be submitted as a PDF. Include sufficient documentation that SAA members can determine what you did and how successful your campaign was. Your campaign must have been conducted between 2005 and 2009 to be eligible for a prize.

“DON'T WORRY WHEN YOU ARE NOT RECOGNIZED,
BUT STRIVE TO BE WORTHY OF RECOGNITION.”



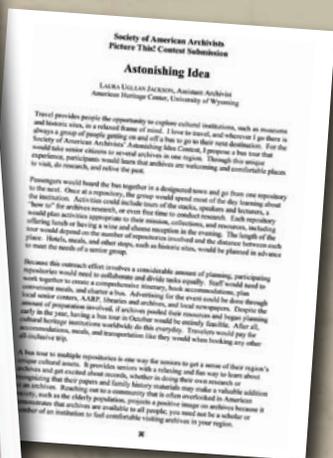
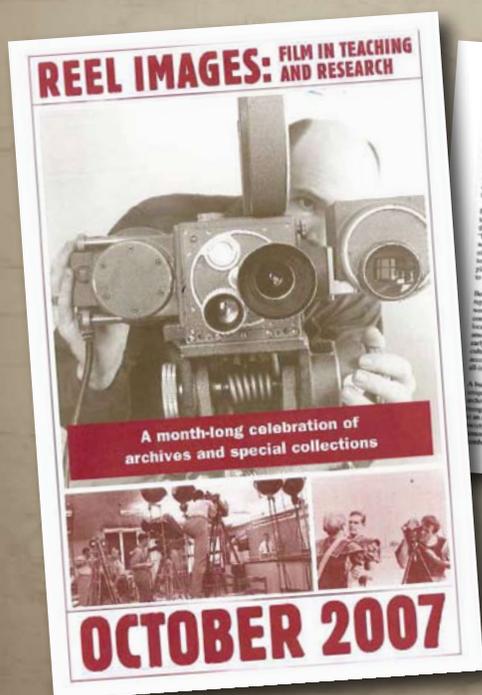
The University of New Mexico Health Sciences Library and Informatics Center participates in New Mexico's statewide Archives Month program. For 2008, it developed a program based on a collection of historical images it own—and won in the “Best Poster” category.

BEST “ASTONISHING IDEA”

What to submit: A description of up to 500 words that addresses your intended audience(s), message(s), and distribution medium(s). (Hint: See “Communication Planning 101” in this kit.) Include an explanation of how this idea, when implemented, would have a positive impact on public awareness of archives and archivists.

DEADLINE: Entries must be submitted BY OCTOBER 31, 2009, to SAA at saahq@archivists.org with the subject line: *Make an Impact Contest 2009.*

~ ABRAHAM LINCOLN



Indiana University Libraries was the winner of the 2008 “Best Successfully Implemented Campaign,” and the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, won in the “Best Astonishing Idea” category.

VOTE FOR THE BEST!

Submissions will be displayed online at www.archivists.org. All SAA members are eligible to vote for the best entry in each category. Voting will take place online from November 9 to 30, 2009. The winner will be determined by the most votes per entry in each category. The winners (one from each category) will be announced the first week in December.

Check out last year's contest winners at: www.archivists.org/archivesmonth/AAM2008/PictureThisContest.asp.