Agenda Item III.A.

Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 1, 2016
Hilton Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia

Member Affinity Groups

(Prepared by Council Working Group Members Lisa Mangiafico [Chair], Pam Hackbart-Dean, Rachel Vagts, and Nancy Beaumont)

BACKGROUND

Since May 2013 the SAA Council has considered possible changes in member affinity groups "to encourage flexible, inclusive, and participatory opportunities for the membership." See a summary of previous work in the May 2016 Agenda Item 0516-V-B-MembAffGroups: http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/0516-V-B-MembAffGroups.pdf.

The May 2016 agenda item also included a set of guiding principles and proposed changes in the current structure of and requirements for SAA sections and roundtables. The Council asked the Working Group to distribute a call for member comments on the proposed changes and, based on those comments, to prepare an action item for consideration by the Council at its August 1, 2016, meeting.

The Call for Member Comment was posted from June 14 to July 6, 2016. See the Appendix for all responses to the Call received via the website and the SAA Headquarters email box.

DISCUSSION

Member comments regarding the proposed changes in sections and roundtables were very positive and encouraging. We take this as an indication that a flexible, common-sense approach to resolving some long-standing issues is welcome. Flexibility requires tending, however, and we understand that implementation of changes in the structure of and requirements for sections and roundtables will require significant volunteer time in the first year and significant staff time for at least a few years. We propose that:

- The changes discussed by the Council in May 2016 and affirmed by member comment be implemented.

- This work move ahead as quickly as practicable. Although there is sometimes merit in determining all possible scenarios and developing policies and procedures to account for them prior to implementing a new process, we believe that this transition would benefit from moving ahead now based on agreed-to general principles and refining as we go along. This

will require excellent communication between the working group and the Council and with all affinity group leaders to ensure that trust levels remain high.

- This work be delegated to the staff, with oversight from the Council Working Group on Member Affinity Groups.

Guiding Principles

We would plan to adhere to the following guiding principles (as originally presented in May 2016). SAA should:

- Be responsive to the many thoughtful comments of members in regard to the proposed changes—including those made as implementation proceeds.
- Foster an environment in which groups can—and are encouraged to—spend more time on their missions and less time on governance.
- Increase the opportunity for participation by nonmembers.
- Seek to implement simpler, more efficient systems/processes and to minimize "legislation" of groups.
- Develop a better and more logical schedule for group processes.
- Allow for more flexibility and space at the Annual Meeting.

Changes to be Implemented

Based on member feedback and on our consideration of the issues, we propose the following modifications in the current component group structure:

1. **Eliminate the distinction between sections and roundtables.** All interest groups that meet the basic requirements outlined below will be given meeting space at the Annual Meeting, complete with basic audiovisual support (microphone, LCD projector, screen). All groups will be referred to by one common name [sections]. SAA staff will provide support to all groups as they rework their logos or name plates to accommodate the name change.

2. **Invite SAA members to join as many [sections] as they wish.** Currently SAA members may join an unlimited number of roundtables but are asked to choose just two sections. This broadens their options.

3. **Invite nonmembers to be list participants on up to three [section] discussion lists.** Currently nonmembers may be "list participants" on roundtable lists ("Nonmembers of SAA may participate in a roundtable by joining in its electronic communications list and engaging in discussions of and work on issues of interest to its membership"). This privilege will be extended to all interest groups, but will be limited to a reasonable number of lists (i.e., three). As now, nonmembers will not be permitted to hold office, serve on a steering committee, or vote in interest group elections or referendums.

4. **Require of all [sections] the following:**

a. Standardized bylaws based on the SAA template. All current bylaws that are not in this format (primarily current Section bylaws) will be simplified based on the template.

b. Submission of a proposal for the group's annual meeting (including agenda, description, preference for onsite/offsite location, AV needs, duration, and indication of whether it is a solo or joint meeting) by March 1 each year.

c. Conduct of an online election for group leader(s) using SAA's process, with submission of the slate due by June 1 each year. Inclusion in each election and/or referendum conducted at this time a simple questionnaire asking for member feedback on the effectiveness of the group or posing a question such as, "If you have suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the group, note them here."

d. Submission of an annual report and a complete leader roster by September 1 each year. The report will be prepared by the outgoing chair. SAA will create an online form to make it easier to provide the required information – including an indication of how the group addressed SAA's strategic priorities in the past year.

e. Responsiveness to SAA Council requests for assistance in conducting research, drafting expert comments, or undertaking other activity related to the group's area of special interest.

5. **New interest groups may be formed much as they are now,** with submission to the Council of a petition, signed by 100 SAA members, that includes a statement of purpose and goals and a statement of why a separate interest group would be beneficial to SAA.

6. **Interest groups may be discontinued if they do not meet one or more of the requirements stated above.** Inability to meet a requirement will lead to a conversation between/among the interest group chair and/or steering committee, the Council liaison, and the executive director to determine 1) why the group is unable to complete an activity, 2) what might be done to assist the group in moving forward (e.g., combine with another group, change leadership), and 3) whether the group might function more effectively as a special interest discussion list. (See the next item.) The Council will decide if a group is to be discontinued.

7. **Continue staff investigation of preferred software for association-based online communities and implement as appropriate.** The staff plans to move from Lyris to a more robust software package (Higher Logic) that will enhance email discussion lists and, in the longer term, enable more robust online forums, member directories and rosters, and document storage. Following implementation of the new software, the working group will revisit two ideas that emerged for additional ways to participate within SAA: 1) creation of special interest discussion lists for small groups of members and 2) creation of "virtual communities." Yet to be determined, for example, is a simple and logical method for requesting creation of a discussion list. (What is the threshold? Is a petition to the Council [or the staff] by 25 SAA members sufficient to justify development of a special interest

discussion list? Should a list be discontinued if there is no activity on it for a period of, say, six months?)

The Governance Manual will have to undergo significant review and revision, a process that we hope will retain the notion that groups are organized to advance professional practice within areas of common archival interest and affiliation.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the SAA staff, with oversight from the Council Working Group on [Member Affinity Groups], prepare and implement a work plan to transition SAA sections and roundtables to the new structure as quickly as reasonably practicable, with presentation of the initial plan to the Council at its November 2016 meeting;

THAT the Council be updated on the transition at least every other month until the transition is complete; and

THAT the Governance Manual be revised (with revisions approved by the Council) to reflect the new structure and requirements.

Support Statement: Discussions about modifying the structure and requirements for SAA's sections and roundtables have been ongoing for many years. Based on the work done by several member groups and staff since May 2013, as well as member feedback throughout these discussions, it is appropriate to move ahead with initiatives that will simplify structures, preserve the many advantages and services provided by SAA component groups, and provide members with flexible, inclusive, and participatory opportunities to engage with SAA.

Relation to Strategic Plan: Goal 4: Meeting Member Needs – SAA is an agile association that delivers outstanding service and fosters a culture of inclusiveness and participation; 4.1. Facilitate effective communication with and among members; 4.2. Create opportunities for members to participate fully in the association; 4.3. Continue to enrich the association and the profession with greater diversity in membership and expanded leadership opportunities.

Fiscal Impact: Significant investment in volunteer and staff time to implement the changes, provide regular reports to the Council, and ensure excellent communication with the affinity groups.

Appendix

Responses to Call for Member Comments on Proposed Changes In Member Affinity Groups (June 14 – July 6, 2016)

Received Via SAA Website

Excellent work

I support these changes and commend the time taken to address some of the issues generated by them. Conflating Sections and Roundtables makes sense. I do agree that the term "group" is too generic and see no reason why all groups can't be considered and called "sections" whether large or small.

Accommodating non-members through limited access to three email lists is an excellent solution to being more inclusive across geographical boundaries and could actually increase membership in certain instances; yet it does address maintaining the value of being an SAA member. Incidentally, and addressed by some other comments, is the important issue of members signing onto what I am calling the "section" lists. The fact that members default to no-mail is, in my opinion, a serious communication problem; one that, I hope, might be addressed by automatically signing members to lists when they join a section upon renewing their membership. An auto-signature that includes links to either unsubscribing or going to a digest format could be added to all messages, allowing each member to manage their inbox, at will, at any time. A survey two years ago showed that there was a great discrepancy between the numbers of members of the Museum Archives Section and those who were on the list serv and I think that is because of the time needed to sign up every year upon renewing membership. I really think this is an important issue.

Finally, the plan for the special interest lists beyond the formal "sections" is an excellent one and will allow for more virtual communication. I can see how this would be very useful to the still nascent Natural History Archives "Association" which encompasses a very small number of individuals, many of whom are unable to attend the annual meeting on a regular basis. This is also an issue for our compatriots in Libraries and Museums, who also have other annual meetings to attend and limited budgets. Having SAA support for these list would allow for increased communication among those with shared issues.

My other suggestion is that it would be helpful to allow for these virtual "special interest groups" (as opposed to "sections"--I leave the final nomenclature to your wisdom) to meet informally on an occasional ad hoc basis at the annual meeting. But this is more a programming, not an administrative issue per se.

The Natural History Archives Association has a room scheduled for this year but there are not enough of us to use it. For the Society to host a list and then offer the possibiliy of a meeting place if desired, would be most excellent, using the same March 1 deadline for sections as stipulated in the recommendations. These occasional meetings could be for informal conversations among those addressing similar issues and may or...may not...grow to larger more formal sections, but could lead to communications with the more formal sections within the Society.

Also want to say that standardizing the administrative aspects of managing "sections" is also a great idea.

thanks for all your good work on this.

Submitted by mathe on July 6, 2016 - 1:28pm.

Thank you, mostly agree

I really appreciate all the work and thoughtfulness that has gone into this proposal. When requests for comment were solicited previously, I chimed in loudly, particularly regarding nonmember participation and numerical thresholds for an entity's creation/continuation. This document has found reasonable compromises for those, and I appreciate it.

I agree with others that "group" is not a highly useful name. ALA uses the designations "sections," below which sit committees, and "interest groups." Perhaps we may find those useful. Given that sections/roundtables do not directly feed into SAA operations (to my knowledge, anyway), interest group may be more accurate.

Submitted by sbennett on July 5, 2016 - 1:24pm.

Affinity Group Changes

The changes presented by Council simplify processes, which is good governance in action. I have only one issue to address:

I would counsel against the term "group," which has a few inherent problems:

1. SAA already uses it as the larger term that includes all affinity groups, Council-appointed groups, affiliated groups, inter-organizational groups, and SAA Council itself.
2. The word is destined to be confused with "working group," which is already in place with a specific meaning.
3. The word is too generic to mean anything in particular even though we need it to mean something in particular.

I suggest any of these four choices as a better option, but I present them in order of my preference, with the highest preference first:

1. section (which has long-standing use in SAA)
2. special interest group (which is used by many associations and is often abbreviated as SIG)
3. interest group (for those who want to avoid the abbreviation SIG)
4. affinity group (which we have often used in exactly the way we mean it to in this instance)

I prefer "section" for many reasons, including the fact that it is the term least likely to cause a member (or non-member) to conflate it with another type of group--since it is the only term without "group" within it. Also, section connotes some status within SAA: a section of SAA is literally and figuratively a part of SAA, rather than a separate and separable body.

Geof Huth
Submitted by geofhuth on July 3, 2016 - 12:04pm.

I agree
These changes look very reasonable, I like them.

Submitted by annayev on June 29, 2016 - 6:40pm.

These all seem like
These all seem like reasonable changes to me. I know that a roundtable that is as specialized and small (such as our own Lone Arrangers) may need to change the way it solicits participation from its membership and steering committee to attend to these new changes, but I think the group would be ready to make that happen if the Council decides to go forward with this.

Submitted by melissa.a.torres on June 29, 2016 - 1:59pm.

I like it
I've read the (blessedly succinct - thank you!) summary report from Council on member affinity groups. The recommendations make a good deal of sense to me. They reflect and codify the current reality of SAA constituent groups.

Just one observation: at a recent ALA meeting I found myself in a very large room where member groups were each given one round table to hold their meetings. It was cacaphonous and confusing and turned into not much more than lunch table-type discussions with people within earshot. I hope we never get so big that we have to resort to such a solution! I applaud Council and the SAA staff for seeking to find meaningful ways that members can meet with other professionals with similar interests - and even contribute to the development of their profession.

Kathy Marquis
Submitted by marqu897 on June 28, 2016 - 5:16pm.

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comment on changes
These changes seem clear and logical. I have no comment

Submitted by cwaggone on June 28, 2016 - 2:57pm.

Feedback on Member Affinity Groups

I am in agreement with removing the distinctions between Sections and Roundtables in favor of Affinity Groups. As noted in the SAA Governance Manual, the groups are "organized to advance professional practice within areas of common archival interest and affiliation." I belive that this is an important factor that needs to be addressed by all affinity groups, that is, how does the group intend to advance professional practice? This addresses also the requirement 5-e that a group be responsive to SAA Council with "assistance in conducting research, drafting expert comments, or undertaking other activity related to the group's area of special interest."

I agree with Point 7 and believe that there needs to be in place a mechanism to appraise for Disposition the listserv and other records of the group once inactve. I recommend that this would be a requirement for the Chair of any group.

I think that point 8 is also good, with the same caveat as my comments to point 7 above.
If the distinction of Section or Roundtable is removed, then I think all such groups should be under an umbrella of Affinity Groups and be left to decide what they call themselves, rather than having a specific label of "group".

I disagree with the use of the term Forum. To me a Forum is a particular meeting of people and not the group of the people. It would make sense to call the SAA annual meeting group time "Forum" of the X group.

Kari Smith (no need to be anonymous)
Submitted by karichka on June 28, 2016 - 10:46am.

A good compromise, but some details still needed

I support the tenor of these proposed changes. They reflect new realities of SAA that sections and roundtables were increasingly similar in nature and the division of the two types of groups is probably no longer necessary. I agree with those who find the label "groups" for the new "affinity groups" rather generic but think that once affinity groups are named and constituted under this structure, it will sound less meaningless. I think most of the other details are sensible from the number of people necessary to create a new group, the responsibilities of existing groups, the balancing of member/non-member needs, and the deadline for requesting meeting time. Groups will need to step up some responsibilities, but most of them already meet these standards and the new norms are stated and explicit.

There are still some details to work out about how much time each program committee will set aside for meetings of "groups" and how to avoid schedule conflicts for SAA attendees. Will there still be five times set aside for "groups" to meet as there are this year in Atlanta? If SAA can't make that commitment, who is going to decide: the program committee each year, staff, Council?

I hope those questions can be answered in Atlanta, but overall I want to thank the staff and members of Council who worked on this.

Submitted by lgbarber on June 23, 2016 - 1:45pm.

Others have made some good

Others have made some good points about how group meeting proposals will be handled and whether or not that will become a competitve process, as well as how scheduling will be handled for the groups at future annual meetings. I'm also curious if SAA staff are comfortable with providing more discussion lists and if the technology infrastructure is there (I remember the A&A listserv debacle from a few years ago--times have changed since then, but I still find logging into and using the discussion list application frustrating just as a user).

Overall I think this is a good proposal; I appreciate that with this proposal members would be able to join more sections and that nonmembers would be able to participate in section discussions lists, due to flattening the already-flattened distinctions between sections and roundtables.

Submitted by mwiget on June 23, 2016 - 10:15am.

Good Proposal

Assuming all 'groups' or forums can get space to meet at the annual meeting, I endorse this plan.
In my past comments I stressed that "the good of the archival profession" and maximizing participation by members are the goals. Maximum inclusiveness is crucial to the first (letting non-members participate) and NOT limiting the opportunities for groups/forums to meet at the annual meeting serves the second. Limiting possibilities to meet on the basis of there not being enough money or space would seem very mysterious considering the monetary hardship the annual meeting is for many.

Peter Gunther
Submitted by raggmopp_2000 on June 22, 2016 - 1:19pm.

Member Affinity Groups

I appreciate unifying roundtables and sections as groups and continuing to allow us to join as many as we like. Most importantly I appreciate continuing to open the groups to non-members. I see this as a mission of SAA to continue to educate the public about the field of archives. I frequently tell people who are just getting their feet wet in the field that they can join an SAA group and observe the conversations and greatly increase their learning.

Submitted by Susan Rishworth on June 17, 2016 - 6:12am.

Looks good; one thing

Will meting proposals be evaluated and approved, or basically if a group states it wants to meet by the deadline a spot is guaranteed?

Submitted by jordon on June 16, 2016 - 8:22pm.

I heartily endorse this

I heartily endorse this measure, especially to make the best use of SAA staff and council time and resources. I very much favor the requirements outlined in Section 5 for ongoing group participation, and think these are very reasonable steps that can still be met by smaller active component groups.

My only question is will there be any criteria for the discussion lists (as outlined in #8) to be dissolved? For example, if there is no posting activity for 12-18 months, this seems like sufficient criteria to save the old posts and discontinue the active list.

Submitted by eiratansey on June 16, 2016 - 3:15pm.

Comments

In general I think the proposed changes are good ones. I agree with removing the distinctions between roundtables and sections, as I was always disappointed that I could only join two sections when in reality I was interested in participating in more than two. In terms of what I get out of both roundtables and sections, it's about the same - I mainly follow the discussion groups so how the two differed was always a little vague to me.

I also agree with the previous commenter's idea of using a different word other than "group" that is mentioned in the proposal, as I don't find it a particularly strong word - I like the suggestion of using "forum" instead.

Submitted by JessicaScott on June 16, 2016 - 1:33pm.

Comments/Suggestions/Questions

I think that the proposed is an admirable attempt at compromise.

I would suggest the use of the word “group” (Point #2) is bland an uninformative. An alternative term could be “Forum” which encompasses many meanings related to what Sections and Roundtables do: opportunity, environment, setting, meeting discussion, debate, conference, assembly, council and roundtable.

Point #4 is a good compromise for allowing non-member participation. It will be interesting to see how that is implemented and monitored.

Point #5.b. Is there a presumption all Groups/Forums would get a space on the Agenda simply based upon submission, or if the number of Groups/Forums became voluminous it would become competitive like sessions proposals? What attempts will be made to accommodate scheduling of Groups/Forums to not compete with one another (currently Sections & Roundtables are scheduled separately and Sections/Roundtables that have certain affinity/overlap are attempted to not be scheduled at the same time).

Does Point #6 presume that all current groups are grandfathered? What happens if you form a new group, having the requisite 100 signatures, but then consistently fall below 100 in actual membership?

Submitted by dw.noonan on June 16, 2016 - 9:58am.

What difference, at this point, does it make

Preface - I agree with 3-8 - unlimited joining, open to non-members, rules for activity, discussion groups over virtual groups, etc. However, what difference does it make if the membership gets to comment or even votes on the words "section" and "roundtable" when SAA has effectively taken away the distinction already. The only difference is size. Sections used to matter because they had influence on the annual meeting program - they could sponsor and get approved sessions. They had space, and speakers, bylaws, reports, et al. Used to be that the other committees and task forces would have equitable representation of the sections - which meant that they represented the membership. Sections were the bellcow of representation. This is not so anymore. And conversely, then roundtables got meeting space, bylaws, A/V, listservs, etc. too. So what is the difference at this point since there is no hierarchy. It is just a name now. Secondarily, replacing section and roundtable with "group" is vanilla, its milksop. At least the other words implied some sort of action. Group is just a bunch of people with some commonality. It does not imply volition or action. If the power of the sections is gone and the numbers will be equalized, why don't you just make them all "roundtables"? At least it implies discussion and perhaps coming to decisons about things that matter less than policies, positions, or standards. Whoa be it to the roundtable that tried to jump that fence. The best way to clear the decks of dead wood (groups) and hangers-on (people) would be to charge an extra $5 for every "group" one wants to be in. Given the recent dues increase, this is probably not the best time for such an idea.

Submitted by MyNameIs on June 14, 2016 - 12:02pm.

Received Via SAA Headquarters Email Box (saahq@archivists.org)

I like the changes that are being proposed. I especially like that sections and roundtables will be the same.

Phyllis Kinnison, MLIS, Archivist
Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, Texas

Go for it! My only minor comment is that the petition to form a new group could reasonably be pegged at 150 or 200 instead of 100, but that's a quibble. On the whole maybe this will goose more groups into accomplishing something rather than simply enjoying a coffee-klatch over lists and in precious space at the conference. Well done, and thank you. Respectfully, --mark

Mark A. Greene
Univ of WY: Former Director, American Heritage Ctr; Sr Archivist Emeritus
Society of American Archivists: Past President; Distinguished Fellow

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I like the changes proposed for the Member Affinity Groups. I hope the changes will bring more participation. While it is a small matter, I don't prefer the change of everything to a "group." To me group sounds much less professional and less formal/organized. I would propose either making everything either a Section or a Roundtable, or if you want to adopt new terminology, maybe Chapter or Division.

Amy L. Allen, CA, University Archivist
University of Arkansas Libraries

I think having Rountables and Sections was always a bit confusing. I am glad to hear we will now just have Groups. I also think following three groups by e-mail is probably ample, at least for my purposes.

Kobi, Boston Architectural College
SAA Member, CA

Has anybody considered changing some of the sections to roundtables and not others? As the immediate past chair of a roundtable, it seems to me that almost all of the roundtables deal with what you do (e.g., archives management, archival educators) or what types of materials you work with (e.g., recorded sound, congressional papers). Currently, some of the sections also cover those (e.g., description, visual materials), but the other sections deal with who you work for (e.g., business archives, museum archives, college and university archives). Why not call all of those groups that deal with what you do or the materials you work with "roundtables" and all of those groups that deal with who you work for "sections"? By keeping them separate, there would be less chance of creating scheduling conflicts at the annual meeting. For example, if one works in a business archives, it is unlikely that you who also want to

go both the business section meeting and the museum or religious section meetings (since they would continue to be scheduled at the same time); thus, no conflict. But if one deals with visual materials while working at a business archives, a conflict is created if the visual materials group is scheduled at the same time as the business group. Thus, it makes sense to schedule all of the "who you work for groups" at the same time, so why not call them something different than what you name the "what you do" groups and the "what materials you work with" groups?

I am also concerned about allowing non-members too many of the benefits of membership for free. I think that allowing non-members on one discussion list would limit what they get for free, while allowing them to see what they are would have more access to if they were members.

Dr. Mott R. Linn, Jr., CA, Head of Collections Management
Robert Hutchings Goddard Library, Clark University
President of the Academy of Certified Archivists, 2015-16

Aloha,

In response to your call for comments on proposed changes in member affinity groups, I agree completely with points 1, 2 and 3, to remove the distinction between section and roundtable, and to remove the limit on how many you can join. This all makes perfect sense, and I encourage you to make these changes.
Jack Kormos, Archives and Manuscripts Department, University of Hawaii at Manoa

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Hello,

First—thank you to everyone who has worked on this proposal. From the original 2013 task force to the Council working group formed last year, your thoughtfulness and full consideration of all of the issues at hand is appreciated.

As someone who has actively participated and held leadership roles in sections and roundtables, I agree with the proposed changes. A flattening of the current affinity group system is both a necessary and welcome change as SAA grows and our need to gain specialized knowledge and expertise changes almost as quickly as the technology we're using. This change will create parity between the groups—fostering a culture of inclusiveness within the society. The requirement for annual activity/reporting will spark action and forward motion. The ability to quickly form groups to respond to changes in our profession will create a more responsive, active I am excited to see this change implemented!

As I recall, one of the main concerns at last year's annual meeting was that that some groups may fall below the minimum membership requirements. I see that this has been struck from the recommendation, and I commend that change. Smaller groups are sometimes the most active. And when groups do fail to meet the requirements, I see it as an opportunity for both increased outreach and collaboration on the part of that group's membership and the other affinity groups. SAA leadership and membership must be

committed to supporting groups who are at risk of losing group status, and I believe we will be. This is not a competition—we all help one another succeed.

Again, thanks for your work on this and thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and feedback.

Meg Tuomala, Assistant Archivist, Gates Archive

I am in favor of these changes. I think that the option for low-barrier discussion groups is an excellent one. I like that there is a proposed system for allowing groups to move fluidly between being inactive/discussion-only and being more active/structured. All of this sounds like it will achieve the goals of minimizing confusion and administrative effort and lowering barriers to entry. Thank you to those who put work into this proposal.

Mary Margaret Groberg, MLIS, Outreach Archivist, Norwich University Archives

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I would suggest the use of the word "group" (Point #2) is bland an uninformative. An alternative term could be "Forum" which encompasses many meanings related to what Sections and Roundtables do: opportunity, environment, setting, meeting discussion, debate, conference, assembly, council and roundtable.

Point #4 is a good compromise for allowing non-member participation. It will be interesting to see how that is implemented and monitored.

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Does Point #6 presume that all current groups are grandfathered? What happens if you form a new group, having the requisite 100 signatures, but then consistently fall below 100 in actual membership?

Daniel W. Noonan, Assistant Professor, e-Records/Digital Resources Archivist
University Libraries | University Archives, The Ohio State University

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I would like to express support for all of the proposed changes. All seem very logical and have the value of simplifying current structures and processes.

Alston Cobourn, Assistant Professor and Digital Scholarship Librarian
Washington and Lee University

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1. In agreement
2. Think there could be something better than group – e.g. retain "roundtable" for all; this conveys action, participation or "forum" or "special interest group (SIG)"
3. In agreement
4. Would there be extra administration required to limit to 3? I started as a non-member list member and then joined.
5. a. In agreement

b. In agreement

c. Partial agreement – re simple questionnaire - perhaps there should be an regular (e.g. annual?) vote to indicate that the group is still current and valid

d. In agreement

6. Partial agreement – statement of purpose also needs to indicate how they differ from existing groups. Some current roundtables have a level of overlap and not much activity
7. Partial agreement – conversion to virtual community group appears to create extra work for SAA staff. If the group is not active to undertake points in #5 what is the point?
8. Disagree – leads to too much splintering of knowledge and groups and more work for SAA staff

Elizabeth Charlton

Thank you to the SAA Council and to the small working group that prepared this most recent proposal. It appears to address many (if not most) of the concerns raised with the previous proposal. I support this proposal for the following reasons:

- Members can join as many "groups" as they wish.
- Removes the distinction between section and roundtables.
- Requires groups to report their activities and especially how they have addressed SAA's strategic priorities in the previous year.
- Allows non-members to join a limited number of discussion lists (3 seems appropriate).
- It is simple.

I have one concern and a suggestion.

First the concern: "Group" is a bland word. Perhaps "forum" would be better?

And the suggestion: As a member of a couple of sections and multiple roundtables, I am peppered with requests this time of year for nominations for section/roundtable officers. If this proposal is implemented, I expect that number will increase. It would be helpful if there was a central place (i.e. website) to learn of openings in all "groups" – and perhaps a "central application" hub for individuals to indicate an interest (as there currently is for SAA wide committees appointed by the Vice President).

Thank you,

Elizabeth Nielsen, University Archivist, Oregon State University

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Hello,
Many thanks to the working group for putting together this proposal.

I agree with the guiding principles and think that the working group did a nice job of following them.

Regarding the proposed changes:

Agree with 1-5. Note on 5e. It's great to ask for this but I don't know how you can make sure this will happen. I think you can ask the leaders of the groups to send out calls for comments/feedback, but not sure you can make it a condition of being a group because there's no way to make people participate.

6. 100 signatures doesn't seem like enough, as it is SAA offers a ton of options for groups and I'm not opposed to more, but I'd suggest moving it to 150, or keep it at 100 but make sure you have at least 2 or 3 people committed to lead the group for the first couple of years to make sure the group fulfills all the obligations of being an SAA group.

Agree with 7-8.

Well done on coming up with something flexible and appealing to non-members while still making membership valuable.

Rachel Seale, Outreach Archivist, Iowa State University

Hello,
The proposed changes to the Member Affinity Groups appear to be responsive to the comments/concerns that came from members last year and offers members more options for group participation. And this proposal addresses the concern that we allow some non-membership participation, particularly for those just starting out in the profession.

I suggest simply calling the groups "Affinity Groups" which seems descriptive of their purpose.
I noticed a small change for the due date for Group annual report. The current date is November 21. The proposed date is September 1, which is much earlier. How about October 1 annually?
Kind regards, Deb Torres

Deborah A. Torres, Assistant to the Associate Dean/Assistant Program Director
St. Catherine University

I approve of the changes except for the use of the word "group." Section would be better.

Valerie A. Metzler, M. A., C. A., Archivist/Historian

Dear SAA leaders,

My main concern regarding the proposed changes in Member Affinity Groups is with the following requirement: Conduct an online election for group leader(s) using SAA's process, with submission of the slate due by June 1 each year. Inclusion in each election and/or referendum conducted at this time a simple questionnaire asking for member feedback on the effectiveness of the group or posing a question such as, "If you have suggestions for improving the effectiveness of the group, note them here."

I belong to both the Business and Religious Archives Sections and to a number of roundtables that touch upon my functional areas as archivist. Each year, in the months leading up to the Annual Meeting I receive a deluge of emails regarding nominations of new officers, elections of new officers, proposals for sessions, etc. I get a lot of benefit out of participating in the section and roundtable listservs, but find it almost overwhelming having to wade through all the emails that are sent and to try to make responsible choices regarding election of representatives from multiple groups all around the same time. I don't know if it would be possible to stagger elections within the year or to have some of them in alternate years. Given the opportunity to make a suggestion at the time of the annual elections for group leaders, mine would be to **not** have have all the elections at around the same time.

Joseph Coen, C. A., Office of the Archivist, R. C. Diocese of Brooklyn

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Dear SAA Council members,

I apologize for this belated comment on the changes to member affinity groups, but I hope you will take it into consideration.

I support the proposed changes overall and applaud the effort to make affinity groups more inclusive. I do however ask that we reconsider changing the language to "group" and instead rename everything a "roundtable." The word "roundtable" is a more accurate descriptor for the role of these entities. Speaking for the Congressional Papers Roundtable, we would like to retain this piece of our name and branding. Resources created by the CPR are very often used in work with congressional donors and their chosen repositories, and name recognition is important to those relationships as the CPR continues to establish standards for managing these collections.

Thank you very much for your work on this issue. I look forward to seeing the outcome of these changes.

Danielle Emerling, Congressional Papers Roundtable Chair Elect
Assistant Curator, Congressional and Political Papers, West Virginia & Regional History Center
West Virginia University Libraries