

## SAA's 2006-2007 Strategic Priorities

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What does the future hold for the archives profession? And what can SAA do to address the issues that archivists are likely to face in the years to come?

In February 2005, the SAA Council embarked on a strategic planning journey that began with creation of a “radar screen” of 10 to 12 challenges or threats to the profession—disruptive forces that will likely have a significant impact on our profession and that could be harmful if not addressed. Council members narrowed that list to the three highest priorities, defined desired outcomes (i.e., what the world might look like if each issue were resolved); and then developed comprehensive lists of concrete activities (i.e., what the Society might do) to achieve the desired outcomes.

Since that first meeting, Council members have reviewed and refined the issues, sought broad member input via online discussion lists and an annual meeting forum, and proposed activities for inclusion in the FY2007 (July 1, 2006–June 30, 2007) budget.

While it would be natural to wish for “closure” in our planning, the strategic planning process that SAA has adopted is ongoing, requiring us—continually—to:

- Monitor external and internal environments to determine which critical concerns will have the greatest impact on our members and which are within our capacity to act upon effectively,
- Solicit member input to ensure that we’re in tune with your concerns and that we’re not missing some really big issues,
- Update desired outcomes as appropriate, and
- Consider what actions we can take that might make the desired outcomes happen.

Based on your input during the past year, Council members tweaked our “radar screen.” As of now—and these can and will change over time—the following three “critical issues” are the highest priorities identified by SAA’s Council. In each case below we provide the issue statement, the desired outcomes, and the three highest-priority activities that we identified to respond to the issue. The single highest-priority activity in each area (noted via asterisk) is included in the Society’s FY 2007 budget.

### TECHNOLOGY

**Issue Statement:** Rapidly changing information technologies challenge archival principles and practices, and demand increasingly effective leadership from the archival community to prevent loss of records and improve preservation of and access to modern archival records in all formats.

***Desired Outcomes:*** When SAA and the archival profession successfully come to terms with this challenge, all of the following statements will be true:

1. All archivists possess recognized core competencies on how to manage, appraise, acquire, and provide access to electronic records and other digital assets.
2. Archivists are able to communicate and collaborate with information technologists and members of allied professions at a basic level.
3. Some archivists have advanced knowledge of electronic records and digital asset management techniques so that they can serve as a source of expert knowledge, conduct research, and anticipate changes in technology so that the profession is better prepared to respond.
4. Archivists, records managers, and IT professionals develop, accept, and implement widely accepted standards for archival functions (eg, accessioning, appraisal, arrangement and description, preservation, access) for born-digital records and digitized archival assets utilizing readily available tools.
5. Archivists have a variety of educational opportunities to acquire and improve electronic records-related competencies at the introductory, advanced, and continuing education levels.
6. Archivists will formulate appropriate advocacy strategies based upon a sophisticated understanding of the role of information policy in the creation and accessibility of records.

***Three Highest-Ranked Proposed Activities:***

1. Work with appropriate SAA groups to identify competencies and standards and collect, review, and clarify best practices relating to all areas of archival practice that are affected by electronic records and digital asset issues.\*
2. Create an Archives Technology Web Portal and collaborative communication tools on the SAA website to provide up-to-date news and information on technology issues, linking to calendar events, code snippets, projects, white papers, announcements of training events, etc.
3. Co-sponsor an annual “technology summer camp” for the development and sharing of research relating to technology in archives and allied professions. It could include hands-on experience and a chance for conversation between archivists and those from other information disciplines.

## **DIVERSITY**

**Issue Statement:** The relevance of archives to society and the completeness of the documentary record hinge in part on the profession's success in ensuring that its members and the holdings that they manage reflect the diversity of society as a whole.

**Desired Outcomes:** When SAA and the archival profession successfully come to terms with this challenge, all of the following statements will be true:

1. Underrepresented populations will have greater knowledge, skills, and support to identify, manage, preserve, use, and interpret records vital to our cultural heritage.
2. SAA's membership and leadership will steadily become representative of American society as a whole.
3. Greater numbers of students from diverse backgrounds will have an opportunity to be exposed to the archival profession and to the value of preserving documentary evidence.
4. Archivists will be committed to ensuring that the holdings within their repositories represent the diversity of perspectives in society.

### ***Three Highest-Ranked Proposed Activities:***

1. Produce specialized and bilingual promotional literature for college placement offices and fairs, using Hispanic universities (HACUs) and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) as primary target audiences.\*
2. Translate into Spanish existing brochures and selected content on the website to serve as a "welcome mat" for Latino populations.
3. Develop a fact sheet that highlights current diversity-based efforts, focusing particularly on efforts with underrepresented groups.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY**

**Issue Statement:** Archivists face a daunting and too often unsuccessful challenge in competing for decision makers' limited funds and support, which endangers the goals of ensuring citizens' rights, enabling organizational accountability, and making history accessible through archival programs.

**Desired Outcomes:** As the nation's largest and oldest archival association, SAA should take a sustained leadership role in promoting public awareness of professional archivists and archival work. Advocacy must become one of the profession's core concerns and SAA must develop the capabilities for conducting effective, ongoing advocacy work. We must build partnerships with other archival and related professional associations at the national, regional, and local level in

order to command the greater resources that will be needed to influence public awareness effectively. When SAA and the archival profession successfully come to terms with this challenge, all of the following statements will be true:

1. Congress funds the “Partnership for the American Historical Record” (PAHR) at a level allowing greatly increased support for state and local archives programs. This would mean a National Archives budget of \$500 million, with at least \$20 million allocated for PAHR.
2. American Archives Month is a well-established program with wide participation by archival programs that attracts steadily increasing media coverage and public awareness.
3. SAA members are able to provide a simple, accurate, and compelling description of what an archivist does and the value of archives.

***Three Highest-Ranked Proposed Activities:***

1. Launch American Archives Month in October 2006, working in conjunction with other organizations that currently celebrate Archives Week/Month.\*
2. Continue and enhance support for the “Partnership for the American Historical Record.”
3. Develop and promote a simple, accurate, and compelling description of what an archivist does and the value of archives.

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If you have questions or concerns about these issues or the strategic planning process, contact SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont ([nbeaumont@archivists.org](mailto:nbeaumont@archivists.org) or 312-606-0722).

See also:

Radar Screen (Adopted February 2005 and Revised as Indicated) (PDF)  
Statement of Goals and Objectives (2003)  
SAA Strategic Objectives (2003)