



## *Archives in Context*

### Season 6 Episode 2: Stacie Williams and Amy Cooper Cary

Aired February 18, 2022 • Length: 29:58 minutes

<https://archivesincontext.archivists.org/2022/01/31/season-6-episode-2-amy-cooper-cary-and-stacie-williams>

#### **SPEAKERS**

Amy Cooper Cary, Stacie Williams, Chris Burns, and Anna Trammell

#### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

archives, publications, publishing, authors, editors, archivists, case studies, book reviews, archival literature, submissions, superpower

#### **TRANSCRIPT**

**Nicole Milano** 00:10

From the Society of American Archivists, this is Archives in Context, a podcast highlighting archival literature and technologies, and most importantly, the people behind them.

**Chris Burns** 00:28

Hi, everyone, and welcome to another episode of Archives in Context. My name is Chris Burns, and I'm here with my co-host Anna Trammell.

**Anna Trammell** 00:35

Thanks, Chris. Today we are joined by Stacie Williams, Publications Editor at the Society of American Archivists, and Amy Cooper Cary, editor of American Archivist. And we're really excited to be able to talk with them today and learn more about writing and publishing opportunities with SAA. So welcome Stacie and Amy.

**Amy Cooper Cary** 00:58

Thank you. Great to be here.

**Stacie Williams** 01:00

Thanks so much for having us, Anna and Chris.

**Chris Burns** 01:02

Great. So before we talk about different publication opportunities with the publications program and the society's journal, could you each introduce yourselves?

**Stacie Williams 01:13**

Sure. So my name is Stacie Williams, and I'm the Division Chief for Archives and Special Collections at the Chicago Public Library. I have been in this position since December 2020. So still very new, still really exciting. Still a lot to learn.

**Amy Cooper Cary 01:31**

And I'm Amy Cooper Cary. I'm head of Special Collections and University Archives at Marquette University and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I've been in this position for one year. And I've been a member of SAA for more than 20 years and have been active in many sections and committees and served on Council.

**Anna Trammell 01:54**

So to start off with Stacie, could you talk a little bit about the publications program and what kind of opportunities are available for folks to publish with SAA?

**Stacie Williams 02:05**

Absolutely. And thank you so much for the question. So the publications program began at SAA in 1970. And since then, as an organization, we've published hundreds of books, case studies and other materials discussing the technical and theoretical aspects of archival work, not just for our members, but also professionals and adjacent organizations who engage in cultural heritage preservation work. For the book program, most people submit manuscripts for single monographs about like technical practice, or might be works of collected essays about archival theory. Currently, we offer routes to publishing through our book proposals process, our manuscript submissions process, our Archival Future series, case and case studies which have a separate review process through their section cochairs. And our Trends in Archives Practice modules. All of them have, you know, maybe slightly different requirements or guidelines, review processes and different lengths of time to publication. And overall, our Publications Board commits a considerable amount of personal time to essentially serve on the role of the Board and review these proposals. And our Board reviews proposals for a variety of factors, including how unique the offerings are within our current literature, and as an offer an assessment of primary and secondary sources to whom we can share the work.

**Chris Burns 03:40**

Great, thank you. And Amy, could you talk more about American Archivist and what the process looks like for submitting a research article or case study?

**Amy Cooper Cary 03:49**

Sure. American Archivist accepts submissions on an open and a rolling basis. So people turn in submissions through the Allen Press peertrack system, and that can be really done at any time when an article is ready. Guidelines for research articles which are about 8,000 words, and case studies, which are about 3,000 words, as well as other types of articles can be found on the website. I want to put a link to submissions and editorial guidelines in the episode extras at the bottom of this page. Submissions are assigned once they come in to three peer reviewers in a double blind review process. That is the reviewers do not know who the author is. The author does not know who the reviewers are, and that trio consists of one editorial board member and then two other reviewers who are volunteers from the membership. All of these reviews inform the editor decision on

publication. I will say that the majority of the articles go through at least one revision before a final decision is made. The process of going through peer review gives authors a tremendous amount of feedback. And it really helps authors refine their articles. Of course, if authors are interested in discussing their proposals before submission, I'm always open to a conversation to answer questions, or to give advice and I really enjoy that part of the process.

**Anna Trammell 05:37**

It's really interesting to hear about some of the behind the scenes work that happens and what that process looks like. But I imagine it can be, there could be a barrier to access, especially for new professionals and new archivists and people who haven't published before. So what advice would the two of you give to archivists who maybe aren't used to this process but feel like they have something to contribute to American Archivist or SAA publications more broadly?

**Stacie Williams 06:06**

Thanks for that question. Anna. I have on our end the Publications Board, we are saying just get in touch with us. Please, please feel free to get in touch with me as the Publications Editor or anyone else who is on our Publications Board. If you have questions about how to how to prepare a proposal or how to how to even conceptualize the work that you're talking about for writing, it is it is absolutely true that the process can feel intimidating. And I think one of the one of the things that we are really trying to kind of break down for our members and for potential authors is that while it's true that many of the people who do publish with SAA have pretty lengthy publishing histories, we are right now looking for people who have writing experience across a variety of different areas. So it's not dependent necessarily on whether or not you've had significant, it's not necessarily dependent on whether or not you've had significant writing experience or significant experience specifically with with scholarly writing or a scholarly tone. We have we have a lot of new members on our board this year, who are coming in with some perspectives and some experiences in publishing that are really broad and really vast, but I think are are going to go a long way to helping us think quite honestly, I think more creatively and think with an eye toward innovation about what topics we're focusing on, what areas are under- or over-represented in the literature and make, I think, really intentional and thoughtful decisions around what we're publishing, and whose voices have a chance to come to the table. For new authors, you know, we're definitely looking for books or proposals that have a unique voice or unique perspective, we understand that all archival experience is not represented equally, especially across our literature. So please, please don't feel that even if maybe you don't have a lot of writing experience, but you if you don't have a lot of published writing experience, but you're actually a strong writer, and your writing samples, you know, again, don't don't feel like just because you might be a new archivist or an early career archivist that you don't have anything at all to contribute to the literature, or that you need to work in the field for you know, 15 or 20 years before you could even come up with an idea. So much about what's changing in our field right now, I think especially related to how we use technology, and the role that plays in ethics, for instance, and how we even relate to each other and providing services to the public. All of that is evolving in real time. And I think there's a lot of new writers who might have something important to say about these changes that's very important to hear right now. And remember that first publication also doesn't have to be you know, the big 30,000 or 50,000 word book, maybe that first publication for you, as a writer as a smaller case study, helping you get a little practice with with just writing for the style, writing for this audience, writing in a particular format. Maybe the book isn't a traditional

publication, but maybe it's something that's illustrated or maybe you know if that's your particular storytelling, or information sharing gift, I think we are very open right now to really different ways of expressing the information about our profession. So whatever idea that you think you might have, please just get in touch with us and we can talk with you and talk about you know, how to make that idea how to better how to take that idea out of your head and be able to put it on a paper and come up with a publication.

**Amy Cooper Cary 10:05**

That's a really great answer, Stacie. And I, I want to add, from the perspective of American Archivist, there are a lot of opportunities to participate in SAA's publishing program. In addition to book publications in American Archivists, there's Archival Outlook, there is, of course, case study series. So there any number of ways to get involved, and it is really crucial to involve as many voices, as many new members who have those strong writing skills as possible. You know, for American Archivist, it might be that a research article may feel out of reach, but new authors, it can contribute in a number of different ways to the journal as well. Book reviews are a really great entry-level writing opportunity. They're, you know, they're relatively short, they engage particular writing in the literature, and it's a really good way to get your feet wet. There's also the opportunity to contribute to the Reviews Portal. And authors contributing to the Reviews Portal are are also very new to working within the publications program. I would also suggest that peer reviewers are gaining experience by reviewing other writing. And so maybe new authors would like to sign up and register in that peer track system as a peer reviewer to help provide experience and perspective on what is coming out in the literature. So there are just a tremendous number of ways and again, to echo Stacie, just come and talk to us when you have an idea. If you have a desire, you want to get involved. We're here to help find a way to do that.

**Chris Burns 12:31**

Thanks to you both for those answers. Those were pretty thoughtful, pretty in depth. It's clear, you've both been thinking a lot about these publications programs, the journal, and your role in this. We're wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your pathway. What drew you to these editorial positions in the first place?

**Stacie Williams 13:01**

Sure, Chris. Well, I can say I've been very fortunate to first of all have had opportunities to publish, I think early, early as as an archivist. And I've been involved with SAA from almost the start of my archives career. I joined the student chapter for SAA while I was at Simmons College in Boston. And I started my program in 2010. So I think that same year, got to attend my very first as a conference. So that was about 11 years ago. And during that time, I had the opportunity, I think because I was able to be involved so early on in graduate school. And let me add, we were really, really fortunate in that at Simmons at that time, there was money set aside if you were in the LIS program, to pay for student memberships to our professional organization. So I was very fortunate to be able to to join through that and have the school pay for it. And then served on a lot of different committees and groups. So that was the newsletter editor. That was that was one of my first sort of section positions in SAA was the newsletter editor for the Archives and Archivists of Color Section. And then following that as co-chair of the Women Archivists Section, where I got to work with Bethany Anderson on the Women Archivists Section salary survey, that was 2017, which then turned into a year on a working group related to the collection of like research data and archiving that so it was a working group designed to think up, maybe how we were approaching that capture that preservation of what types of data projects we could look into for SAA. But now

most recently moving into this role as the publication's editor, which really, it was interesting as at the time when the position appeared, it just happened to dovetail with a lot of things that were happening in my career at the time in terms of working on like digital scholarship projects, are really focusing on scholarly output via institutional repository migration projects, or research data, research, data archiving and preservation projects. So that I think plus my previous experiences as a journalist, I worked as a journalist for a little over 10 years before starting library school, and have actually published a book as an author. So I think it was just a lot of it just put this particular position and alignment with so many things that were a part of, I guess, like my life, or professional trajectory at the time. So it's, it's really exciting to now be in the position and see people engaging with with these issues and archives so thoughtfully and vocally, we have such a vocal contingent of folks who are reading our work and engaging with it and commenting on it. And that's incredible.

**Amy Cooper Cary 16:19**

For me, you know, this might be kind of a holdover from the 10 years that I spent working with publishers as a part of the purchasing team for the now defunct Borders chain, and worked for them for very long time and spent a lot of time working with the publishers to fulfill negotiate contracts and things like that. But it's not really an exaggeration to say that of everything I have done with SAA, I've most enjoyed working with publications. I've been involved, really since very early in my SAA career, serving on the American Archivist editorial board, I was reviews editor, I served as council liaison to the pubs board. I'm currently serving as co-editor of the Archival Future series, as well as the editor of American Archivist. I also had experience with the Midwest Archives Conference as a editorial board member and eventually the editor of Archival Issues. So I feel like the arc of a literature has formed me, and I'm an editor at my core, so contributing to that arc of literature in this way, it's always where my heart has been.

**Anna Trammell 17:54**

One of my favorite parts about getting to talk to people on this podcast is just learning more about their backgrounds and how they ended up where they are at this juncture in their careers. And just thinking about Amy's previous work with Borders, I had no idea that's so fascinating, or Stacie being able to kind of chart this path from starting as a grad student at Simmons and being able to, you know, edit an SAA newsletter for a section. It's just always fascinating for me to hear. And you know, I've had the opportunity as a newer member of the profession to be able to learn from both of you as an intern on the publication's board and coming into the Women Archivists Section shortly after Stacie was co-chair and just being able to, to learn from your example and have the possibility to you know, engage with SAA in different ways. And with SAA publications through some of these opportunities that you've been talking about that maybe have a little lower barrier to entry, like Archival Outlook or case studies and things like that. So I hope that some of our listeners who are also newer professionals will be inspired by some of these opportunities that you're describing. So Stacie, could you talk to us about your main goals for the publications program and what changes you'd most like to see during your time as publications editor?

**Stacie Williams 19:25**

Absolutely. Thank you. Thank you for that. So our main goals right now for the Publications Program are creating, standardizing and clarifying some of our editorial processes for authors. We have a lot of new people on the board and it is still pandemic, still coordinating all of our schedules and feedback is an iterative process

that we are always looking to make more efficient on our end. Other equally important goals right now are, as I mentioned, encouraging new officers and creating routes of inclusion, support, and innovation to the publishing program. We know that the publishing industry, whether we're talking mainstream fiction, or nonfiction publishing, or academic university presses, blogging, consumer magazines, anything else still has a lot of growth to do in areas of diversion, diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility. So as a publishing program, we're like everyone else dealing with these challenges, I think, and really trying to actually meet and face that challenge head on in ways that are proactive and not reactive, and actually engage the things that our membership, the things that our membership are asking us for. So you know, questions like, do our authors reflect the changing profession? Do the ideas that our authors are proposing represent contemporary understandings and applications of the work and have we, as the board implemented changes across other editorial areas of the program, so with graphic designers, or copy editors, illustrators, other vendors, so that our program is really holistically addressing and are meeting the needs of today's archival and cultural heritage workers. All of these are questions that I want us to be like constantly asking ourselves in the publications program toward the goal of creating bodies of knowledge that serve us now and in the future. And I'll say the final thing is that we are hoping to create some editorial bridges with the American Historical Association. And this is this is actually a larger joint conversation that Amy is also undertaking with me. So that we could be doing more to share knowledge across our publishing channels in order to work more collaboratively and intentionally with one of our largest groups of stakeholders. Historians are some of the folks who use our collections and content the most. So really looking I think, at this period of time as as a tremendous opportunity for bridge building across the profession, and really sharing knowledge in ways that lend themselves to the preservation of our cultural heritage.

**Chris Burns** 22:14

Amy, very similar question for you. What are your main goals for the American Archivist? What kinds of changes or new things can we expect to see during your time as editor?

**Amy Cooper Cary** 22:28

We've already seen one of those changes, and that is a new digital format. And that is something that's really exciting American Archivist has been published since 1938. It's been published in primarily a print format for decades. It's the leading publication in the archives field and it really represents some of the best intellectual work written about archival practice as well as influences in the archives have on cultural ideas, social influence, legal, technological developments. All of this that influences our work as archivists influences the way that we see the archival record, and ultimately influences how our users interact with those materials. Since I first started reading the journal in the late 1990s, I've really understood American Archivist to be a remarkable publication. And in moving this year, really just this summer, our first issue in moving into its first digital-only format, we're seeing a huge change in the way that readers have the opportunity to engage with this with the journal. That huge change requires a real commitment on the part of the editorial board to make sure that readers see the same commitment in the journal to high quality content that it has always provided. But I think what's most exciting is that in this new digital format, the journal has the opportunity to leverage that experience and to actively engage SAA's goals for diversity, equity, and inclusion to improve access to a number of materials and to include different types of materials in support of of the publications color, for example, to look at new publishing workflows, and mostly, I think to continue to engage with members and readers to

determine what we actually want from this new journal. It's a stark change for a lot of people. I really can't wait to see the next few years of development and publishing in this new format. I think it's exciting. It's offering us an opportunity to be very dynamic and responsive. And I think that's a great contribution.

**Anna Trammell** 25:34

Absolutely, that's a big change right away in your role. And I've been really excited to see some of these changes. And just really appreciate both of you sharing your thoughts on how the profession is changing and what that means for SAA publications and how they can be more dynamic and responsive to that change. So really excited to see what the future holds. So now we're going to move to our final question. And this is something that we ask everyone we interview on the Archives and Context podcast. If you could have any superpower, what would it be? And why?

**Stacie Williams** 26:25

That is actually a great question. And I feel like it took me a long time to think about. Not habits, astral projection or teleportation. I would love love love to finish a morning meeting and then teleport to a cafe and set your mind to play for the rest of the afternoon, edit my manuscripts and then teleport back to the west side of Chicago and get my children from school by 4:30. Yes, that would be lovely.

**Amy Cooper Cary** 26:56

I think that sounds, that's kind of interesting, because it plays into this, my response which has stymied me all week long. I did not know how to answer this question. But I suppose what I really want is something that some people, some probably who are listening right now already have, and that is the ability to think brilliantly and fluidly about scientific topics. In particular, theoretical physics, astrophysics, biological sciences, I'm completely fascinated by these large concepts in science, like chaos theory, mass extinctions, black holes, quantum mechanics, the way the universe, and you name it. And I'm fascinated because these things tend to freak me out. I have absolutely zero facility with the actual work that goes into these topics. But I love dipping into books that explain them well, and actually leaves me reeling and wanting to read more. So I think about the work of Richard Feynman or Stephen Jay Gould, or James Gleek, all people who I've read multiple books by so being able, able to actually do that kind of thing, and that kind of that kind of thinking. And that kind of work is as close to a superpower as I can imagine. And being able to write about that kind of thinking and work so that people like me can understand it is a darn close second.

**Chris Burns** 28:39

Well, I'd like to say we end the episode by granting you these new superpowers. But unfortunately, as powerful as this podcast is, we don't have that much power. It's been wonderful speaking with you both today, though, however, and it sounds like you've already both have some pretty rich superpowers. So thank you for bringing those powers and your skills to SAA and serving in these capacities and for talking with us today.

**Stacie Williams** 29:09

Thank you so much for inviting us to chat and share a little bit more. This was fun.

**Amy Cooper Cary** 29:16

It's totally my pleasure. Just wonderful to be here. Thank you.

**Nicole Milano** 29:24

You've just listened to an episode of Archives in Context, the official podcast at the Society of American Archivists. Members of the podcast team include Bethany Anderson, Chris Burns, Mary Caldera, Nicole Milano, Lolita Rowe, Anna Trammell, and JoyEllen Williams. Opinions expressed in this podcast are our own and are not reflective of a particular institution. Be sure to subscribe and rate us on iTunes if you enjoyed what you heard. And join us again next time.