

Society of American Archivists Membership Meeting August 5, 2019

Executive Director's Remarks

State of the Association, Fiscal Year 2019

The following report was presented at the Annual Membership (Business) Meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Austin, Texas, on Monday, August 5, 2019. A recording of the Membership Meeting is available at https://www.pathlms.com/saa/events/1551/video_presentations/139383

I was an English and Poli Sci major, but I've always loved numbers. Not the algebraic equation kind, but the kind that help to tell a story.

And so in my 8 (or so) minutes today, I'd like to talk about SAA's fiscal year 2019—a story that is peppered with numbers and has a happy ending.

REVENUES

SAA's revenues derived from four primary sources in FY19:

- Membership dues comprised 34.8% of total revenues.
- The Joint Annual Meeting in Washington, DC—our largest conference ever—contributed 34.2% of revenues.
- Education courses, both in-person and online, yielded 16.7%.
- And Publications, including periodicals subscriptions and advertising and book sales, yielded another 9.6%.
- (The remaining 5% came from job board advertising and CD investment income.)

Over the years, we've strived to keep Membership dues income at between 30 and 40 percent of total revenues, though the "industry standard" in association management is closer to 45 to 50 percent.

Annual Meeting revenues were extraordinarily high because of record-setting attendance, and exhibitors and sponsors were drawn to the joint meeting because they didn't have to spread their dollars over two or more conferences to reach the archives/records audience.

Education revenues, which had been declining in recent years, rebounded modestly with our very popular in-person "boot camps" and more opportunities for online learning.

And in Publications we continued to publish *American Archivist*, *Archival Outlook*, and *In The Loop* with slight increases in advertising support for each—and the Publications Board and staff invested significant time in working with authors to prepare new books for release in FY20. Despite our best-laid plans for

staging new releases at two to three per year, we faced the third year in a row of the challenge of working with authors who are full-time archivists and who thus have limited time to give to projects like writing a book for SAA. It's important to us that the books are authored by experts—actual archivists—and so it's worth the wait. Nevertheless, it did create a gap in our revenue stream.

Four major sources of revenue, with three carrying most of the weight in FY19.

That's the short story on the Revenue side.

Because SAA is a non-profit organization, let's look at the numbers reflecting SAA's investment of that revenue (i.e., where we spent money on members' behalf).

INVESTMENTS

Roughly 35% of your investment in SAA goes to infrastructure—salaries and benefits and office space for your 12 staff members.

The Annual Meeting is an expensive proposition, requiring significant expenditures in audiovisual support for education sessions and section meetings, food and beverage, and special events, and in FY19 the expenses associated with our largest-ever conference comprised 24.4% of total expenses.

Expenses also were incurred for:

Governance—for example, two full Council meetings and one one-day Council meeting during the year, as well as approximately \$19,000 to support Section activities via small allocations to each of our 46 sections and funding of a few component group projects;

Advocacy—such as an in-person meeting of the Committee on Public Policy; implementation of our successful Archives on the Hill event in Washington last August; membership in the National Coalition for History, which provides information and lobbying support; and Bill Maher's representation of SAA at two meetings per year of WIPO's Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights in Geneva, Switzerland;

In Periodicals, production of *American Archivist* and *Archival Outlook*—including provision of online versions. (This year we'll be offering an option to opt-out of the print version of *AO*, but there are production costs—even in an online environment.)

In Education, the Committee, staff, and instructors invested time and effort in significant curriculum revisions for FY19, and for FY20 and beyond Rana Salzmann and her staff are investing in development of new A&D and DAS courses and a new Management Track; continuing our focus on online course development; pursuing strategies for recruiting new instructors; scouting the continuing education landscape to ensure that we are competing effectively with increasing numbers of providers; and enhancing our efforts to make members aware of our products by making a modest investment in marketing and promotion.

And in **Publications**, we worked to complete several of the projects that you saw in the Bookstore at this meeting. Thanks to the efforts of the Publications Board under Chris Prom's inspirational leadership, and of staff members Teresa Brinati and Abigail Christian, 5 new books premiered at this conference,

three of them linchpins in our Archival Fundamental Series III, one that addresses our ongoing professional conversation about values, and the fifth an important exploration of the profession's future in partnership with the American Library Association. We're very grateful to our authors, editors, and contributing writers.....

But that's just part of the story in Publications.

If you stopped by the Bookstore during this meeting, you saw posters for *Creating Family Archives*, SAA's first foray into the consumer market. We have big plans for CFA once it's released this fall – my dream is to have it featured on the Today Show one morning – and we hope that you'll refer family and friends to it. The payoff for you is that you won't have to spend your time advising them—or doing the work yourself!

Thanks for your patience as we've worked to bring these new products to market.

Also good news is that we have 17 new books in the pipeline for publication between now and 2022, including 4 additional books in the Archival Fundamentals series, more in the Trends in Archives Practice series, and 10 new titles ranging from “Archival Accessioning” to “Trusting Records in the Cloud.”

In other words, we're counting on Publications contributing more on the revenue side in the coming years.

It's important to note that we've been creating free content, too, such as the 7 open-access case study series available on line, ranging in topic from our original Campus Case Studies series to our newest series – Native American Archival Materials – in partnership with SAA's Native American Archives Section.

And with support from the Publications staff and some special software, the Dictionary Working Group has continued its construction of the *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*. Dictionary development is a never-ending process, of course, but we're excited that the Working Group will release the free dictionary on the SAA website this fall.

Major investments in technology in FY19 and FY20 are drawing down the technology reserve fund a bit (and very appropriately). We implemented SAA Connect early in the year as a means of managing our many discussion lists and facilitating connections with and among members.

Thanks to a strong reserve, we purchased a much-needed new association management software system—at a price of more than \$400,000—that will:

- Improve your member experience, whether renewing your membership, tracking your progress through the DAS curriculum, or purchasing a book or webcast:
- Help us manage your membership and preferences, so that we can communicate with you on matters that are of greatest interest to you; and
- Assist the staff in being more efficient and productive, thus freeing up time to work on other member services.

The other investment—this year—is the live-streaming of 20 sessions at this conference, as well as enhancement of the audio recordings to include live slide capture and recording of the section meetings. Access to all of this is included in your conference registration fee and made available for just \$99 to members who weren't able to attend.

SAA's very ambitious Strategic Plan for 2020-2022 calls for:

- Conduct of an all-profession survey (which we've dubbed A*CENSUS II) to help us answer critical questions about the environment in which archivists work;
- Support for the newly created Committee on Research, Data, and Assessment;
- More support for the Committees on Public Policy and Public Awareness, including funding to provide media training to a cadre of SAA members so that we can take greater advantage of media opportunities;
- Funding for cost-effective professional development offerings;
- And so on!

ENGAGEMENT

And now my favorite set of numbers—because they reflect the extent to which SAA's members are engaging with each other through their professional organization.

- For instance, in the past year many members participated in content creation, sharing their knowledge and expertise with colleagues.
- More than 200 people were involved in creating content for our books and periodicals,
- 42 individuals developed and/or taught courses and webcasts, and
- More than 400 individuals played a role in the 2018 Joint Annual Meeting, as Program Committee members, Host Committee members, or presenters.
- Currently some 800 members provide leadership and direction and connections by serving on Section steering committees, on appointed groups, or on the SAA Council.
- 2,182 individual subscribers currently wait with bated breath to learn about the Dictionary Working Group's Word of the Week.
- 2,671 attendees crowded into the Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, DC, for our Joint Annual Meeting a year ago.
- 4,227 books were sold in FY19.

- 1,512 individuals attended 67 in-person education courses, and 1,500 more purchased SAA webcasts.
- 175 people viewed our (free) Cultural Diversity Competency webcast—and, we hope, discussed what they learned with their colleagues.
- 105 individuals were awarded a DAS certificate, 33 completed requirements for renewal, and 9 completed the requirements for SAA's new A&D certificate.
- And I'm pleased to announce that paid attendance at this conference totals 1,701—and total participation from exhibitors, sponsors, non-archivist speakers, and guests is 1,997.

(I would note at this point that we have not increased member prices for in-person courses, webcasts, books, or the Annual Meeting for three years and will not be implementing any increases in FY20.)

So how do all these numbers add up? In my view, they indicate an organization that is:

- Financially healthy,
- Engaging a sizeable number of members in content creation, policy development, and issue management,
- Fostering community among its members via 46 sections and a very intentional effort to create a welcoming environment, and
- Positioned well to provide the information, education, and advocacy that will help members, leaders, and staff advance the profession together.

Thank you for the continued privilege of serving as SAA's executive director.