

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS, MUSEUM ARCHIVES SECTION  
Hilton Austin, Austin, TX  
Business Meeting, 13 August 2009

Section Chair Leilani Dawson started the section meeting by having the 51 attendees introduce themselves.

*Election of section officers and upcoming changes in bylaws related to section elections*

Leilani read the biography of newsletter editor candidate Joe Ciccone, who was unable to attend the meeting. After a call for additional nominees, Joe was elected unanimously for the newsletter editor position. Francine Snyder and Susie Anderson graciously accepted nominations to be the co-chair-elects for the upcoming year, and were unanimously elected.

Leilani also noted that SAA Council was in the process of revising the governance and election policies and procedures for sections and roundtables. The first of these strongly encouraged sections and roundtables to conduct electronic elections for upcoming election cycles, which SAA would manage with its online election system. Leilani favored the section implementing this change as it would allow for the entire section membership (over 900 people) to vote for section leaders, as opposed to just those who were able to travel to the SAA annual conferences.

The next change discussed was what to do to maintain the number of steering committee members in years when the section does not have a chair-elect. (As things had been, the section elected a chair-elect every other year, with that person serving as chair elect for one year and then chair for two years—so there had been no chair-elect in the first year of the chair's term.) Leilani asked whether people would prefer electing an at-large steering committee member in those years or asking the immediate past chair to join the steering committee to fill out the roster. Incoming Council representative Deborra Richardson pointed out that new Council guidelines would ask sections to elect their chair/leader position every year (and would forbid that person from serving more than three consecutive terms), making the discussion moot. So, it was confirmed that from now on the section shall hold elections for either a chair and a chair-elect or for two co-chairs every year. Leilani noted that she would soon be drafting proposed revisions to the section bylaws in order to reflect these decisions and to otherwise bring them in-line with the new Council guidelines.

*SAA updates*

Ann Jenks of the Program committee encouraged the group to submit session and pre-conference workshop proposals for the joint 2010 SAA/NAGARA/COSA meeting in Washington D.C. There is no particular theme for the meeting, but proposers are encouraged to present submissions that speak to the commonalities of archival experience. This year's deadline is September 24<sup>th</sup>; and updated session proposal forms are available on the SAA website at <http://www.archivists.org/conference/>.

Deborra Richardson, the section's incoming Council representative, updated the group on Council's recent activities. Items of special note for the section included the aforementioned

revisions to section (and roundtable) governance and election guidelines, as well as information on the newly-formed Working Group on Cultural Property, which Council has charged to examine issues regarding collections containing cultural-sensitive materials. Deborra encouraged people with expertise in this area to let Council know if they are interested.

Other Council updates included a revised charge for the Standards committee, as well as revised A&A listserv terms of participation, the adoption of the ALA/SAA Joint Statement on Access (and concomitant disbanding of the taskforce working on this issue), revisions to the SAA Strategic Plan and draft Advocacy Agenda, updates to the SAA investment policy, and a newly-charged SAA Finance committee. Finally, Deborra noted that Council would like to get feedback from AAM on its progress and/or attitudes towards a statement on access (originally AAM was invited to be included in the work on the joint statement, but it declined); people with knowledge of or interest in this area can direct their feedback to either Deborra or to Susan Malbin, the co-chair of the Joint Committee on Archives, Libraries, and Museums.

### *Discussion on advocacy*

As a follow up to the call for sections and roundtables to consider what they, their members, and their members' repositories are doing in the areas of SAA's three strategic priorities (advocacy, technology, and diversity), the section what museum archives are doing to advocate for archives. The archives staff at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston reported on their very active programs for Archives Month in October, which were helped along by the fact of the Museum's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Smithsonian has also started an Institution-wide archives month program as well; in 2008 each Smithsonian museum archives had an open house, and they are looking for more opportunities to expand their outreach. The statement "Archives Begins Where You Are" was also discussed, along with its implication that outreach to museum colleagues (and outside stakeholders) and otherwise advocating for archives are not just Archives Month activities. Nevertheless, Archives Month—with its strong support from SAA—is a good place to get museums and museum visitors focused on museum archives; one suggestion would be for museum archivists to publish a posting featuring the archives on the museum's blog in October (if their institution has a blog).

This segued into a discussion of the technological tools available at museums. A little less than half of the attendees reported that their museums had blogs, and it was suggested that the section either provide a portal for these museum blogs on its website or have an upcoming newsletter article featuring blogs and blogging. Wikipedia was also suggested as a place to provide links to museum archives blogs; or at least that museum archivists update their museums' entries to include information about the museum archives. It was noted that although Wikipedia has an entry for 'Archives' in general, it does not have one specific to museum archives.

### *Session ideas for 2010 SAA conference*

\* Francine Snyder suggested a session on project management and long-term vision for archives, especially those with small staffs. How do archivists in such situations get things done; how do they know what projects to tackle and in what order? What mechanisms are in place to ensure

that priorities either are maintained or are revisited in a systematic fashion, and what is done to measure progress and keep track of what goals have been accomplished?

\*Susan von Sahlis suggested a session on documenting change at institutions, prompted by the fact that the Harvard Art Museum is leaving its historic Fogg building, which is being gutted and repurposed. How do museums (or other organizations with or formerly occupying historic buildings) document their transformations; what artifacts (in addition to textual and visual records) do they keep? How do they document their organizations' architectural history along with their institutional history? This subject struck a chord at the meeting, with other attendees mentioning other institutions in related circumstances. Possible parallels with or lessons to be learned from historic houses and other living history museums, where buildings are part of the collections, were also noted, as was the opportunity to collaborate with the Architectural Records Roundtable. It was suggested that if this became a session, it would make for a good guide as well; the session papers could be published in the section newsletter and/or elsewhere on the Museum Archives Section website.

#### *Announcements and updates*

\* Deb Wythe reported that she is working with a group of museum archivists in Sao Paulo who are interested in hearing about museum archives and museum archivists in the United States, and that she will soon be sending out a call asking for people to submit their experiences and advice.

\* The NEH Stabilization Grants are back (now called the Sustaining Cultural Heritage Collections grants). The grant guidelines will be up soon (by September), and the submission deadline will be early December. The grants, which are split into smaller planning/evaluation grants and larger implementation grants, may be used for things like HVAC systems, security, storage systems, etc.

\* Francine Snyder, the section's Website Coordinator, put out a call for people to submit their archives for the website's featured repository section.

\* Kathleen Williams from the NHPRC invited applications for the Archives Leadership Institute at the University of Wisconsin, which the NHPRC has re-funded.

\* Susan von Sahlis announced that the Peabody Salem Museum will be hosting a Museum Archives Conference in 2010. The conference (which will likely be primarily aimed at art museums) will include panels with both museum administrators and archivists.

\* Sarah Demb suggested people check out online learning tools on electronic records management for museums. The tool is available online at: <http://www.collectionslink.org.uk/RM-Tool/>, and the Collections Link website also includes a number of other guides, FAQs, and how-tos related to managing museum collections and documents.

\* Susan Anderson announced that the Smithsonian and the Rockefeller Archives Center have rolled out a series of workshops on the tools that resulted from their Collaborative Electronic

Records Project. The first of these workshops was held at the Austin annual conference, and they will become a standard part of SAA's continuing education offerings. Susan invited applications for an upcoming workshop to be held in Philadelphia on Friday, December 11<sup>th</sup>, from 1 to 4 pm.

\* Deb Wythe announced that the *Museum Archives* manual is still selling well (around 190 copies sold last year), and that—given its sales rank among SAA titles and the distribution of profits by sales rank—it is still making a noticeable positive contribution to SAA's bottom line.

Respectfully submitted,  
-Leilani Dawson, Chair.