SAA 2001 Planning Conference Summary Report
May 5-6, 2001
Chicago, Illinois

Marcia Poell Holston, CAE
Harrison Coerver & Associates
3519 SW Alameda Drive
Topeka, Kansas 66614
Telephone: 785-272-8500
Fax: 785-272-4914
mpholston@aol.com

Table of Contents

List of Participants

Lee J. Stout, President
Steve Hensen, Vice President
Elizabeth Adkins, Treasurer
Tom Battle
Tom Connors
Jackie Dooley
Mark Greene
Dennis Harrison
Jane Kenamore
Richard Pearce-Moses
Becky Haglund Tousey
Wilda Logan Willis
Susan E. Fox, Executive Director
Debra S. Nolan, Meetings Director

Planning Objectives

The following objectives were established for the Conference:

1. Identify and explore issues of future importance for SAA
2. Define SAA priorities for the next 2-3 years.
3. Create momentum and commitment.

These objectives were established based on advance interviews with SAA volunteer and staff leaders. They were reviewed with participants at the outset, as was the process designed to accomplish them.

Review of Current Status

To establish a starting point for discussion and the scenario planning process, the current status of SAA was reviewed. The following is a summary of the status:

Membership:

- 3500 individuals and 500 institutions. Stagnant; No significant growth.
- Solid retention rate: Core membership of older, more seasoned professionals; sense that younger constituencies not joining

- 88% of current membership is over age 40
- Competition from local, regional and allied associations † lower dues & friendly relationships
- Drop analysis indicates most cite "dues too high" † many from librarians whose funding has been significantly cut
- Little investment in membership marketing at present time
- Don't know "market share" due to lack of data on universe of eligible members
- 75% of members earn less than $50,000 per year / 82% hold post-graduate degrees
- 34% of members pay dues out of their own pocket
- Members in diverse employment settings: government, academia, historical societies, businesses, museums, libraries, religious organizations, etc.

Financial:

(Based on Year End 2000 Audit)

TOTAL BUDGET	$ 1.3 million
Dues	+ $427,000 (33% total revenue)
Annual Meeting	+ $15,000 (1% total revenue)
Periodicals	- $46,000
Publications	- $35,000
Workshops	- $70,000
Contributions	+ $8,000
Investments	+ $91,000 (7% total revenue)
Other	+ $7,800
Grants	+ $10,000
Committees	- $56,800
Membership	- $119,000
Administrative	- $184,800
Surplus/Deficit	+ $30,000
Reserves	Approx. $1 million

- Solid financial position
- No significant growth trends

Continuing Education

- Continuing education / high performance standards are core to SAA mission
- Continuing education programs are a strength, but need broader curriculum & general shoring up
- Moving into distance learning / on-line education

Mission

SAA serves the educational and informational needs of its members and provides leadership to help ensure the identification, preservation and use of the nation's historical record.

Goals

1. MEMBERSHIP: To build a diverse and cohesive membership and to support those members by addressing their professional needs as well as by developing a strong archival community.
2. STANDARDS: To promote excellence in the archival enterprise through identification, creation, promulgation, and support of standards important to sound archival policy and best practices.
3. PUBLISHING: To publish and distribute high quality archival literature publications at all levels for members and the archival community.
4. EXTERNAL NETWORKING: To define, establish, and enhance strategic relationships with archival and allied professions, associations, institutions, and coalitions.
5. EDUCATION: To support opportunities for professional and disciplinary growth by promoting graduate education and research, and by guiding and providing high quality continuing education programs.
6. POLITICAL: To exert active leadership on enduring and emerging archival issues by advancing archival concerns and perspectives on the critical challenges of the digital age, shaping public polity, and promoting funding for archival programs, research and development.

Scenario Planning Process

Focal Issue

Given the objectives, the focal issue for the scenario planning exercise was defined as follows:

Where should SAA focus its human and financial resources in the coming 2 to 3 years? What should our top priorities be?

Frame of Reference

To focus thinking about factors influencing the future, the group was asked to respond to the question, "What Do We Know Now that We Wish We Had Known 5 or 10 Years Ago?" Responses included:

- The web is God and Microsoft is the devil
- Recognition of the importance of standards
- Archivists could be leaders in standards development
- More and better information about international standards and a better understanding of alternative definitions and views of archives
- How to influence the development of technology and information systems in the archival community
- The importance and scope of relationships and collaboration with disciplines and professions beyond just historians
- The key role of archivists in the new information economy
- The significance of intellectual property
- The marketability of historical non-fiction
- The popularity and appeal of nostalgia
- The difficulty in attracting younger generations to membership
- The implications of emerging technology on skills and continuing education needs
- The scope of interest and popularity of graduate archival education
- Membership would level off and programs would not meet the needs and expectations of all members

Stakeholders

The following were identified as those who hold a "stake" in the future of SAA and in the profession, and a brief description of what their stakes are. These stakeholders are important because they have influence or potential influence on the archival community and profession, or represent current or potential markets for SAA membership, products and services.

STAKEHOLDERS	STAKE IN SAA OR THE PROFESSION
Archivists/Preservationists	Economic; Professional development
Public/Society	Access to and creation of information; Preservation of legacy
Historians, Researchers, Users	Access to essential resources
Government (all levels)	Accountability; Information; Public access and service
Legislators/Public Policy-makers	Access and management of records; Evidentiary role
Academics	Intellectual sustainability of the profession
Employers of archivists	Legal documentation; Institutional memory; Added value
Institutions without archivists	Legal documentation; Institutional memory
Geneologists, Collectors, Buffs	Access to essential resources
IT professionals	Expertise and perspective on information management
Librarians, Museum professionals, and Records managers	Expertise and perspective on information
Educators	Access to educational resources; Enhancement of education process
Lawyers	Evidence; Creators of information
News Media	Access to information

resources

Trends and Factors Driving the Future of SAA

Major forces, trends and developments which will influence or drive the future of the archival profession were discussed and identified in five general categories † Economic, Political, Social/Cultural, Technical and Professional. Participants then articulated the assumptions and uncertainties with regard to how the factors would play out in the future.

Economic Factors:

1. SAA capacity to expand member products and services

Assumptions:	Budget will remain tight. Alternative sources exist to fund programs and services.
Uncertainties:	How much funding will be available from alternative sources? Could projects generate a surplus? Will demand for services (i.e. education, publications, etc.) increase or decrease? Can SAA attract new member segments? How much will the current membership software drain our finances?

2. Health of the U.S. economy

Assumptions:	Economic volatility will impact the salaries of archivists and numbers employed. Salaries generally will not rise significantly. SAA can't count on investment income as a significant source of income.
Uncertainties:	To what extent will technological skills & experience of archivists impact their salaries? Will demand for archivists in the labor market grow? As archivists become more involved in other disciplines, will they find SAA relevant?

Political Factors:

3. Government grant programs

Assumptions:	Grant funding will be stagnant or decline. Political trends and economic health will dictate government funding levels.
Uncertainties:	How healthy will the U.S. economy be? Will the political clout and trendiness attached to preserving cultural heritage continue?

4. Legal and regulatory environment

Assumptions:	Copyright and intellectual property will be of increasing concern, debate, and litigation. Privacy and access (including Freedom of Information Act) will be a subject of

growing contention.

Uncertainties: How will privacy and intellectual property issues be resolved?

5. U.S. Archivist

Assumptions: The position will turnover within the next 3 years.

Uncertainties: What will the new U.S. Archivist's attitude be toward SAA?
How will SAA position itself, define its stance and role in the nomination process?

Social/Cultural Factors:

6. Demographic shifts in the U. S. population

Assumptions: Growing ethnic and cultural diversity will impact archivists in all aspects.
Younger members will expect agile delivery, modularization of services, and everything for nothing.
Aging members represent an opportunity for gifts / planned giving to SAA.

Uncertainties: Can SAA attract younger members?
Will the pace of change drive out older archivists sooner than expected?
Will aging archivists retire from employment and leadership, or "die with their boots on?"
Will younger members get involved as SAA leaders?

7. Time pressure and Volunteerism

Assumptions: Time pressure will increase.
The role of volunteers and methods of engaging them will change.
There will be a 24/7 connection to work.

Uncertainties: Will there be a significant backlash to 24/7 connection to work?

8. Globalization of the profession

Assumptions: International professional collaboration will grow.

Uncertainties: How do we connect with the third world?
How will SAA members react to increasing international activity?

9. Society's desire for authentic history

Uncertainties: How do we navigate "Disney" versus authentic versions of history?

Technical Factors:

10. Digitization

Assumptions: There will be increasing digitization and it will be more expensive.

Uncertainties: How will digitization affect support for maintaining originals?
Will increased visibility generate increased resources?
How will digitization impact traditional archival functions?

11. Electronic Records

Assumptions: Electronic records will be more expensive to preserve and maintain, but cheaper to create.
Electronic records will revolutionize archival function and practice.
Records will be lost without preservation solutions; collaboration with other disciplines is essential to developing preservation solutions.

Uncertainties: Who will have custody of electronic records?

12. Internet

Assumptions: The pace of change will continue.
Functionality will increase.

Uncertainties: How will internet business models affect access to archivists?

Professional Factors:

13. Impact/evolution of graduate archival education

Assumptions: The field will expand and programs will grow in depth and strength.
The percentage of archivists who are program graduates will increase.

Uncertainties: Will there be further erosion of history-based programs?

14. Professional employment standards for archivists

Assumptions: There will be increasing agreement on minimal credentials.
More archivists will meet professional standards.
Employer expectations will rise.

Uncertainties: Will ACA have an impact on the profession?
Will there be a truly independent accrediting body?
How will we define ourselves? How will allied professions define themselves?
Will certification be more of a hiring factor outside the corporate environment?
Will our role expand without expanding our skill set?

15. Employers' and institutions' understanding of the role / contribution of archivists

Assumptions: This will continue to be an uphill battle, but progress will be made.

16. Standards for appropriate management of archives

Assumptions: Descriptive standards will increase.
Preservation standards will be well established.
Open standards/XML will help preservation.

17. Relationships with affiliated professional organizations and other professions (e.g. business, IT)

Assumptions: There will be increasing collaboration.

Uncertainties: Will some of the related organizations merge? Will ARMA swallow us?
Will the boundaries between professions blur distinctions?

Scenarios

Participants were broken into 3 groups, with each group assigned the task of creating and naming a story or scenario of an alternative future based on the prior discussions of key factors and trends as well as their degrees of impact and uncertainty. The scenarios are set in the year 2011, ten years from today. Although a transcription of the scenario presentation by each group was not possible, the following is a summary of the key elements of the 3 scenarios or alternative futures:

Scenario A: "SAA RULES"
(SAA's vision or preferred future is realized)

- SAA is a player globally
- Members are technically proficient
- SAA is influential with NARA, the government and the public
- E-records standards are in place
- SAA offers free training to all members in a wide range of disciplines on all important topics. This training is conveniently available.
- Staff is adequate to meet member needs, and employs excellent association management software.
- Members are highly satisfied with SAA services and benefits
- Members from other professions and disciplines (e.g. business, landscape architecture) are attracted to SAA

by the quality of its educational conferences, website and other information resources

- Membership has increased dramatically and is far more diverse, including an array of disciplines, professions, lifestyles and cultures/ethnicity, many of whom are represented in leadership as well as in the membership.
- The mean age of membership has dropped dramatically since 2001.
- SAA has an excellent array of publications in multiple languages.
- SAA has significant impact on intellectual property law.
- SAA has an influential speakers bureau.
- Public love of history has become public appreciation and support of archiving and public understanding of archivists' expertise.
- Archives are recognized as a vital component of society. The profession enjoys greater public visibility and awareness as a result of the continued popularity of public historical programming and publications as well as a successful SAA national public relations campaign. It is a widely-recognized career choice.
- As a result of this popularity and awareness, graduate archival programs flourish. Acceptance into these programs in highly competitive.
- Archivists are uniformly educated to meet standards, salaries are competitive, and employers value the archivist function.
- Corporate sponsors aid in SAA's ability to offer consistently high quality conventions and conferences at minimal cost for members. These sponsors include the entertainment industry, which has profited from the public interest in authentic historical programming and learned the value of the archivist in making it possible.

Scenario B: "CODE BLUE "
(SAA fails)

- SAA is down to 500 members. The membership base was lost due to the retirement of most of the core members and the failure to attract new generations of archivists.
- Technologically proficient archivists have left SAA membership because their needs were better met by other organizations.
- SAA primarily functions as a roundtable of ARMA.
- Corporate archivists and other special constituencies have spun off into their own separate associations because SAA did not effectively meet their needs and expectations.
- MAC and MARAC merged into one organization which is highly successful and has drained much of SAA's intellectual capital.
- Regional societies of archivists are doing well, and have replaced SAA as the primary choice of professional organization for most archivists.
- Following the resignation of the Executive Director and other key staff, SAA decided it could no longer

- afford professional staff. A former SAA president who retired has taken on skeletal administrative responsibility for the organization on a part-time basis.
- The newly appointed U.S. Archivist has no archival background and little interest in working with SAA.

Scenario C: "KEEP ON TRUCKIN'"
(SAA survives but does not achieve its vision)

- Although SAA has lost about 10% of its membership in the past 10 years, grants are beginning to make a positive difference due to an improving economy following the recession of 2000 - 2004.
- The newly appointed U.S. Archivist is supportive of archivists but is a former state governor and has no professional background in the area.
- The job market is tight, but good for technologically skilled graduates and the corporate sector.
- Copyright problems have finally been resolved.
- There is a trend toward greater interest in use of primary materials in classrooms across the country, but this not met with increased resources.
- SAA members are impacted by political issues for which they are not prepared.
- There are 950 attendees at the SAA annual meeting and the theme is "Coping with Internet 4.0: The Digital World after Microsoft." The attendees include the highest percentage of minorities in SAA history.
- Some geneologists and historians are attending the convention, but not a high number.
- SAA is using technology to engage more members through its website. For instance, the President's address at the annual convention is available to all members via streaming video.
- A group of dissatisfied members has formed a competitive association called the Organization of Disaffected Archivists (ODA) and has attracted about 350 of SAA's former members.
- ODA has taken over the list-serve.
- Financially, SAA is running surpluses of about $1,000 per year. The budget has continued to be tight and SAA struggles financially.
- There has been a shift toward a more ethnically and culturally diverse membership, but the numbers still do not reflect society as a whole.
- Publications are updated and remain a successful SAA product.
- There is an increasing number of younger members.

Scenario Analysis

The following statements reflect the themes and observations which participants noted in analyzing the scenarios:

1. The issue of certification was not a factor in any of the scenarios.
2. SAA's intellectual capital is key to its success.
3. Attracting younger members is essential to success.
4. Attracting members from allied professions is key to success.

5. Defining and focusing on our core constituency is key to success. SAA should work with ACA to define its core constituency.
6. SAA needs to do a better job of integrating new members into the SAA community.
7. SAA needs to explore and define its role internationally.
8. Our ability to educate members about integration of technology and its central importance to the profession is key to success. We must help them adapt to technology.
9. Continuing education programs and resources need[to be expanded in scope of content, delivery methods, accessibility / availability, and frequency.
10. SAA's ability to play a leadership role in defining the perameters of graduate archival education is key to success.

Priority Objectives

Priority objectives were defined as the most important accomplishments which the leadership believes can and should be achieved through the Society's efforts and commitment of resources in the next 3 years. Objectives are based on the analysis of the scenarios or possible futures and the critical factors driving those futures. The group agreed to set objectives for accomplishment within the next two to three years.

A range of objectives was established by the group and then prioritized. Priority sequence was determined by a voting process in which individual participants were asked to choose the three objectives they considered most important and assign a #1, #2 and #3 priority ranking. Items ranked #1 received three points, items ranked #2 received two points and items ranked #3 received one point. Points were then tabulated and objectives were prioritized by point total.

Objectives are listed below in the order of the group's priority assignment (tie votes are noted with an asterisk* although numerical order was maintained to avoid confusion in reference to them.) The number in (parentheses) following each objective denotes the number of priority points it received from participants. *Note: Because an objective received few or no votes does not necessarily indicate lack of support by the group; it simply means that it was not given a high priority at this time and in the current environment.*

1. Develop a strategy to expand and market membership to defined constituencies and specialty segments within the archival community. An integral part of this effort is development of an ongoing system to facilitate effective communication with archivists so that SAA knows the needs and expectations of members and potential members. (23)
2. *Help members adapt to the new paradigm in ways that are relevant to the various types and sizes of their work environments. (12)
3. *Develop distance learning (on-line, on-demand) capabilities for continuing education. (12)
4. Increase external funding to support the organization. (9)
5. Work with ACA to define SAA's core constituency as well as the essential skill sets and socio-political roles of the archivist. (7)
6. Develop a long-range publications plan which will generate significant revenue and educate archivists. (5)
7. Assess SAA's ability to find and develop new leadership for the future. Plan for the succession of new leadership. (4)
8. *Issue new guidelines for graduate archival education and pursue accreditation. (3)
9. *Define SAA's international role and begin playing it. (3)
10. Establish best practices and standards for all archival functions. (0)

Follow-Up

Staff will work with the officers and Council to develop action plans for accomplishment of the 3 top priorities, and to address other objectives as time and circumstances dictate.