Guidelines for Chairing a Successful Education Session
ARCHIVES 360˚
August 22 – 27, 2011
Chicago Hyatt Regency Hotel

A key ingredient in the success of any education session is the skill of the session chair. For *ARCHIVES 360˚*, we're lucky to have a wealth of great ideas to discuss and many talented speakers who are willing to share their expertise. But even great ideas and great speakers need structure – and providing that structure is the job of the session chair. The following "dos and don'ts" offer some guidance on facilitation and time management.

DO:

Provide brief framing remarks at the start of the session. Your remarks should: <u>Comment on why the topic being discussed is important</u>; <u>describe briefly how it will be approached</u>; and <u>clearly delineate the objectives of the session</u>.

Use polling techniques to find out who is in the room. You can do this by asking attendees to raise their hands in response to questions such as: How many of you work for a college or university? A corporation? A one-person shop? How many already have experience on this topic? How many are using encoded archival description for your finding aids (or other relevant question)?

Be a firm timekeeper and have a mechanism in place for telling speakers when their time is up. Agree in advance that you will interrupt the speaker or pass a note to him or her.

Meet with your speakers in advance. (A breakfast or lunch is a nice way to get to know each other.) This is your opportunity to make agreements about how the session will flow – and also to review audiovisual requirements. If more than one presenter will be using PowerPoint™, we encourage you to consider loading all the presentations on one laptop for a smoother transition between speakers.

Take command of the room. Exercise the prerogative of the chair to: hold questions until a more appropriate time or dismiss them as outside the scope of the discussion; recognize individuals who are out of order; and ensure that no one monopolizes the conversation. Make sure that you are positioned to see all attendees. Repeat audience questions to ensure that the conversation is between the speakers and the full audience, rather than just the speaker and a questioner, and to ensure proper recording if the session is being taped.

Keep the conversation on track and flowing. Summarize what is being said. Move the conversation along if it gets stuck or side-tracked. Chairs of panel sessions should come prepared with questions that will promote discussion among participants. Remind panel members in advance that they are expected to interact with each other, not just give a brief statement.

Remember that audience members are diverse in their backgrounds, expertise, and organizational resources. Avoid the use of jargon and acronyms that may be unfamiliar to some in the room.

Provide a wrap-up at the conclusion of the session, noting what has been learned, what you take away from the conversation, and key opportunities for the diverse group of archivists who have attended the session.

DON'T:

Start the session by going around the room and asking all attendees to identify themselves. It takes more time than you have available and seldom advances the conversation.

Let the speakers run away with the session. Make sure there is time for discussion. If speakers start with "show and tell," gently redirect them to focus on strategy and lessons learned.

A REMINDER ABOUT AUDIOVISUALS

Please reinforce with your presenters the following information – provided in all speaker packets – about use of audiovisuals:

- Audiovisual aids can facilitate learning if they are used appropriately, but they can also be distracting and time-consuming. PowerPoint^{TM} can be a convenient tool for organizing your thoughts, but alienating to the audience if you aren't mindful of the following. If you plan to use AV, be sure your slides are on a light background with lettering in an easy-to-read, dark font (such as Arial). Each slide should contain no more than 4 bullet points and no more than 40 words. We suggest a font size no smaller than 18 pt. Busy backgrounds or moving objects can rob attention from the educational value of the presentation. NEVER READ FROM YOUR SLIDES. Will your presentation work if your AV doesn't? Accidents happen: It's always smart to have a backup, such as a print-out of slides or other notes.

- In view of the high costs of renting audiovisual equipment, SAA is trying to make judicious use of equipment. All speakers should plan to bring their own laptop computer to support their remarks and to avoid the possibility of a misplaced presentation or technical difficulties. **Please remember that NO INTERNET WILL BE PROVIDED.** If you have questions regarding this policy, please speak with your Program Committee Liaison.

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Thank you for your participation in
ARCHIVES 360° **!**

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