

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
January 25 - 27, 2011
Chicago, Illinois**

**Discussion: Focus and Reporting of
Communications Technology Working Group
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont)**

BACKGROUND

Item A36 on the Council's August 2011 "To Do" List instructed the staff to include on the January 2012 agenda discussion about the name, reporting structure, and charge of SAA's Communication Technology Working Group to clarify questions regarding the group's focus and reporting structure that arose at the August 27 Council meeting.

The Minutes of the September 1, 2007, Council meeting record the following:

III.C. Formation of Ad Hoc Web Technology Working Group

Doyle outlined a proposal that he will be bringing to the Council for appointment of an informal working group to work with staff on needs analysis and specifications for SAA's content management system, with emphasis on ensuring that the needs of appointed groups are met.

Per Brian Doyle's report to the February 2008 Council meeting (0208-II-E-6-WebDevelop):

Following its August 2007 meeting in Chicago, the SAA Council charged a Website Working Group (WWG) "to investigate, evaluate, and recommend strategies for the effective management of online content created and/or maintained by the Society." The formation of this group followed informal discussions among various stakeholders about the demand for deployment of new technologies (e.g., portals, wikis, blogs, etc.) to meet the information needs of SAA's members and the profession at large. The members of the WWG are:

Brian Doyle (Chair)
Gregory Colati
Christine Di Bella
Chatham Ewing
Jeanne Kramer-Smyth
Mark Matienzo

Aprille McKay
Christopher Prom
Seth Shaw
Bruce Ambacher (Council Liaison)

Doyle was named as chair of the group presumably because the group's original purpose was to advise the SAA staff on the requirements for purchase of a new content management system, which was a business decision within the staff's purview. Chairmanship of the group did not change as the Working Group evolved.

Per the Council's February 2009 strategic planning session and a March 19, 2009, Council conference call to develop revised strategic priority activities (see 0509-II-A-1-StratPrior-ActionPlanFY10-Tech-3):

Establish a "Tech Futures" TF to 1) provide an environmental scan of the current and emerging tech landscape among professional associations and 2) advise the Council, staff, and members on new developments and tools for applicability to SAA and the archives profession, including policies, protocols, and enforcement mechanisms for participation in SAA-sponsored social networking sites." The strategies and specific tasks assigned to address this measurable activity: "Discuss and draft charge outlining group composition, duties, terms of service, and reporting mechanisms. Consider respective roles of this group and WWG, with possibility of folding two groups together. (Note: Ongoing nature of tasks may imply need for working group rather than TF.)

In subsequent online discussions, the Council agreed to re-form the Website Working Group into a "Communications Technology Working Group" to avoid proliferation of appointed groups and to maintain the "working group" format so that it could remain flexible in terms of task assignments.

New Working Group members (Laura Drake Davis, Aprille McKay, Sibyl Schaefer, and Seth Shaw) were appointed to CTWG by then-Vice-President Helen Tibbo in March 2010 to identify desired outcomes and application specifications for the SAA Standards Portal, as outlined in the Council's strategic priority activities (Technology 2b). At that time, the following description of the Communications Technology Working Group was adopted by the Council:

Communications Technology Working Group

Reports to: SAA Council

Purpose: The purpose of the Communications Technology Working Group (formerly the Website Working Group) is to investigate, evaluate, and recommend strategies for the effective management of online content created and/or maintained by the Society. Working closely with SAA staff, the group will: 1) help to keep SAA abreast of the current and emerging technology landscape among professional associations; 2) identify and prioritize organizational and member needs as they relate to development of the SAA website and other applicable Internet technologies; and 3) advise the SAA Council, staff, and members on new developments and tools

for their effective application to the needs of SAA and the archives profession, including appropriate policies and protocols for their use.

Members: Working group members may be named as necessary, with the approval of the Vice President.

Background: The Website Working Group (WWG) was established in November 2007 as a result of several converging issues:

- The work of SAA’s Technology Best Practices Task Force, as well as the DACS Working Group and the EAD Working Group;
- The desire expressed by the Standards Committee to create a “Standards Portal”;
- The general need for more robust Web content management tools for use by the staff and by component groups.

It was determined that the variety of content development needs within the Society demanded the deployment of a new content management system (CMS). Between November 2007 and April 2009, WWG worked to analyze SAA’s needs, review prospective CMS solutions, and recommend to the Council a preferred solution for acquisition and deployment. Since that time, the SAA staff has been working with a contracted vendor to configure and launch the selected system (i.e., Drupal).

Simultaneously, the SAA Council has continued to analyze strategic issues that the Society faces and to formulate action plans. Included among the desired outcomes pertaining to technology is to “provide an effective online mechanism to share news and information about existing or developing best practices and standards for electronic records, imaging, and metadata, including commentary on such practices and standards.”

The Website Working Group was renamed as the Communications Technology Working Group in March 2010.

Guidelines/Duties: The Communications Technology Working Group is charged to help keep the Council, staff, and members abreast of current and emerging trends in communication technology that may help SAA to more effectively fulfill its mission. Therefore, group members are encouraged to maintain a broad, functional outlook in advising SAA's leadership. Conversely, the Council and staff may identify specific development priorities that demand the focused input of the group. Accordingly, specific project tasks relating to these priorities are subject to periodic change.

Reporting: The chair shall submit to the SAA President and Executive Director periodic reports on the group’s progress and recommendations.

Deadlines: Determined on a project basis.

Updated: April 2010, August 2011.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- Do Council members wish to continue with a Communications Technology Working Group?
- If so, do Council members wish to change the purpose of the Working Group?
- Do Council members wish to alter (or clarify) any other aspects of the Working Group's description?