

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Chicago, Illinois**

**Communications Task Force:
Update and Discussion Questions
(Prepared by Beth Kaplan)**

This is an interim report to inform the Council on the progress of the Communications Task Force (CTF) and to invite comment and direction. It contains a description of CTF work so far and questions on which the CTF would like input from the Council.

BACKGROUND

The Communications Task Force was established in August 2012 to advise the SAA Council on practical ways to enhance SAA's communications. Per its charge, the CTF analysis focuses on three areas of SAA's communications: target audiences, content and messages, and the efficacy of a variety of communication tools and channels. The Task Force [charge](#) supports SAA Strategic Priority 1, Desired Outcome #3: "SAA will make increasingly effective use of current and emerging technology to enhance communication with internal and external audiences and stimulate collaboration among its constituents." The full charge and other resources mentioned in this report are available at www2.archivists.org/groups/communications-task-force.

An update and request for comments from CTF was shared via the Council list in October 2012. The purpose of this report is to provide a second update at this halfway point in the CTF's life and to request Council members' feedback. The CTF is anxious to make sure its work is on track to meet the Council's expectations for preliminary recommendations (due in Spring 2013) and final report and recommendations (due to the Council in August 2013).

DISCUSSION

To date, the CTF has:

- Conducted a survey of SAA communications channels. The survey reviews each communications channel (*The American Archivist*, *Archival Outlook*, *In The Loop*, publications generally, SAA website, Twitter stream, Facebook presence, Linked In), describes the intended audience(s) for each, its stated goal or message,

and distribution method (e.g., who receives it? how is it accessed? is it a benefit of membership or open to the public?)

- Conducted a phone interview about communication practices with Nancy Beaumont, Teresa Brinati, and Brian Doyle
- Completed mini-environmental scans of five organizations (Association of Canadian Archivists, ARMA International, AARP, American Historical Association, and American Library Association), probing each for a variety of factors that make the organization similar to or different from SAA, identifying the range of communication channels produced, and capturing ideas for potential adoption by SAA.
- Analyzed five articles, recommended by Nancy and Teresa, on organizational communications strategies, criteria for effective organizational communication, and communication audits.
- Compiled and reviewed a variety of existing resources that contain evaluative information about SAA communications, including Google Analytics reports of the website, the membership survey data, the Communication Technology Working Group (precursor to CTF) report, the periodicals redesign survey (see microsite), and more.
- Posted an annotated list of the resources we are consulting and creating on the microsite.
- Polled the chairs and co-chairs of all Sections and Roundtables to confirm that our survey information on their communications channels is correct.

Next steps:

- Conduct a more thorough analysis of the member survey results for communications-specific issues (report pages 139-164, and verbatim comments).
- Write a guest blog post for *Off The Record*.
- Develop a strategy for sharing the CTF's work so far and soliciting feedback from the membership.
- Completing editing and posting documents not yet shared (communications survey, environmental scans).
- Narrowing down evaluation criteria and determining how to apply them to each communications channel.
- Developing recommendations.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Does it generally look as if the CTF is headed in the right direction? Any comments or suggestions for activities conducted so far or proposed next steps? Anything glaringly missing?
2. Suggestions for soliciting and incorporating member feedback. How targeted should this be?
3. Does a blog post and an accompanying *Archival Outlook* piece on the CTF's charge and analyzing the communications-related findings of the membership survey sound like a good next step? The post would include a few questions and request responses.