

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
June 8 – 10, 2012
Chicago, Illinois**

**Public Library Archives and Special Collections Roundtable:
Online Video Conferencing Support
(Prepared by PLASC Co-Chairs Adrienne Pruitt and Valerie Wingfield
and Immediate Past Chair Heather Kramer)**

BACKGROUND

The Public Library Archives and Special Collections Roundtable wishes to bring to the attention of the Council a request for roundtable meetings to support online video conferencing to allow members who cannot be physically present to participate in the business of the roundtable. After a surge of initial interest the year the roundtable was founded, attendance at the PLASC annual business meeting has declined sharply, due in part to the continuing budget cuts being imposed on public librarians in particular. We believe that interest in the roundtable is strong, but the ability of members to travel to meet is not.

Last year, only the second year in the roundtable's history, no current members of the steering committee were able to attend the Annual Meeting. The incoming secretary led the roundtable meeting. This year, again, no current members of the steering committee will be attending due to budgetary and time constraints. If future meetings could be held via Skype or in another online medium, whether in conjunction with an actual physical meeting or purely online, participation by steering committee members could be assured, and many members who could not otherwise afford to participate would be effectively re-enfranchised.

DISCUSSION

Given the chronic underfunding of archivists, at public libraries in particular, it seems overly optimistic to assume that many of them are able to travel to the Annual Meeting. This has caused a recurring problem for the PLASC steering committee, many of whose members either cannot afford or cannot take the time from work to lead the roundtable's business meeting. Many more members may have excellent ideas and a powerful interest in the roundtable's work, but likewise cannot be present. Support for virtual participation at the roundtable's annual meeting would solve this problem, taking advantage of current technology to give more members a robust voice in the roundtable's work that would otherwise be silenced.

PLASC would like the SAA Council to consider incorporating the possibility of online video conferencing for roundtable and section meetings, either as an adjunct to the physical Annual

Meeting or as a substitute. SAA's support for virtual participation in annual roundtable meetings would allow more open communication between roundtable members and would extend full participation to members whose budgets and time constraints do not allow them to be present in person. Allowing for video conferencing at roundtable meetings would also support Desired Outcome #3 of SAA's Technology Priority. It will enhance communication with internal audiences and allow for more fruitful collaboration.