

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

**Use of Social Media at 2012 Annual Meeting
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont)**

BACKGROUND

At its January 2012 meeting, the SAA Council discussed a report from the Communications Technology Working Group, “Enhancing SAA’s Use of Social Media and Online Communications” (0112-V-P-CTWG), that summarized its findings after convening a public forum at the 2011 Annual Meeting “to solicit input on what resources, capabilities, and uses individual members and groups want from SAA.” The following “core” recommendations were made in that report:

- Provide access to Wi-Fi at Annual Meeting.
- Facilitate tweeting and/or blogging at the Annual Meeting.
- Establish specific Twitter hashtags for Annual Meeting sessions, preconference sessions, and continuing education workshops.
- Make more effective use of RSS and website news feeds by promoting the existing capabilities of SAA’s list servers and Drupal content management system.
- Re-publish to the SAA website the SAA President’s and SAA Executive Director’s bi-monthly columns from *Archival Outlook*.

In addition, the CTWG identified the following issues for further discussion and/or investigation: Improve SAA staff’s use of social media, especially Facebook and Twitter; establish a presidential, SAA Council, and/or SAA leader blog; establish an official Annual Meeting wiki; identify external social media venues to promote SAA’s advocacy and public awareness efforts; and develop a destination on SAA’s website for the public and improve the information architecture.

In discussing the report, the Council assigned Council members Elisabeth Kaplan, Donna McCrea, and Kate Theimer and staff members Nancy Beaumont and Brian Doyle to work together to develop and implement ideas for enhancing the use of social media at the 2012 Annual Meeting. Understanding that wireless Internet access throughout the conference hotel will not be possible in 2012, the group was to focus on other ideas, such as a Host Committee blog (before and during the meeting), use of hashtags, creating a tip

sheet on how to use the RSS feed, and coverage of education sessions and plenaries via a blog (shared with Host Committee or Program Committee-specific) and/or tweeting.

IDEAS FOR ENHANCING USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AT 2012 ANNUAL MEETING

On February 13, Kaplan, McCrea, and Theimer sent to Beaumont a “draft for discussion” citing various ideas that might be implemented for the 2012 meeting. The discussion document included 1) general recommendations, 2) use of blogs, 3) Twitter and Facebook, 4) how to effectively promote an annual meeting blog, and 5) other issues to be addressed later. The group exchanged ideas between February 13 and February 23. Following are brief summaries of the ideas and progress made toward implementing them.

General Recommendations

The Council members expressed their conviction that the role of the SAA staff should be minimal in terms of taking on responsibility for social media-related activities at the 2012 Annual Meeting. The staff should be able to coordinate contributing content or suggesting topics as time permits, but as soon as possible after agreement on basic guidelines and ground rules is reached by stake holders (Program and Host committee members and staff), the staff should hand off all activities to the committees.

Use of Blogs

Implementation of a Host Committee blog for the 2012 Annual Meeting was easy! SAA’s dynamic Host Committee was enthusiastic from early on (as in October 2011) about developing a blog for San Diego. Following the January Council meeting, Beaumont notified Host Committee Chair Ardys Kozbial that the committee was welcome to use whatever blog format would best meet its needs. (The 2009 HC’s “Austin Is for Archivists” blog was created in WordPress. The 2010 HC chose not to create a blog, but instead created PDFs of a dining guide and other materials for posting on the conference webpage. The 2011 HC created a WordPress blog that was linked from the conference webpage.) On or about March 12, the committee launched its WordPress blog (<http://saa2012sd.wordpress.com/>) and its members have been actively engaged since then in populating the blog with good information for conference goers. The blog is linked from the conference webpage under “Concierge” and it includes links to SAA’s Facebook page and Twitter profile.

The Council members suggested the following: “Assuming that there is interest from the Program Committee this year in participating in a blog, a single blog for the Annual Meeting should be established, designed, and populated by the Host Committee and the Program Committee.” Kaplan cited the Midwest Archives Conference blog from its spring 2011 conference (<http://2011mac.wordpress.com>) as an example of effective use of social media in association with a meeting. The MAC blog does an excellent job of combining local arrangements information with program content. My communication

with the SAA Program Committee about its interest in participating in a blog – presumably one that is shared by the Host and Program committees – has stalled, due largely to the press of other Annual Meeting business. (I hope to have an update on this at the Council meeting.) The two challenges that the Program Committee may face in regard to blogging about the program are 1) how that content will complement (rather than duplicate or contradict) the program content on the conference website itself and 2) the extent to which other Program Committee duties may affect level of participation. The 2012 Program Committee will soon be considering whether it wishes to participate in the already-established blog.

Twitter and Facebook

Twitter users began using the conference hashtag #saa12 on Twitter even before August 2011. The convention for this hashtag was established for the Austin meeting in 2009.

The Council members suggested that the Host Committee should communicate via Twitter and Facebook “if they have volunteers who will commit to supporting these tools.” We are currently discussing options with the Host Committee.

We have had a preliminary conversation with Program Committee Co-Chair Rob Spindler about the idea of having a coordinated effort by Program Committee members – or other volunteers – to tweet from the education sessions. He will poll the Program Committee members to determine level of interest. Although we hope that a coordinated effort will be made and we stand ready to assist in recruiting volunteers, we have in the meantime prompted all speakers to include the conference hashtag on their slides and handouts to encourage “conversation” about the sessions. The Preliminary Program includes in several places the “Join the conversation! #saa12” graphic and we will include this graphic in the Onsite Program as well.

We currently are exploring the suggestion that we set up an RSS feed for #saa12 tweets. In the meantime, the widget in the lower right corner of the conference webpage streams #saa12 tweets as they occur.

The Council members had several ideas for enhancing our use of Facebook as a tool for conference communication before, during, and after the meeting. The staff has made a concerted effort in the past few months to learn more about making the most effective use of Facebook tools and crafting messages appropriately for this medium. (We hope you’ve noticed a difference recently!) We expect this week to bring forward the public “Events” page for the SD2012 event within the SAA Facebook page so that we can experiment with ways in which to 1) engage the Host and Program committees in creating content and 2) enable conversations among conference attendees and others.

Based on what we’ve learned in our efforts to become educated about Facebook, the staff would like to consider “liking” our 2012 vendors on Facebook and/or “following” them on Twitter as yet another means of providing them and their audiences with value for associating with the Annual Meeting.

Promoting an Annual Meeting Blog

The Council members specifically suggested the following, which we are discussing in light of other decisions to be made: What content from blog/Facebook/Twitter should be included on the main conference website (in addition to the Twitter stream)? Selected blog posts, or just the usual “follow us on Twitter, like us on Facebook”?

Other Issues

The Council members had several suggestions for “issues to be addressed later”:

- “Consider how to let people share their photos. Flickr used to be the thing but now there are many options.” In 2010 we created a photobucket account to stream DC 2010 photos. As we have explored alternatives to paying a professional photographer to cover the 2012 conference, we’re tossing around the idea of asking members – many of whom are armed with smart phones – to upload their photos (and captions) to a central site from which they can be shared. More to come as we do our research. We will still retain a professional photographer for awards photos.
- “Make sure that anything that is done with additional apps is not limited to iPhone users.” We’ll do our best....

As always, I’m happy to respond to any questions or comments.