

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
August 12 – 13, 2013
New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Member Comments on Strategic Plan Actions
Received as of July 31, 2013
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont)**

The following Call for Member Comments on Strategic Plan Draft Actions was released via the website and other SAA communication vehicles on July 16, 2013, with reminders on July 23 (to key groups via discussion lists) and July 30 (via *In The Loop*):

PROPOSED ACTIONS:

Based on the Goals and Strategies adopted by the Council in May 2013, the Key Performance Indicators developed at that session, and member comments received throughout the Strategic Plan review process to date, the Council has drafted the following proposed actions to move the organization toward achievement of its Goals.

The Council welcomes member comment on the proposed Actions through July 30, 2013, as well as in person at an Open Forum on the Strategic Plan to be held at the Joint Annual Meeting in New Orleans on Thursday, August 15, from noon to 1:15 pm. To comment in writing: log in and comment at the bottom of this page or send an email message to saahq@archivists.org.

Because strategic planning is an iterative process that will be the focus of Council discussion at its winter meeting each year, the Council welcomes member comment on any aspect of the Strategic Plan at any time. Send your comments to saahq@archivists.org.

No comments were received by the July 30 deadline. The following comments were received on July 31:

Frank Boles (Clark Historical Library, Central Michigan University / Chair, SAA Government Affairs Working Group / SAA President, 2008-2009):

I note with some concern that although SAA argues it has a core value to "social responsibility and the public good" there is no comprehensive implementation of this this statement in goal 1 implementation language. There seems implicit in Goal 1 implementation plans an assertion that social responsibility and the public good" will be forwarded through advocacy for archives generally and the creation of specific position

papers on matters of relevant public policy.

Although I do not doubt this, my concern is that members may read into the very broad language used in the core values statement the possibility of a broader mission than is supported in the goal 1 implementation language. Members have on more than one occasion argued it was SAA's mission to support "them," that is to support causes that in their opinion bring justice into their personal life. I recall both the issue of the equality for women in the 1970s and more recently the issue surrounding gay rights. Members have also argued on occasion that SAA should "take a stand" on important public policy issues that are tangential to, or totally unrelated to what has traditionally been defined as the "archival agenda" but which can be covered under the rubric of "good government."

Candidly, had I been more thoughtful "up front" I would have suggested amending the vague "social responsibility and the public good" language to ask Council to define social responsibility regarding what and the public good in what specific areas? However since the horse is already out of the barn, might I suggest explicit language in Goal 1 implementation language that limits these very broad statements to a rather narrowly focused "archival agenda."

Accomplishing this in the context of the current language is not particularly easy, but what I would suggest is adding a 1.1.4 that reads, "As part of the current strategic plan SAA does not intend to address systematically issues of "social responsibility and public good" that fall outside of the parameters outlined above."

The language is specifically crafted both to give council some wiggle room to address individual issues that that may arise over the next five years which fall outside the parameters, but might be seen important for Council to address, but at the same time to have a fairly specific answer to the inevitable "flames" when small groups of members "demand" SAA address a public policy issue that they see as "critical" and likely site the broad, non-specific language found in the organizational values as justification for SAA involving itself in the matter.

Kathleen Roe (New York State Archives / Member, SAA Government Affairs Working Group / SAA Vice President/President-Elect, 2013-2014):

The strategic plan's goals and strategies provide an effective combination of supporting and furthering important directions that SAA is taking in education and standards while also bringing a sharper focus on areas where definite steps forward are needed in the next five years. This document lays out a very ambitious agenda of activities that I hope will be the subject of solid and broad discussion at the SAA annual meeting as well as feedback from colleagues who are not in New Orleans.

In particular looking at the wide and extensive range of advocacy and awareness activities, it will be important to identify those which we, as a society and as individual archivists see as being the most essential to do, and those that are most important to do first. It will be essential to the success of advocacy activities for them to have the

potential for meaningful outcomes and impact for individual archivists, for our institutions, and for our profession. Consideration also needs to be given to who will carry out the many and varied activities, what partners can help achieve them and improve their success, and how to foster the essential network and collaboration to make strong steps forward in advocacy possible. I hope to see further detailing of the specific partners both in the archival/records community (particularly CoSA, NAGARA and regional archival organizations) but also some targeted partners for whom records and archives issues, especially relating to electronic information, are critical for their success—such as chief information officers and information technology departments, secretaries of state, health and science professions—a long list needs to be assembled and carefully assessed for strong advocates. There are many ways to go, but we need to hone in on the most important opportunities to establish ourselves as experts we know we are, but need to make clear to others what contributions we make and can make.

Similarly, in the activities focusing on ensuring a diverse, representative, and dare we even think, a comprehensive American historical record, there is so much to be done, and so many directions possible that it will be important to have a thorough discussion of what are the most essential actions to take, and to take soon to address a far-too-long-standing issue. In pursuing this, it is so important to engage with communities themselves that are currently underrepresented in the historical record—this work needs to be something we do with, not to, those whose documentary record has been neglected. Discussion informed by the input of some very smart, experienced members of the SAA community is really important to moving this forward effectively.

For all of the activities, timelines and realistic assessment of resources, partners and outcomes will be important lenses through which to view these activities and determine what are the most important to bring forward as the routes to implementing the goals and priorities. Energizing and focusing the time and talents of the Society will also be an essential component to moving this plan forward in a very real way.

SAA is not a “them”, it is “us”, and I hope this plan will be the framework that we all can support, and from which we can draw to guide our varied efforts to move the archival record and the archival profession into a stronger role in contributing to the fabric of this society, and to recognizing the essential evidence we have for so many people and so many uses. I look forward to hearing spirited discussion in New Orleans and beyond.