

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

**2013 Program Committee Final Report  
(Prepared by Co-chairs Robin Chandler and Nancy Lenoil)**

**Committee Selection**

With the approval of SAA President Jackie Dooley and Council of State Archivists (CoSA) President Julia Marks Young, the co-chairs selected 11 committee members who were diverse by many measures: regional affiliation, repository type, subject expertise, duration of membership, and gender. Of the 40 volunteers for Program Committee service, 28 (70%) hailed from academic institutions. The final committee members included five academics (46%) and three state archives representatives (27%). Other members (27%) represented a museum, a religious organization, and a foundation. Committee members came from institutions in nine states: California, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Ohio, New York, North Carolina, and Washington. To our great sadness, Laura Tatum, originally on the committee as one of the three co-chairs, passed away one month before the committee met in Chicago to review session proposals. Laura continuously contributed to the committee's work. We chose not to replace her on the committee.

Our group was very hardworking and professional, consistently demonstrating their commitment and enthusiasm. The members of the 2013 Program Committee are co-chairs Robin Chandler and Nancy Lenoil and members Noah Huffman, Andrew Huse, Colleen McFarland, Derek Mosley, Erin O'Meara, Beth Shields, Jennie Thomas, Bonnie Weddle, and Audra Eagle Yun.

**Session Proposals**

The last two SAA Annual Meetings have featured themes: *ARCHIVES 360°* for SAA's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (Chicago, 2011) and *Beyond Borders* (San Diego, 2012). SAA President Jackie Dooley suggested that 2013 be theme-free and simply described as *ARCHIVES 2013*. Therefore the 2013 Program Committee sought proposals covering all aspects of archives practice and appealing to a broad range of archivists from both CoSA and SAA. A total of 137 session proposals and 23 professional poster proposals were received and reviewed for the 2013 program.

As per the annual cycle, the bulk of the Program Committee's selection process took place in the fall of 2012, culminating in a face-to-face meeting in Chicago. This work resulted in the selection of 70 sessions in seven time slots, 22 professional poster presentations, and a variety of special events covering such technical topics as digital preservation, electronic records, open-source tools, web access, digitization, and descriptive standards, as well as skill building in such areas as advocacy, fundraising, ethics, management, and leadership.

It is important to note that an informal CoSA committee (comprising 2013 Program Committee Co-chair Nancy Lenoil, 2013 Program Committee members Beth Shields and Bonita Weddle, then- Executive Director Vicki Walch, and CoSA staff members Jenifer Burlis-Freilich and Rebecca Julson) worked to shepherd CoSA session proposals. The committee worked to encourage CoSA members to develop sessions by suggesting topics and speakers and worked with CoSA members who were developing proposals. Also, several proposals were developed by the CoSA committee. The committee worked in varying degrees on ten topics that resulted in eight proposals submitted and accepted in addition to sessions that were proposed by other CoSA members, bringing the total number of CoSA-developed sessions in the program to 14. (For one of the accepted proposals, the session participants had to withdraw due to lack of funding to attend the meeting and the session was cancelled.) The seven sessions for the 2013 program with which the CoSA committee had direct involvement were the following:

- 101:** Digital Preservation and Records Management in the Cloud: Challenges and Opportunities
- 106:** Successful Succession Planning: Lessons Learned When Long-term Staff Members Leave
- 204:** By Default or Design: Public Records in Manuscript Repositories and Special Collections
- 304:** Training in Place
- 403:** State Archives Reboot: The State Electronic Records Initiative (SERI)
- 502:** The State of State Archives 2013
- 605:** All for One and One for All: State Archives and Effective Archival Advocacy

Some of the committee's energy was spent promoting and encouraging CoSA members to submit session proposals. The committee informally tracked other sessions being proposed by CoSA members. The existence of the informal CoSA committee was essential for development of many CoSA-related sessions. Not only did the committee develop sessions, but they did a considerable amount to encourage others to develop sessions, resulting in a very rich program for both CoSA and SAA attendees.

In addition, the Student Program Subcommittee (SPS), chaired by *ARCHIVES 2013* Program Committee member Audra Eagle Yun, received 34 paper and 55 poster submissions. Of these, 3 paper and 41 poster presentations were selected as impressive examples of student accomplishments and scholarly contributions. Yun recognized the outstanding work of her fellow SPS members Tomaro Taylor (2012 SPS Chair), Donald

Force, Christine George, and Ellen Swain in evaluating and ranking proposals as well as communicating with presenters.

Building on innovations of the 2012 Program Committee and inspired by some of the preliminary ideas submitted by members to the SAA Annual Meeting Task Force, we added more lightning talks and scheduled more 60-minute tracks, and we had hoped to experiment with a model for providing virtual sessions (making one complete track available via audio-recording with synched slides after the conference). As of the writing of this report, Nancy Beaumont is still working with a vendor to reach an agreement.<sup>1</sup> In addition, we’re experimenting with a 30-minute session on Thursday (the first day of sessions), entitled *Professional Poster Pitch*. In this 30-minute block, professional poster presenters can “pitch their projects” in two minutes or less, offering a sneak preview of their work which will also be available on Thursday and Friday during the Poster Session. Participation is optional, and the “pitch” will not be recorded. The Poster Pitch is an excellent way to get ideas out to a larger audience and to practice a very brief presentation without the pressures of speaking in a full session. We hope to have some dynamic participation!

Using the primary session topic selected by proposers during the submission process, the chart below documents the diversity of 2013 program session proposals received, reviewed, and evaluated by the Program Committee as of December 2012.

**ARCHIVES 2013 Program Committee Results in December 2012**

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Topic Total</b>	<b>Count of Accepted</b>	<b>% Accepted of Submitted</b>	<b>% of All Accepted</b>
Access/Privacy	9	4	45	6
Advocacy	8	6	75	9
Appraisal	9	1	11	1
Audio/Visual	9	3	33	4
Description	7	5	71	7
Digitization	13	6	46	9
Diversity	7	5	71	7
Education	8	3	38	4
Electronic Records	10	6	60	9
Ethics	2	1	50	1

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<sup>1</sup> *Staff note:* Updated per Beaumont’s Annual Meeting report to the Council (Agenda Item 0813-1-VI-E): “Although I have been talking with two vendors (Peach New Media and Learning Times) about virtual conferencing options for 2013 (and particularly the possibility of providing – for a small fee – MP3 audio with synched slides for a select set of sessions identified by the Program Committee), we were not able to reach an agreement in time to provide a reasonable set of sessions via this method. Plan B, which would have used in-house PSAV services to provide audio with synched slides for just the seven ‘01’ sessions and which we would then have made available free via the SAA website, came in at a cost of \$12,125, making it unfeasible to implement. Going forward, we will begin discussions with vendors in the early fall, well in advance of the Program Committee meeting.”

Facilities/Security	4	1	25	1
International	4	2	50	3
Management	12	7	58	10
Methodology	3	2	67	3
Other (Disaster Recovery, Community Outreach, Crowdsourcing, Holdings Security & Processing)	5	5	100	7
Preservation	1	1	100	1
Professionalism	6	2	33	3
Records Management	2	2	100	3
Social Memory	3	3	100	4
Standards	1	1	100	1
Web Access	3	2	67	3

As a result of the Program Committee’s deliberations, 51% of the submitted proposals (i.e., 70 proposals) were accepted, 9 % (12 proposals) were chosen as alternates, and 40% (55 proposals) were declined.

As described in the chart above, proposals fell into nine primary topic areas: Digitization, Management, Electronic Records, Access/Privacy, Appraisal, Audio/Visual, Advocacy, Education, and Description. Eighty-five (or 62%) of the proposals received were focused on these nine topics. Not surprisingly, 41 (or 58 %) of the *ARCHIVES 2013* sessions concern these topics. These statistics could be one indicator of members’ interests.

In addition, it is interesting to note that 10 of the 12 alternates came from the nine primary topics, with three alternates chosen from Appraisal (the highest number of alternates from a single topic).

Anecdotally, of the 34 proposals that were declined and fell into one of the nine primary topics, the Program Committee encouraged 12 of the proposers to consider their session as suitable for a lunchtime forum in New Orleans, to submit their proposals for the New Orleans Research Forum, or to continue working on their proposal and resubmit in 2014.

For the record, 52 (37%) of the proposals received spanned the 16 other topics described in the chart above; every topic has at least one session represented in the final program.

### **Considerations for the Future**

In June 2013, the SAA Council solicited feedback from the *ARCHIVES 2013* co-chairs regarding the revised charge for the Program Committee. Reflecting on this past year, the co-chairs have information to share stemming from lessons learned in the process of managing the committee that lie outside the scope of our charge. This information concerns session alternates and the selection of Program Committee co-chairs.

## *Session Alternates*

**Context:** The 2013 program experienced an unusual number of withdrawals by session participants due to health issues and unexpected financial burdens (government funding cuts such as the sequester, nonprofit funding collapse, etc.). In several cases, sessions collapsed or “dropped” and the co-chairs, with assistance from our SAA staff liaison René Mueller, sought replacements from our lists of alternate sessions previously chosen by the 2013 Program Committee. In one case, given the timeframe of one session “drop” a few weeks before the Annual Meeting, members of alternate sessions solicited to replace the dropped session were unable to participate because of the financial constraints placed on individuals by their institutions. Understandably, the institutions required more advance knowledge to secure funding in their budgets to support session member participation. Because of this, one program track has fewer sessions than originally planned (500s).<sup>2</sup>

**Ideas for future Program Committees to consider:** Given its focus, the 2014 Annual Meeting will likely have a large number of government-sponsored sessions, so fluctuating budgets could jeopardize sessions. Hopefully the Washington, D.C., location will favorably minimize the financial burden for federal employees. Regardless of affiliation, we would like to suggest the following guidelines (applicable to the submission process and committee deliberation period) to future Program Committees for reducing the number of dropped sessions:

- Re-emphasize to session proposers that acceptance is more than committing to present a paper or speak on a panel; there is a financial commitment by an individual or institution.
- Communicate to session proposers the need for diversity of institutions on a proposal. Instruct committee members that priority during the selection process will be given to proposals with a diversity of institutions represented. This increases the opportunity for many SAA members to participate, and also spreads the costs of participation in the Annual Meeting across institutions. While institution-focused sessions should not be discouraged and obviously will still be considered, it should be noted that sessions whose participants are largely from a single institution put a session’s stability at risk should funding collapse for that institution.

**Ideas for the SAA Council to consider:** SAA may wish to explore a virtual conference service as one of many mechanisms that can help support dropped sessions or the withdrawal of single participants on a given session. A virtual conference service could resolve several issues, including: 1) support the participation of one or more remote session members in a live session located at the physical Annual Meeting location and 2) support the participation in sessions by remote audience members. We recognize a virtual conference service requires 1) identifying a service model that meets SAA’s

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<sup>2</sup> *Staff note:* In consultation with staff, the co-chairs worked diligently to accommodate a requested time swap in the 600 track. Late notice prevented session participants who were approached to swap dates/times from accommodating the request. Instead, an extra room was found and the session was added to the 200 track so that 9 sessions were offered in the 600 track and 11 sessions were offered in the 200 track.

requirements (ALA and ACRL are employing these services) and 2) identifying a financially sustainable model. There are also many funding models for SAA to consider: direct support from membership costs, meeting registration costs, or development activities that might include seeking corporate underwriting, long-term building of an endowment supporting virtual services, or, alternatively, having a more spontaneous annual crowd-sourced fundraising event using platforms such as Kickstarter to fund the virtual service for the Annual Meeting.

### ***Co-Chair Selection***

Our “co-chair” experience has been wonderful. We are a great team! Our thinking on how we approach managing groups and implementing work are all in synch. It has been an absolute joy to work together. In addition, we remained engaged and juggled the decision making as schedules allowed. But our success would not have been possible without the incredible support of the SAA office, specifically René Mueller and Nancy Beaumont.

The kind of collaboration we experienced may be very rare and difficult to replicate, but it is a model to aim for as co-chairs are selected. We urge the SAA Council and newly-elected Vice Presidents to consider how to insert compatibility into the process of co-chair selection. It is not only fruitful for the organization (i.e. producing results), but it will also help build a lasting partnership between colleagues.