

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
February 2 – 4, 2010
Washington, D.C.**

**Action: Petition to Form Public Library Archives/
Special Collections Roundtable**

(Submitted by: SAA Member Renée DesRoberts)

A request to form a Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable was submitted via e-mail by SAA member Renée DesRoberts on November 17, 2009. She wished, if possible, to allow individuals to provide their signatures electronically. Doyle set up such a system, and DesRoberts submitted the required documents on December 28. Beaumont warrants that, as of January 29, the requisite 50 member signatures were obtained prior to submitting a petition. SAA staff contacted DesRoberts, who indicated that she would be willing to run the first meeting, per the requirement that states: “Someone who is willing to run the first meeting of the Roundtable (usually the person preparing the petition) must also be identified.” The proposal, including Statement of Purpose and Goals, follows.

Our Mission and Goals

The Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable serves to encourage advocacy for and education about archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy, and other historic and special collections within public libraries of all sizes.

The Roundtable provides an arena for discussion and dissemination of best practices of the archival, library, museum, and history fields. It works to support the informational, historical, and cultural interests that converge in public library archives and special collections.

Why Public Libraries Need Their Own Roundtable

The organization and structure of archives within public libraries varies widely. However, they all carry a mission of service to their communities and the obligation to support accessibility. This often creates special complexities for the caretakers of these collections and perhaps a different point of view along the spectrum between libraries and archives.

Additionally, collections caretakers in public libraries are often charged with oversight of such varied collections that to keep abreast of current and best practices in the areas of archives, museums, public history, genealogy, and public librarianship is overwhelming.

Most caretakers cannot possibly belong to the myriad local, state, regional, and/or national organization(s) that pertain to the work they do, and that would help them in their duties. A

clearinghouse in which it all comes together, where these caretakers can comfortably question, discuss, and learn about all aspects of their work, would be a unique accomplishment.

The Benefit of this Roundtable to SAA

First, there are a great number of people who work with historic collections within public institutions, including libraries, who do not identify themselves as archivists. Because SAA roundtables are open to nonmembers, the group will be in a great position to inform those caretakers about the work of the Society, how it pertains to what they do, and the advantages of membership.

Also, there is a growing realization that caretakers of historical collections in public libraries face huge obstacles to implementing management programs for their collections. This is compounded by lack of staffing and funding for the archival programs. Sharing education and funding opportunities with these caretakers (i.e., preservation, security) would be a key benefit.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the SAA Council approve the petition, signed by the requisite 50 SAA members, to form a Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable with the following Statement of Intent and Goals:

Statement of Intent: The Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable serves to encourage advocacy for and education about archival, manuscript, local history, genealogy, and other historic and special collections within public libraries of all sizes.

Goals: The Roundtable provides an arena for discussion and dissemination of best practices of the archival, library, museum, and history fields. It works to support the informational, historical, and cultural interests that converge in public library archives and special collections.

Support Statement: The roundtable petition meets all submission requirements for Council consideration in approving a new SAA roundtable.

Fiscal Impact: None. (*Staff Note:* Will require additional meeting room or other space at annual meetings going forward.)