

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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Washington, D.C.**

**Report: Task Force on Developing a Statement of
Core Values for Archivists
(Prepared by Rosalye Settles)**

The five-member Task Force on Developing a Statement of Core Values for Archivists (Values Task Force) conducted its deliberations through email and conference calls. Work is on-going. The charge to the Task Force stated:

THAT the SAA President be charged to appoint a five-person task force to prepare a “Statement of Core Values for Archivists,” for consideration by Council at its summer 2010 meeting. This Archival Values Task Force shall be composed of one Council member, one senior member of the profession, one junior member of the profession, and two additional members representing diverse constituencies. The “Core Values” statement shall be developed with full consultation and participation by SAA members and other archival associations.

BACKGROUND

Archivists have long struggled with the challenge of defining their professional identity and responsibilities. As the leading professional association of archivists in the United States, SAA has taken leadership in promoting professional practice through defining standards for archival practice, promoting and sponsoring an increasingly sophisticated professional literature, holding annual meetings to exchange ideas and information, providing a wide range of educational opportunities, and developing other benchmarks for the profession, including technical standards, certification for individual archivists (administered by an independent organization), and publicizing a Code of Ethics. In these and other ways, SAA has taken initiatives as the most prominent organization representing the American archival profession.

In his August 29, 2008, Presidential Address, Mark A. Greene challenged SAA to follow the lead of many other professional associations in adopting a statement of values that define the archives profession. A central component of professional identity is such a set of widely accepted values. The American Library Association, for example, has adopted a formal set of values, available at:

<http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/oif/statementspols/corevaluesstatement/corevalues.cfm>.

In his Presidential Address, Mark Greene suggested a set of ten archival values, in an effort to move forward with a professional discussion of identity. They are:

1. Professionalism
2. Collectivity
3. Activism
4. Selection
5. Preservation
6. Democracy
7. Service
8. Diversity
9. Use and Access
10. History

Greene presented this list as a basis for discussion, not as a proposed final list of archival values. At its August 25, 2008 meeting, the SAA Council established a Task Force to explore the feasibility of developing a “Values Statement” for archivists. This Task Force was not charged with developing such a statement, but with recommending whether development was feasible and, if so, proposing a process for doing so.

In February 2009, SAA President Gottlieb accepted the Task Force’s recommendation to appoint a five-member Task Force to develop such a statement. A five-member Task Force was appointed in July 2009.

DISCUSSION

This is a progress report of Task Force activities from August 2009 through December 2009. During this time frame, Values Task Force members reviewed and evaluated Greene’s list of archival values as well as values statements and similar documents from related professional associations, including:

- American Library Association
- Rare Book and Manuscripts Section of ALA
- American Historical Association
- ARMA
- NAGARA
- Council of State Archives
- American Association of Museums
- Society of American Anthropologists
- Special Libraries Association
- American Association of Art Museum Curators
- American Institute for the Conservation of Art and Historical Artifacts
- The National Film and Sound Archives of Australia

Each Task Force member rated the relative importance of Greene’s ten archival values. Additionally, each Task Force member reviewed and ranked the values statements of other professional groups. Rankings were collected and then distributed for discussion via conference calls. The Task Force is currently reviewing an early draft of a Values Statement for the Council’s consideration at the May 2010 Council Meeting.