AGENDA ITEM III.H.

Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
May 26 – 28, 2010
Chicago, Illinois

Action Item: Scholarships to the Modern Archives Institute
(Submitted by: Jim Cassedy, SAA Member)

BACKGROUND

On February 4, 2010, the SAA Council noted with regret that the Colonial Dames of America, Chapter III, Washington, DC, discontinued support for the Modern Archives Institute (MAI) scholarship awarded to SAA member(s). SAA thanked the CDA for its support of archives education over the past 35 years and noted that the scholarship for the Modern Archives Institute would be discontinued, effective with the Summer 2010 Institute. Also discontinued was the Awards Subcommittee charged with reviewing applicants for this scholarship:

The Colonial Dames/Donna Cutts Scholarship Awards Committee serves as the selection committee for this award. The committee is composed of three members of the Society of American Archivists and one of the co-chairs of the Awards Committee (ex officio). One member of the subcommittee shall be appointed each year by the SAA President-elect to serve a three-year term. The senior member of the subcommittee in years of service shall serve as its chair.

The Council's regret was appropriate, as the Modern Archives Institute traces its origins to 1945, when Dr. Ernst Posner, in order to make archival training accessible to persons working in archives outside the DC area, began to offer a short, intensive, summer institute on archival theory and techniques in cooperation with the National Archives and the Maryland Hall of Records. It is in honor of Dr. Posner's work in archives, and his service to SAA, that the SAA Fellows' Ernst Posner Award was established. In addition, SAA noted the Modern Archives Institute's importance with the Distinguished Service Award in 2007.

DISCUSSION

While SAA sponsors other scholarships, such as the F. Gerald Ham Scholarship and the Mosaic Scholarship, these scholarships usually go to students in full-time academic programs. The Modern Archives Institute, however, is aimed at participants that usually have limited archives experience and limited time to gain this experience. Participants represent a wide variety of archival repositories, large and small, public and private. Institute slots go to persons who work with archives or manuscripts, managers whose
organizations include archival units, and persons from other professions who require a basic understanding of archives work.

The range of participants who come to each Institute session is remarkable. Among others, the Modern Archives Institute regularly serves representatives of religious congregations or orders, public librarians whose libraries have collections of personal papers, tribal archivists, and staff in professional or non-profit associations who are charged with identifying and caring for association records that should be preserved.

These attendees often take responsibility for identifying and carrying out archival functions for important and significant records or papers that will never be transferred to an external archives institution or manuscript repository. Other participants identify and care for documentary materials that will ultimately be accessioned or collected by archival institutions. The Institute also serves staff of small archives and manuscript institutions who do not have professional archives training.

The purpose of the Institute is “to introduce participants to archival theory and practice and the responsibilities of archival work.” In accord with SAA’s general recognition of the value of historical documentary materials, the Society should take an interest in our colleagues in these categories. One way to provide such support is to support the Modern Archives Institute's mission through scholarships.

The cost of the Modern Archives Institute is currently $725 per year. Maintaining two scholarships, plus two $500 living stipends, would cost the SAA approximately $2500 per year. Two sessions of the Modern Archives Institute are scheduled each year, one in the winter and one in the summer in Washington, DC. Payment for the winter institute must be received between October 1 and December 1 of the preceding year. Payment for the summer institute must be received between October 1 of the preceding year and April 1 of the institute year. Spaces may be tentatively reserved without payment if submissions are entered before the deadlines.

Although SAA could support such a scholarship from its general funds, there are other funding possibilities. For example, Archival Outlook (July/August 2009) notes that Ms. Linda Henry left SAA $342,405 in her will. Linda was a deep believer in archival education; she led the Modern Archives Institute for several years. Certainly funding the Modern Archives Institute scholarships would be one way to honor Linda's legacy.¹

The Modern Archives Institute has been providing archival education to individuals for 55 years. Begun by the founders of the American Archival Community, led and supported by succeeding generations of archivists, and honored by the SAA, the Institute is worthy of continued recognition and support through scholarships to its program funded by the Society of American Archivists.

¹ Staff Note: Per the bequest, the Linda J. Henry fund is unrestricted.
RECOMMENDATION 1

THAT the Council of the Society of American Archivists support two annual scholarships (one to the summer session, one to the winter session) to the Modern Archives Institute, held in Washington, DC, beginning with the winter session in 2011. The scholarship includes $725 for registration plus a $500 reimbursed living stipend. The application deadline for the winter scholarship is November 1; the application deadline for the summer scholarship is February 28. Applications are reviewed and selections of recipients are made by a Modern Archives Institute Scholarship Selection Committee composed of three distinguished Fellows of the Society of American Archivists.

RECOMMENDATION 2

THAT the Council create a Modern Archives Institute Scholarship Selection Subcommittee of the Awards Committee to review scholarship applications and select up to two recipients per year. The Subcommittee structure mimics that of other Awards Subcommittees and is composed of three distinguished SAA Fellows with staggered three-year terms: one member of the Subcommittee shall be appointed each year by the SAA President-elect to serve a three-year term. The member who has served the longest on the committee serves as chair of the committee.

Support Statement: The Modern Archives Institute is aimed at participants that usually have limited archival experience and have limited time to gain this experience. Participants represent a wide variety of archival repositories, large and small, public and private. Institute slots go to persons who work with archives or manuscripts, managers whose organizations include archival units, and persons from other professions who require a basic understanding of archival work. In accord with SAA’s general recognition of the value of historical documentary materials, the Society should take an interest in our colleagues in these categories. One way to provide such support is to support the Modern Archives Institute's mission through scholarships.

Fiscal Impact: The cost of funding two scholarships to the Modern Archives Institute is approximately $2,500 per year (in FY10 dollars), including the provision of a $500 living stipend.