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

Action Item: 90-Day Membership Grace Period  
(Prepared by Nancy Beaumont and Brian Doyle)

BACKGROUND

SAA conducted general elections via an online ballot for the first time in 2009. In the course of configuring the electronic voting system, staff discovered a discrepancy between a policy in SAA’s Constitution and long-standing administrative practice.

According to Article IV of the SAA Constitution, “membership in good standing shall cease when dues are ninety (90) days in arrears.” For at least the past 10 years, office procedure has been to cancel member status approximately one month after the dues expiration date. SAA’s old association management system was set up according to this model no later than 1999. No records are available at SAA Headquarters regarding procedures prior to that point. Unaware of the discrepancy, staff configured the new AMS according to the same logic in April 2007.

For the purpose of the 2009 and 2010 elections, the 90-day grace period was honored. At the Council’s February 2010 meeting, staff brought this situation to the Council’s attention and was directed to reconfigure the AMS to bring procedures into compliance with the Constitution.

DISCUSSION

Following some investigation with our database vendor to ensure proper support, reconfiguration of the AMS is proceeding and will be complete by the end of the fiscal year. Restoration of the 90-day grace period will be effective by July 1, 2010. Due to operational constraints, however, extending the grace period to 90 days requires that staff extend delivery of complimentary editions of *Archival Outlook* for that period, resulting in an estimated annual increase in printing and postage expenses of approximately $10,000.

To the best of our knowledge, no member has contested the one-month grace period in the past ten or more years. Currently members receive their first dues renewal notice via email 90 days prior to their expiration date. Four additional notices are sent to members prior to cancellation, two by first-class mail and two by email. In staff’s professional opinion, and based on “best practice” within the association management community, these procedures provide necessary and adequate notice for member retention purposes. Given the speed of communication enabled by modern technology, as well as the advent of online credit card transactions, we believe that a one-month grace period constitutes good policy and good stewardship of the Society’s resources.
RECOMMENDATION

THAT the following amendment to Section IV, “Dues,” of the SAA Constitution, be proposed at the August 14, 2010, Annual Membership Meeting: [strikethrough = deletion, underline = addition]

A member shall be enrolled upon the first payment of dues and shall receive benefits during the period for which dues have been paid. All dues shall be payable in advance. Membership in good standing shall cease when dues are ninety (90) twenty-eight (28) days in arrears. Changes in membership dues shall be determined by a majority vote of those members present and voting at the annual business meeting of the Society.

Support Statement: No member has contested the operational one-month grace period in the past ten or more years. Currently members receive their first dues renewal notice via email 90 days prior to their expiration date. Four additional notices are sent to members prior to cancellation, two by first-class mail and two by email. In staff’s professional opinion, these procedures provide necessary and adequate notice for member retention purposes. Given the speed of communication enabled by modern technology, as well as the advent of online credit card transactions, a one-month grace period—defined specifically as 28 days in order to accommodate February—constitutes good policy and good stewardship of SAA’s resources.

Fiscal Impact: If approved, this amendment will save the Society approximately $10,000 per year in direct expenses for printing and mailing of Archival Outlook.