

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
August 15, 2009  
Austin, Texas**

**Action Item: Membership Committee Appointments  
(Prepared by: James Roth, Membership Committee Chair)**

**BACKGROUND**

In the course of this year's volunteer nominations and committee appointments process, a number of discrepancies came to the attention of Vice President Peter Gottlieb, Membership Committee Chair James Roth, and Director of Member & Technical Services Brian Doyle. According to the Council Handbook:

The Membership Committee shall be composed of one representative from each key contact district; two additional representatives to coordinate SAA's mentoring and career development initiatives; a vice chair/chair-elect (hereafter referred to as the vice chair) to manage SAA's Key Contact Program; and a chair. The chair of the Diversity Committee serves as an *ex officio* member. Standing subcommittees shall be appointed as needed.

Some time ago, terms for District Representatives got very lopsided. Instead of following the committee bylaws establishing that "committee members' appointments are made on a staggered basis to assure the terms of three to four members expire each year," the committee is faced this year with six members rotating off of twelve District Representative positions. This was due to members resigning before their term expired and the Membership Committee reissuing a 3-year term instead of appointing someone to fulfill the term.

Based on this information, the committee proposed to the Vice President the following appointments in order to restore the normal rotation of terms:

- Four new District reps receive 3-year terms for 2009-2012;
- One new District rep serves a one-year term (subject to renewal) for 2009-2010;
- One new District rep serves a two-year term for 2009-2011.

After this year, terms should return to the 3-year status with reappointments, as may be recommended by the Chair and Vice Chair of Membership Committee, at the discretion of the Vice President. This is in keeping with other committees and the bylaws. The discrepancies described above also led to a discussion between Gottlieb and Roth about the prospect of establishing "term limits." After discussing this issue with

Membership Committee leaders and consulting with SAA staff, we believe this issue isn't really about term limits but about the need for the Membership Committee to conform to existing bylaws and to communicate more effectively with the Council. Perhaps the real question that needs to be discussed is how volunteer appointments should be made to the Membership Committee.

## DISCUSSION

In the 2009 "Call to Service in SAA" letter issued by Vice President Peter Gottlieb, the Membership Committee was listed without indicating the number of available positions. This perhaps sends a skewed perception that all Membership Committee positions need to be filled each year. We do not want to be exclusionary but at the same time we want to communicate to the Council that a part of the work of Membership is based on acquired knowledge of the Key Contact Program, which is set up according to geographic districts. The District Representatives are instrumental in making the Key Contact Program run smoothly and efficiently.

As described on the Key Contact Subcommittee Web page:<sup>1</sup>

The concept of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Key Contact Program is simple. A cadre of volunteers, **working under the supervision of the Membership Committee**, supplement and extend the efforts of the SAA professional staff. Approximately sixty volunteers work with members **at the grass roots level, in their state or province**, welcoming new members, contacting members who have chosen not to renew their membership, and assisting the Society in soliciting new members. This personalized means of contacting and soliciting members, in cooperation with the ongoing efforts of the national office, **provides a stronger multi-level approach** to our membership initiatives....

After key contact representatives have completed their contacts, they draft a brief **report to their district representative** confirming that they have completed their efforts, outlining any comments they received from both new and non-renewing members. This report is submitted no later than three weeks after receiving a key contact mailing. The **information that is reported to the district representative is then combined with other key contact reports and given to the Membership Committee chair**, who then uses this information, and an analysis of membership statistical trends, to generate a final report outlining the outcomes of that specific key contact mailing. This report is forwarded to the entire Membership Committee, to all of the key contacts, and to SAA's Executive Director.

We feel the Membership Committee needs to communicate more effectively to the Council and the Vice President regarding how we generate nominations for District

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<sup>1</sup> [http://saa.archivists.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-KEYCONT.html?Action=Show\\_Comm\\_Detail&CommCode=SAA\\*\\*CS-KEYCONT](http://saa.archivists.org/Scripts/4Disapi.dll/4DCGI/committees/SAACS-KEYCONT.html?Action=Show_Comm_Detail&CommCode=SAA**CS-KEYCONT)

Representatives. We use the Key Contact program to develop our talent and then we make recommendations to the Vice President accordingly.

Because the District Rep positions are geographically based (District 1—New England, District 2—NY, NJ, PA, etc.), we usually try to find people in that area to be the Representative. It doesn't make sense to have someone in Alaska be the District Rep for New England. We have found that Key Contacts make really good candidates as Reps because of their familiarity with the program and because they naturally fall within that geographic area. Much of the work a District Rep does is managing the Key Contact program in their region. We prefer to see new appointees have experience as Key Contacts before they step into the role of District Representatives. We view the Key Contact Program as a “farm system” to bring in new leadership to the Membership Committee. The one District Rep position that does not have any Key Contacts is the International District 12 Rep. Because this District is relatively small and easy to manage, it would be the one District Rep position that could be filled with a new member.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT only four positions within the SAA Membership Committee be advertised via the self-nomination process: Career Development Representative, Mentoring Program Representative (which is also the Mentoring Subcommittee co-chair), District 12 Representative, and Membership Intern. The Career, Mentoring, and District 12 Representative are 3-year terms<sup>2</sup> and the Internship is a one-year term. The three 3-year term positions over three years should be staggered, and the Intern position can be renewed every year.**

**Support Statement:** [None provided.]

**Fiscal Impact:** None.

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<sup>2</sup> **Staff Note:** The Council Handbook currently designates two-year terms for the Career Development and Mentoring Program Representatives. Staff recommends that the Council Handbook be amended to make these three-year terms in order to simplify the appointments process.