

**Society of American Archivists  
Council Meeting  
August 9, 2010  
Washington, D.C.**

**Discussion: Membership Voting Methods for  
Dues Increases, Other Matters  
(Prepared by SAA Treasurer Aimee Felker)**

**BACKGROUND**

In my discussions with members about the Council-proposed dues increase that will be put forward at the annual membership meeting on August 14, several SAA members raised concern that the dues increase will be voted on only by those members who are able to attend the membership meeting. (As the SAA constitution is currently written, adjustments to membership dues shall be determined by a majority vote at the Society's annual business meeting, which is traditionally held in conjunction with the annual meeting.<sup>1</sup>)

This is not a new concern; SAA member Kate Theimer raised the issue via her blog, ArchivesNext, in two posts in 2008 and again recently (July 2010):

- <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=190>
- <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=268>
- <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1492>

Those posts engendered discussion on the blog. In recent weeks, a discussion also has taken place via the Archives & Archivists list.

To my knowledge, this issue has not been brought forward to the Council directly or formally until now.

**FOR DISCUSSION**

In brief, the two opposing viewpoints regarding member votes on changes in dues appear to be the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Per the SAA Constitution, IV. Dues: "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) 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.**" [emphasis added]

- Requiring attendance at the annual membership meeting in order to vote on an issue discriminates against those who cannot afford to attend the annual meeting.
- Attendance at the annual membership meeting (and annual meeting) demonstrates a level of commitment to the organization that may entitle attendees to a greater “say” in the organization.

I asked the members who favor a change in the process if they envisioned a change in how all votes (i.e., presumably, all votes on constitutional amendments and other matters considered at the annual membership meeting) are handled or just votes related to dues. The general response was (paraphrasing): “Dues. [pause]...and any other issue about which I felt strongly.” Some of the people with whom I spoke want full membership votes on the issues. Others were unable to suggest on what issues about which they might feel “strongly.”

### **Questions for Discussion:**

- 1. Should the SAA Council consider recommending an amendment to the SAA constitution to expand the voting on dues changes to the entire membership via electronic vote?**
- 2. If the Council wishes to examine this issue, should we appoint a task force to assist in the process?**
- 3. If the Council wishes to examine this issue, should we also examine the question of whether a certain set of issues – presumably those that would be brought before the annual membership meeting – should be handled via electronic vote of the membership?**
- 4. Finally, should we also consider whether there would remain a need for an annual membership meeting held in conjunction with the annual meeting, and thus propose additional constitutional amendments that would do away with the annual membership meeting?**