

RAO Newsletter

February, 2010

Society of American Archivists' Reference, Access and Outreach Section

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From the Chair

As I thought about the news I could share with RAO members in this column, I was reminded that the data from the newsletter survey the section conducted a year ago revealed that the chair's column was one of the newsletter pieces of least interest to members. (Is anyone still reading this? Hello?) I know there is a great deal that RAO members have to share with each other and the larger archives community and I expect more of us will take advantage of these opportunities via [RAO's blog](#), newsletter, Facebook group, listserv, and service opportunities.

In case you missed it, I would like to again thank RAO members who attended the section's annual meeting in Austin to participate in the break out discussions. Notes from each of the six discussion groups are available on the [RAO blog](#) by topic and I urge you to take a read through the notes and add your own thoughts in the comments. Building on the discussions in Austin, the steering committee is at work on a planning document for RAO outlining goals and priorities for the short and longer term. We expect to share a draft for comment later this winter and hope many of you will take the opportunity to share your thoughts, disagree, propose alternatives, compose interpretive dances, or otherwise participate in the discussion by whatever avenue is most appropriate for you. I really hope that you will participate because as interesting as it is being involved in the section's steering committee, if members are not participating in the section, then something is simply not right.

The section will also be looking for volunteers to join committees in support of ongoing and new initiatives, so watch for formal calls for participants in the coming

weeks. And if these upcoming new opportunities to become a more active member of RAO were not enough to make you subscribe to the RAO blog, join the Facebook group, or sign-on to the RAO listserv, SAA has revised its electronic voting procedures for sections and roundtables. What impact will this have on RAO? Arlene Schmuland and Nancy Melley have explained it all in this issue of the newsletter. I encourage you to consider running for office, but if not this year, how about in 2011 when it will be my job to find candidates? If you have questions about just what it is RAO steering committee members get up to from September through August every year, RAO's [Annual Report](#) will give you an idea, but so will talking with members of the Steering Committee and I encourage you to contact one of us if you want to learn more.

As you read this issue of the newsletter, the "23 Things for Archivists" online learning pilot project for RAO members to expand their knowledge of how archivists can use social media tools is underway. This eleven week project is being run by RAO members, including RAO's first interns Jessica Miller and Ben Bromley, and we anticipate successfully completing the pilot and reviewing its effectiveness for participants as well as RAO later this year. We should hear from the 23 Things participants on RAO's blog and Facebook group and hope to see more of you in both places as well.

--Amy Schindler

Send announcements, press releases, and articles for the blog and newsletter to RAOnews@gmail.com

National History Day and RAO: A Match Made in Archival Heaven

During the most recent SAA conference, I was asked to do a presentation during the Leadership Forum on RAO and its role in encouraging SAA members to become more active participants in National History Day. In this presentation I gave information on National History Day, talked about the Society's decision to endorse National History Day and how RAO was asked to develop specific initiatives targeting National History Day students. I also discussed the RAO National History Day subcommittee and its work to determine how many RAO members were already involved in National History Day activities on the local, state and national level, the reasons why RAO members were not involved in National History Day activities and ways to encourage all SAA members to become more involved in National History Day activities. I also talked about my experience talking to teachers participating at the 2009 National History Day competition about the kinds of resources they would like to see SAA create to support teachers. The presentation was well received and I had several people come to me afterwards to learn more about the National History Day program.

At our section meeting a few days later we had a small group discussion on National History Day and ways that we could more actively support National History Day and the students that participate in the program. Some of these suggestions included activities individual repositories could do such as opening up on certain Saturdays or evenings just for students participating in National History Day activities, waving fees for students participating in History Day activities, developing workshops to help students and teachers participating in National History Day learn about archives and the resources found in a particular repository or working with the National History Day state coordinators. Some

focused on larger issues such as SAA serving as an advocate for National History Day, collaborating with organizations such as the National Council for the Social Studies to develop programs to support teachers participating in National History Day, developing an National History Day wiki or additional information to supplement what is already available on the RAO website or creating materials for teachers that discuss archival terminology, the work of archivists or online resources that provide links to primary resources. The discussion was extremely lively and we hope to move forward with some of the suggestions made.

RAO Chair Amy Schindler is putting together a subcommittee to bring some of these ideas forward. If you are interested in participating please contact her for details.

--Danna Bell-Russel

Archival Podcasts

Podcasts are audio broadcasts delivered via an RSS feed or through a website. You can listen to them on your computer, or you can listen to them on a digital audio player, such as an iPod or a Zune. There are usually presented in episode format and are published on a regular basis.

There are two primary types of archival podcasts: podcasts that contain digitized audio material from their collections and podcasts of new material that are created by archives in order to promote materials, talk about events, and other similar things. Often, both of these types of podcasts are combined. Here is a short list of archival podcasts that are available online.

- [Presidential Libraries Uncovered](#): A podcast from the National Archives and Records Administration which takes recorded audio of presidents from Hoover through Clinton talking about

major policy initiatives, giving major speeches, or talking informally with friends and advisors. Recent episodes include Nixon talking about his 1972 trip to China, John F. Kennedy creating the Peace Corps, and Lyndon B. Johnson talking about his Great Society.

- [The Virtual Gramophone](#): A podcast from the Library and Archives of Canada which features digitized recordings of 78-rpm records and wax cylinders from their collections.
- [Podcasts from the Los Alamos Historical Society](#): A podcast from the Los Alamos Historical Society which primarily focuses on the Manhattan Project, nuclear technology, the Cold War, and (surprisingly enough) ranching.
- [Collections Up Close](#): A podcast from the Minnesota Historical Society which “tells the stories behind selected items in the Minnesota Historical Society's collections.”
- [Podcasts from the National Archives of the United Kingdom](#): This podcast “features a mix of lectures from top academics specifically aimed at pupils alongside radio-style investigations of historical topics using primary documents from the National Archives read by actors.”
- [Kansas Memory Podcast](#): This podcast features the stories of people from Kansas, both famous and not, as told through their letters, diaries, and other documents.
- [What Endures...](#): This podcast from the LSU Libraries Special Collections T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History features updates on Center projects and activities as well as featuring audio excerpts from their collections.

--Ben Bromley

Call for Nominations

Thinking about SAA service? RAO is seeking nominations--self or otherwise--of individuals who would be willing to stand for election to serve on the RAO steering committee beginning at the SAA meeting this August. There are three slots coming open: two Steering Committee member positions which are a two-year position and the Vice Chair which is a three-year commitment: one year as Vice Chair, one year as Chair, and one year as chair of the Nominating Committee. The Steering Committee positions are an excellent way to get involved in the Society and your fellow committee members are a very congenial bunch. If you are interested and would like to know more, or would like to nominate yourself or someone else, please contact Arlene Schmuland at arlene@uaa.alaska.edu and put RAO elections in the subject line.

Election Changes Coming

At its August 2009 meeting, the SAA Council approved revised policies concerning group elections. The pertinent language from the Council Handbook may be reviewed online at: <http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section9.asp> and <http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section10.asp>. What these changes mean for RAO is a change to the timetable outlined in the current by-laws (watch these pages in June for By-law amendments to consider). Now we will submit the ballot to SAA ten weeks before the Annual Meeting, which will be published by SAA six weeks before the meeting. Voting will take place during the first two full weeks of July. There will be no nominations from the floor, so if you know someone who you think would be great on the steering committee, contact Arlene, at Arlene@uaa.alaska.edu, now.

Announcement

On January 19, 2010, Nancy Melley became the new Director for Technology Initiatives at the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Prior to this appointment, Nancy served as an Archivist in the Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division at the National Archives and Records Administration, where she processed, and provided reference on, the permanently valuable electronic records of the Federal Government. Contact her at nancy.melley@nara.gov about Electronic Records and Digitization grant opportunities.

Don't forget to check our blog, <http://raonews.blogspot.com>, for sessions that may be interesting, and add your own session ideas in the comments.

Your Editor