

Question 12 Action Plan:

The Archives Management Roundtable/RMRT Joint Working Group on Diversity in Records Management and Archives has been following up on the 2008 survey of colleagues and other peer groups. Feedback from the survey has been helpful in framing priorities for this year and for providing ideas for other projects. One issue that surfaced was why do persons with disabilities need to be viewed differently than any other 'minority' group? Equally vocal were others who felt that the issues facing professional with disabilities were not well defined. To respond to both of these concerns the Group will work to more fully to identify and define the challenges faced by those with disabilities and explore how these challenges differ from other minority groups. Another point raised was the question of electronic accessibility. The charge from SAA is to focus on physical accessibility issues; but electronic accessibility is an issue that will be part of the Group's consideration of the broad context of disabilities and access. One concern raised by the survey was confusion about the focus of the Group and its related goals. The desire to clear up this confusion has led the group to refocus and reframe priorities so that our mission is supported by our actions.

12. The Archives Management Roundtable/RMRT Joint Working Group on Diversity in Records Management and Archives is charged "To contact and network with persons with physical disabilities in the archives and records management profession (archivists, records managers, and researchers/patrons), identify and study the challenges for them in same, and develop tools to assist them in overcoming these challenges." What do you think should be the priorities and activities of this group in the upcoming year?

AMRT/RMRT JOINT WORKING GROUP [answers of "none" or "no opinion" or the like were removed from this list+]

*****I think this is a noble aspiration, but am not sure that this has a higher priority for his group than, say, the electronic records issues or even helping the Lone Arranger. I really think that SAA/ARMA as a whole should seek to maximize the involvement of everyone possible in the professions(s), whether disabled or not, minority or majority, gay or straight, etc.

*****I think the issues mostly involve the archival side of the house, but some issues to discuss are web access for persons who are sight impaired, and working on access issues for research purposes.

*****Determining the needs persons with disabilities who want to work in the RIM/Archival field.

*****Why? Why physical disability as opposed to any other "diversity" issue? Is there a problem? Show us the problems(s) and we can prioritize the solutions. I do not feel this issue has been sufficiently articulated to adequately address this question.

****Outreach to those already in the profession and outreach to those in library/information school. I think they're the best judge of what activities can be done to help them as employees/users within our industry.

****Prepare for the future (impact of technology, changing legal environment, etc.) If we dwell too much on the past and present the world will pass us by.

****I'd say the group itself should/could define that, then ask for input from the larger archives community. I have no idea off the top of my head.

****I think that the piece of developing a tool (or more than one) to assist persons with physical disabilities in the profession is the key.

****Produce an impressive publication for ongoing distribution and reference. One group of people won't be able to make changes in archival repositories but a well-written resource can encourage changes.

****I feel uneducated here ... and hesitant to offer any suggestions.

****Since they have already developed and sent out a survey to ascertain how many archival professionals are disabled, type of disability and what these people consider their most serious challenges, I would think the next step should be to work on ways to alleviate some of the problems and draw up a plan to convince the archival administrations of the wisdom implementing recommendations for better conditions for the physically challenged. If the survey was limited to those on the Archivists Listserv, perhaps they should also ask related organizations to share their lists so there would be broader coverage and a more significant response.

****to come up with a document that can be used by archivists and records managers to better deal with persons with disabilities that they work with or that they come into contact with.

****Why is this working group focused only on physical disabilities? It seems like there is more to the issue of diversity in records management than just that. In any case, I think that the group should work on advocacy for these professionals who aren't getting the support they need, as the voice of these roundtables is more likely to be heard than that of individuals.

****In reaching the goals of diversity in the archival and records management, it is important to make accommodations not only for with physical disabilities, like difficulties in mobilization, but for those with visual and hearing impairments. Just as furniture and office equipment can be ergonomically designed, there is technology for those who have hearing and visual impairments. For those who are visually impaired, there is Braille for print media and Braille keyboards. I'm sure there are options in computer technology for special software to aid in the work of those who wish to work with

databases for the input of administrative and descriptive metadata. There should also be accommodations made for those who are hearing impaired who both provide and receive professional services. There should be comparable technology, like the TDDY used for telephone service.

***** Just to the word out there is group and maybe make sure people know that there is newsletter.

***** Review 'diversity in the workplace' books and articles and publish reviews on the Working Group's webpage, create materials centered around meeting the challenges of diversity in our professions (i.e. tip lists, best practices, etc.), facilitate focused roundtable discussions on a variety of diversity-centered questions (i.e. Are all of your levels and departments generally numerically representative of your organization?, are you externally recognized for your diversity policies and procedures? How do your peers and the community at large view you?, etc)

***** I'm not sure, I guess if you haven't identified the needs then that would be a good place to start.

***** I think that the development of tools, particularly those available through electronic media, should be the main focus.

***** Main focus should be on electronic records.

***** Determining the needs persons with disabilities who want to work in the RIM/Archival field.

***** I would like to see a partnering with the National Council for Support of Disability Issues. The term "physical disabilities" covers a large range of people, with different issues and needs. The more buy-in we have from differently abled people, the better we will understand the challenges, needs, and assistance that is required.

***** Once the people are identified, I think a survey to determine what the most limiting aspects are for these persons. I know from experience that in-house archives can be a challenge for a person without disabilities.

***** I think the priority should be to focus on the target group more directly by finding out who in these areas are our professionals and users. Perhaps conduct a survey to locate these groups and work with them more effectively. Next develop a research project to define and focus on their needs.

***** Investigate accessibility issues in both physical and virtual access to records. How do the major ERMS' address ADA accessibility requirements?

***** Evaluate what challenges currently exist and prioritize which gaps are most critical to facilitate closing

****Electronic records accessibility

****Development of tools that automate administrative tasks.

****Determining the needs persons with disabilities who want to work in the RIM/Archival field.

****Development and implementation of tools to assist them in their specific challenges related to Records Management and Archives. Continued communication with them in this area and context.

****I think it depends on whether the focus is initially on archivists/records managers or researchers/patrons. If it is on the former, then the group should reach out to those currently within the profession via listserv (and other?) and see if they would be willing to discuss the challenges that they have faced and overcome. The group could then use that information to go to schools and try to attract students with physical disabilities who may have not considered archives/RM as a career because of it. The survey in the most recent newsletter is a great start.

****Maybe a newsletter should be put together to keep us informed of the activities of the group.

****I am too new a member of SAA to comment on this topic.

****Finding out what the persons with physical disabilities think are the challenges and possible suggestions from them for improvements.

****Contact those persons with physical disabilities. Have them specify their disabilities. Ask them if they have ideas for helping them to meet their daily challenges. See where this leads. Perhaps rehab agencies may be able to help; also Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh with their robotics program.

**** Possibly adjusting oneself to their working environment. What to do in circumstances Where the task isn't set up for ADA; how to get around it.