

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
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**Council Working Group on Member Affinity Groups
(Prepared by Chair Mark J. Duffy, Lisa Mangiafico, and Jamie Roth)**

The Working Group on Member Affinity Groups was created by the SAA Council as an internal working group at its November 2014 meeting. The Committee was charged to, “explore options for simplifying component group structure while preserving the advantages and services provided by existing Sections and Roundtables. The internal working group will assess the impact of a flatter organizational structure, provisions for sun-setting component groups that become inactive, and support for virtual groups as an alternative way of organizing within SAA.”

BACKGROUND

The Task Force on Member Affinity Groups (TF-MAG) submitted a report to Council in November 2014 that made several sweeping recommendations on structure, but left several questions unexamined with regard to impact and implementation. Council was unable to arrive at a response in its discussion and appointed this internal Working Group to examine the salient issues and bring a set of recommendations forward for decision.

Council members expressed concern about the imprecise distinction between Sections and Roundtables, the determination of active or inactive status, the emphasis on internal governance as opposed to program, the unsatisfactory provisions for activating or sun-setting groups, and the overhead costs of managing groups. Flattening the formal structure of affinity groups could eliminate the perception of a distinction between Sections and Roundtables that does not exist in substantive benefits or privileges for SAA members. While Council recognizes the need for formal structures to realize the Society’s mission and goals, informal networking structures are increasingly popular with members who use them to tap into timely and spontaneous professional concerns. Virtual relationships are already forming outside SAA. The challenge for Council is to position SAA as sponsor of informally structured communities of interest while also sustaining the association membership model of professional growth and career advancement.

DISCUSSION

SAA Council has stated its preference for flexible, agile governance structures that are responsive to members’ needs. All levels in a membership association should strive for accountability and transparency, and these values are best achieved by uncomplicated structures that encourage communication to flow in ways that are appropriate to the members’ organizational needs. Time-consuming administrative controls that inhibit program development, create overhead for volunteers and staff, and become a resource drain on governance budgets warrant periodic review for improvement.

The relationship between SAA Council and SAA’s component groups must involve a healthy exchange of information, views, and input on the strategic goals of the Society and how to accomplish them together. Self-organizing systems of professional contact should be encouraged

as much as possible. The organization as a whole could take advantage of its members' participation and examples of leadership by having clearer expectations of the purpose of the Leadership Forum and the Council liaison's role in affirming the work of its component groups.

Members have expressed their desire for formal group structures and adaptable informal networks to fill appropriate organizational needs to organize projects, advocate positions, and develop leadership. Council has expressed an interest in maintaining the unique identity and relevance of its component groups without fragmenting the Society's membership or compartmentalizing the profession.

Affinity Groups

The recommendation made by the TF-MAG to flatten the affinity group structure has appeal. The single advantage to SAA members of Sections over Roundtables (i.e., eligibility for financial support) has been eliminated with the decision to give all groups audio-visual support at the annual meeting. All Sections and Roundtables are now able to submit funding requests to Council.

A comparison of the Sections and Roundtables discloses superficial differences that are not effective in practice. Sections are described: "As governing units of the Society, Sections are expected to contribute to the professional discourse and advance the Society's priorities as identified by the Council. Sections have an obligation to respond to requests or tasks assigned to them by the Council." A recent Council discussion of this "governing" aspect of Sections did not receive endorsement. As noted in the discussion, Council also regularly makes requests of Roundtables with the expectation of a positive response.

A key difference for SAA members in how the two groups currently affect their benefits is in the participation privilege. Currently, members are allowed to join two Sections and an unlimited number of Roundtables. The Working Group observes that SAA members pay a slight premium in dues (compared to larger professional organizations) to maintain prominence in its professional domain. As an added benefit of this dues premium, SAA has avoided charging for extra services and sub-unit memberships (as is common in other organizations). A prospective dues increase on the horizon continues in this tradition and assumes a one-price plan for membership that allows members to take the widest possible advantage of SAA's menu of opportunities for service. The internal Working Group agrees with this approach and recommends that SAA members be invited to join as many affinity groups in the new structure as their interest and time permit.

A second important distinction between the two groups applies not to SAA members, but to non-members, who are currently permitted to join Roundtable listservs at no cost to them. The invitation has been extended on the presumption that it serves as a hook to recruit new members who will eventually see the value of membership. SAA members are thought to benefit from the input of outside voices through Roundtable listservs. Data does not exist to verify these assertions or the opposite possibility that SAA loses dues by opening networks freely to those who might otherwise recognize the benefits of membership. The Working Group proposes that these members, who currently maintain a virtual connection to SAA, can be well served by customized virtual communities, but that access to the benefits of Affinity Groups should accrue exclusively to dues-paying members.

The internal Working Group proposes that in merging Sections and Roundtables, the essential benefits of each be maintained and likewise that the responsibilities for reporting and organization be equalized. All existing Sections and Roundtables would be eligible to reserve space and audio-visual support at the Annual Meeting.

Recognizing that Sections and Roundtables have a history in the usage and identity that accompanies their names within the Society, the internal Working Group recommends that all existing groups retain their current names under the broad membership category of affiliation known as SAA Affinity Groups. All existing component groups would be listed, promoted and governed as the Society's Affinity Groups. Future name changes would follow current practice and be subject to Council's review of the group's bylaws. New groups would be encouraged but not required to use the affinity group convention in their name unless an alternate name (e.g., roundtable) better describes their function and purpose.

A single Affinity Group structure requires a blending of the Section and Roundtable policy descriptions (<http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section9> and <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section10>). As extensions of Council's governance function, component group bylaws and mandates could be regularized with a single omnibus vote by Council and review by staff for compliance. A proposal for new Governance Manual rules on Affinity Groups is part of the internal Working Group's Recommendations.

Virtual Community Groups

The internal Working Group recommends that the TF-MAG proposal to inaugurate informal networks or virtual communities be pursued. This idea appeals to many members, and the internal Working Group proposes that we take deliberate, measured steps to pursue the technology for sponsored-group communication as part of SAA's Strategic Plan Goals 4.1-3. The Working Group proposes that as the principal organization for archivists, SAA should be in the business of shepherding loose networks of archivists and promoting SAA as a hub for connecting with others across multiple layers of professional practice.

Created as an alternative to formal structures, virtual community groups would be low-cost, low-maintenance vehicles for members to associate, network, share information, and invite potential new members into SAA. They could utilize SAA's umbrella sponsorship, communication platform, and information ecology but not be required to hold formal meetings, demonstrate "members," enact bylaws, voting procedures, and other administrative work loads. Sun-setting virtual communities could be automatic and measured by a threshold-activity level on the hosted listserv and/or website, and a required annual request for renewal. Virtual communities would not be given space at the Annual Meeting or be especially favored for additional funding consideration in the budget. Virtual communities could evolve into formal affinity groups if their numbers and activities evolved to support that status. They could also cease to exist or become another group when the reason for their being called into existence disappeared.

Non-members of SAA could participate in virtual communities, but the coordinator(s) would be required to be a SAA member, and SAA policies affecting member/group behavior would apply. The internal Working Group recognizes the importance of the distinction between *membership* in a formal affinity group by SAA members and non-member *participation* in SAA's electronic discussion lists (currently allowed for Roundtable listservs). Two long-standing principles of SAA's professional leadership role are recognized in that: (1) all members are eligible for participation, but not all participation may require membership, and (2) open communication channels are a source of outside expertise and a possible source for attracting new members.

Supporting virtual communities will not be without costs, but the costs will be incremental to technology investments that are necessary to support the current communication needs of its component groups. The marginal cost increase for systems maintenance and administration will be far more efficiently absorbed when spread across the organization and staff than the overhead

costs associated with servicing additional affinity groups. The need to monitor compliance with SAA's policies and evaluate measures of service delivery (for sunseting or renewing) will involve some staff time, but consultation with staff indicates that annual evaluations will remain manageable if Council adheres to a low number of reporting requirements and staff-member interactions. Monitoring the content of virtual communities should not require significantly more time than the Society's current environmental scanning activities.

Evolving Structures

The internal Working Group agrees that sunset provisions should apply to all groups according to clear and standard measures of activity, with no discredit or punishment attributed to a group that does not meet the threshold for continuation. Sunset provisions should be activated automatically, not as a result of a staff evaluation or Council intervention. The internal Working Group agreed that no inhibition should exist to the reconstitution of a retired group, whose members may reapply for group recognition.

Input from staff indicates that it will be possible to derive measures of participation and activity to create thresholds for continuing both affinity groups and virtual community groups. The threshold number of members for recognition as an affinity group and for annual maintenance will need to be reviewed by Council annually as the impact of unlimited joining on group membership numbers is uncertain. Currently, only one component group has fewer members than the recommended 4% of total individual SAA membership. The internal Working Group proposes to set an initial percentage at 4% to start up new affinity groups and as the baseline measure for group continuation. Current Sections and Roundtables would be given a two-year allowance to achieve the minimum membership standard. Council understands that it may need to change this threshold percentage after implementation and an evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving the twin goals of providing a sun-setting metric and a qualification standard for new affinity groups. The internal Working Group agreed that a two-year moratorium on sunseting and establishing affinity groups should be enacted during which all existing affinity groups (i.e. former Sections and Roundtables) would be continued regardless of their ability to meet the threshold in the initial years of its deployment (2016-2018).

Affinity or Interest Sections and Leadership Development

The internal Working Group acknowledges that leadership training and orientation within the Society are often developed in the affinity group setting, but not exclusively, and not any more so than in the Society's educational, publishing, and other service opportunities. With respect to the Affinity Groups, the Leadership Forum is an occasion for bringing group leaders together for concerns that Council wishes to share, and that group leaders wish to bring to each other. The emphasis of the Leadership Forum should not be exclusively focused on SAA governance (as if it were only for new leaders in attendance), but on shared experiences of what works, what the challenges are, how to "get things done" in SAA, and what are the good ideas for programming.

Clarifying leader responsibilities is important, but one-directional instructional conversation will not sustain grassroots support for the Forum. The internal Working Group offers principles of operation to guide the Forum from one meeting to the next, and from one Council cohort to its successor. These principles include but are not limited to the following.

- The Planning Committee should include a selection of Council members from different class terms to create a continuity of experience.
- The Forum agenda should include a limit of no more than one quarter of the total meeting time for presentation of policy, responsibilities and business matters.

- An annual invitation should be extended by the President to one or two members of the AG leadership to participate in planning the next year's Forum. A volunteer call is recommended for the following year so that grass roots involvement can be sustained on the planning committee.
- There should be an annual engagement with the SAA Strategic Plan (e.g., Forum discussion or organized attendee conversation and input).
- A brief opportunity may exist to share with the group for the purposes of soliciting reaction to, not simple announcement of, major issues undertaken or planned by Council (e.g. diversity initiative, dues increase, public policy statement(s), upcoming member surveys, etc.).
- The Forum should include open (but organized and prompted) networking time (e.g. coffee hour) for leaders to meet with each other, seek collaborations, network, etc.
- The Forum should highlight noteworthy program initiatives by affinity groups, covering a range of activities (e.g. robust issue discussion, focused resource development, webinars).
- The Forum planning group should always consider ways for reaching leaders who are not able to be in attendance.
- A variety of meeting formats should be explored to energize attendee participation.

Highlights of Proposed Governance Changes

1. Council should eliminate the distinction between Sections and Roundtables by creating a single category entitled "Affinity Groups" by July 1, 2016, allowing for the following provisions. Dues paying members are eligible to join an unlimited number of Affinity Groups for purposes of enrolling in the listserv, electing officers, and participating in the group's programs and events.

- Affinity Groups are eligible for meeting space and A-V at the Annual Meeting.
- All former Sections and Roundtables may retain their current names.
- A template set of bylaws will be offered to each Affinity Group. Council will approve any changes to governance structures to bring Roundtables into compliance with the Governance Manual, subject to the Executive Director's review.
- Revisions to bylaws would continue to be submitted to Council or the Executive Committee.
- All standard SAA support to Sections and Roundtables will continue without loss of privileges or benefits. Affinity Groups will continue to have assigned Council liaisons.
- All standard requirements for the establishment and maintenance of Affinity Groups (formerly Sections and Roundtables), will be normalized across groups and carried into the flatter organization (e.g. annual reports, elections, etc.).
- Affinity Groups will be automatically closed if they fail to meet reporting, election, or other annual requirements or if membership were to fall below 4% of total SAA individual membership. Existing Sections and Roundtables falling below the 4% standard will be given a two-year grace period to achieve the threshold percentage.
- An automatically deactivated affinity group that meets membership requirements may be reinstated by petition to Council within a year, or could follow the standard formation process if a longer time elapses. In the meantime, it could continue in existence as a virtual community group provided it has at least 50 members.

2. Council may permit the formation of Virtual Community Groups. SAA will provide these groups with information technology support and use of its communications platforms.

- Virtual Community groups are official SAA groups that operate for the informal networking and communication of SAA members and are constituted by Council under the leadership of SAA members.

- Participation in the virtual communities is open to non-members in an effort to attract new members and keep channels open to outside expertise.
- Space will not be provided at SAA annual meeting for in-person meetings.
- Bylaws will not be required or allowed. Rules affecting Virtual Community groups will be articulated in the Governance Manual.
- A SAA member must serve as convener and/or web editor. A group may be formed by petition of 50 SAA members.
- An annual request for renewal will be required and Council may ask for additional information to evaluate the group's effectiveness. SAA will use data automatically generated on the volume of activity as a further measure.
- Virtual groups will be automatically retired if a timely request for renewal is not received or the website or listserv shows limited member activity beyond the convener's/editor's postings.
- All SAA policies will apply to Virtual Community Groups. Council and staff may monitor online content for compliance, but Council liaisons will not be appointed.

3. The internal Working Group advises Council to better define the role and expectations of the Council liaison to component groups. Currently the liaison acts as an informant on behalf of the group, a Council representative to the Group, an advocate/spokesperson for the group's interests, a mentor, and a discussion participant. These various roles have accrued and the expectations are unclear on both sides of the liaison/group leadership equation. Future definition of the liaison role should consider the balance between being a helpful "go to" contact and the limited role of Council members to represent all members of the Society in their deliberations. Section IX.G.2 of the proposal to amend the Governance Manual is the only part of following recommendations that speaks to this concern.

4. The annual gathering of the affinity or interest group leaders will be called the Leadership Forum. It will involve not only orientation, but also reciprocal communication, mentoring, networking, program-activity sharing, and member participation. The Forum's Council design cohort will be reconsidered and the planning group will include Affinity Groups representatives. Council will adopt guiding principles for the content and design of the Leadership Forum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the SAA Council approve the merger of all Sections and Roundtables under the component group category of "SAA Affinity Groups" beginning January 1, 2016 with full implementation by July 1, 2016.

- All existing Sections and Roundtables may retain their current names.
- All existing Sections and Roundtables will be continued as Affinity Groups for a two-year period regardless of membership numbers, provided that they meet all other provisions and requirements of new Section IX of the Governance Manual.
- Changes to component group bylaws so as to conform to the Governance Manual requirements are approved in advance by Council as provided in the proposed Section IX.E.4 [Governance], pending submission to the SAA office and review of the Executive Director for compliance by December 1, 2016.

2. That the SAA Council establish a component group category of "SAA Virtual Community Groups" effective July 1, 2016.

3. That the SAA Council amend the Governance Manual by deleting Section IX: Sections and Section X: Roundtables and replacing them with the proposed Section IX: SAA Affinity Groups and Section X: Virtual Community Groups as described in Attachments 1-2 of this report, pending a final review by the Executive Director to ensure consistency and agreement with other SAA policies.

4. That the SAA Council designate the annual gathering of the affinity and component group leaders as the Leadership Forum and adopt the principles outlined in this report as the baseline operating principles for each annual forum. Each Council cohort will review the guidelines in designing the Forum and may make further recommendations to Council and the next cohort as appropriate.

5 That Council amend the Society's Bylaws as follows:*

6. ORGANIZATIONAL UNITS

A. Except as otherwise specified in the constitution and/or bylaws, committees, boards, task forces, working groups, ~~sections, roundtables, member component groups~~, and other units shall be created and terminated by the President with the advice and approval of the Council. Chairs of committees, boards, task forces, and working groups shall be appointed by the Vice President / President-Elect for terms of one year and may be appointed to a maximum of three consecutive terms except for such bodies for which the term and means of selection of chair are otherwise specified in the constitution and/or bylaws of the Society. Each committee, board, task force, working group, or other unit shall have guidelines approved and amended as necessary by the Council that set forth its purpose, size, composition, means of selection and length of terms of members and chair, reporting procedures, and duties and responsibilities. Each ~~section~~ *Affinity Group* shall select its own leaders and shall adopt bylaws defining its own governance provided that no ~~section~~ bylaw may be in conflict with the constitution, bylaws, or guidelines of the Society. ~~Each roundtable shall select its own leaders and shall operate in accordance with guidelines approved and amended as necessary by the Council.~~

*The Constitution requires a two-thirds vote required to amend the Bylaws:

“IX. BYLAWS

The Council is authorized and directed to prepare, adopt, or amend such bylaws as may be desirable to regularize the administrative practices of the Society. Adoption or amendment of bylaws may be made either by a two-thirds (2/3rds) vote of the Council or by a two-thirds (2/3rds) vote of those members voting in a referendum conducted according to the bylaws of the Society. Amendments to the bylaws may be recommended by a majority vote of the Council or proposed in writing by at least 5% of the eligible voting members of the Society. All amendments must be filed with the Executive Director at least sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Meeting. Copies of the proposed amendments shall be distributed by the Executive Director according to a method approved by the Council to eligible voting members at least thirty (30) days in advance of the meeting at which they are to be presented. A copy of the current constitution and bylaws shall be published on the Society's website and shall be available to any member upon request to the Executive Director.

Support Statement

Council's creation of Affinity Groups merges Sections and Roundtables under one organizational heading and eliminates the perception that there is any substantial difference in the services, privileges, or benefits for SAA members between the two component group categories. Existing benefits of Sections and Roundtables are preserved and organizational requirements and

responsibilities are equalized. The streamlined organization and clarified requirements will allow Council and staff to assess the organizational effectiveness of Affinity Groups over time. Council will have tools and measures to retire inactive groups and accommodate popular, emerging interests through both formal group affiliations and looser networks.

SAA's members are increasingly interested and engaged in communicating with colleagues and related professionals in ways that do not require physical meetings or administrative overhead. Virtual Community Groups provide a vehicle for such members and outside parties to share in SAA's information ecology with low impact on SAA's financial and human resources. SAA should sponsor these communications networks as part of its membership growth strategy and long-term evolution towards social media engagement with members.

These organizational changes bring consistency and simplicity to the component group array. It is a risk, however, that any disruption in the norm can be misrepresented if the communication is not thoughtfully managed. Council and staff should anticipate countering uninformed perceptions that these changes involve any loss of tangible benefit to members or to existing groups. Crafting an effective message and delivery will be decisive in managing the change.

The component groups of SAA are engaged in a process of leadership or leadership development. The Annual Meeting Forum is one ideal opportunity to bring the seasoned and rising leaders together to explore their roles and mutual concerns. Greater participation by affinity group leaders in the design and implementation of the Forum will help offset a tendency for the gathering to become a governance-centered orientation. Adopting operating principles will give each planning cohort a baseline for planning the meeting and passing insights on to the next cohort.

Impact on Strategic Priorities

Council's re-organization of the formal group structures, its expansion of opportunities for participation through virtual groups, and its greater attention on the purpose of the Leadership Forum as a vehicle for interacting with component group leaders respond to the following Strategic Goals and activities:

Goal 4: Meeting Members' Needs. SAA is an agile association that delivers outstanding service and fosters a culture of participation.

4.1.2. Implement measures to enhance SAA's communication – and particularly its web and social media presence – using tools that ensure high member satisfaction. Continue to listen to and engage with archivists on social media; Implement Council-approved recommendations of the Communications Task Force, including integration of component group microsites and, to the extent possible, “unofficial” communication tools.

4.1.3. Promote member input on an ongoing basis, and improve means for members to tell SAA what they think and what they need; Provide a place and schedule for Council members to meet with members (via forums and/or in informal settings) during the Annual Meeting.

4.2. Create opportunities for members to participate fully in the association:

4.2.1. Adopt revenue-neutral, low-barrier social media tools to enable broader participation by members in SAA activities.

4.2.2. Remove barriers, perceived and actual, to broad participation by SAA members in the activities of the organization. Collect information from members about what they view as barriers preventing them from being more active in the organization, and share this information with the broad membership for comment. Explore how to remove as many barriers as possible. For member-identified barriers that are more perceived than structural: Implement regular communications to remove the perception of those barriers and to explore the cause of that perception. Regularly assess progress on members' perceptions of SAA as an organization that fosters participation.

4.3.4. Develop resources and tools that encourage and expand leadership opportunities throughout SAA. Build on the annual Leadership Forum to share information about how to effectively lead a component group. Develop guides and resources for component group chairs that help them encourage dialog among and participation of members.

Fiscal Impact

Consultation with staff indicates that approximately 35 hours of administrative staff time will be required to notify existing section and roundtable groups of the changes and effective dates, alert affected groups of the need to update their bylaws and organizational structure, review revised bylaws for compliance; and approximately 40 hours of staff time to address the technological aspects of these changes, for example: SAA website changes, microsites support and setting up new discussion lists for potential virtual groups, and re-configuring AMS for new membership options. Total 75 hours staff time, not all of which will be incurred in the first fiscal year.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1. Proposed Amendment to Section IX of the Governance Manual
- Attachment 2. Proposed Amendment to Section X of the Governance Manual
- Attachment 3. Affinity Group Bylaws Template
- Attachment 4. Component Group Membership Table (SAA staff)

Report of the Council Working Group on Member Affinity Groups

Attachment 1. Proposed Amendment to Section IX of the Governance Manual

Delete “Section IX: Sections” and replace it with new “Section X: Affinity Groups” as follows.

IX: Affinity Groups

Frequently Asked Questions

A. Mission and Purpose

1. Affinity Groups are SAA’s component groups that serve as advocacy and networking units for interests around which the group is formed.
 - a. They focus attention on and give voice to the concerns that form the group’s particular areas of interest. (IX.A.1a, X.A.1.a)
 - b. They function as communities of interest engaged in generating ideas and meeting the intellectual interests of the membership. They focus expertise and interest in professional functions, *topics* and responsibilities to carry out the archival profession’s mission to identify, administer, and promote the use of records of enduring value. (X.A.1.b)
2. Affinity Groups encourage participation and communication. They provide a forum for members to engage in matters of interest to the profession and the group. They provide channels of communication from the group to the membership of the Society and to the Council on matters of concern to the group. (IX.A.2; X.A.2)
3. Affinity Groups perform work. (IX.A.3.a-d)
 - a. Affinity Groups are responsible for advancing the work of the profession in their field of practice.
 - b. Affinity Groups provide mechanisms for members to initiate activities of common interest and formulate specific projects, for which task forces would be created to execute the projects.
 - c. Affinity Groups review material referred to them by the Council for comment or action. Affinity Groups have an obligation to respond to requests or tasks assigned to them by the Council. (IX.B.2)
4. Affinity Groups develop leadership. (IX.A.5; X.A.5)

Affinity Groups offer their members opportunities to take leadership in working with their colleagues.

B. Goals and Areas of Activity

1. Each Affinity Group will adopt a name and maintain a statement of goals and objectives indicating the general concerns and intended areas of work of the group. (IX.B.1)
2. Affinity Groups should communicate with their members and work with them to develop goals and activities that correspond to their mission statement and to the Society’s strategic priorities. (IX.B.2.d; X.B.3.D; in part)
3. Affinity Groups are charged to be active in four areas: (IX.B.2; X.B.2)
 - a. They identify and consider issues in which a significant number of members have an interest. Members may investigate different facets of the issues, then report and discuss their findings during Affinity Group meetings and communications
 - b. They recommend to the Council, through reports, action items, or discussion items — submitted on the [Council Report Template](#) — an action or a position that the Affinity Group believes appropriate for SAA. The Council remains the policy-setting body for SAA, and only it can promulgate a formal position for SAA or any of its constituent bodies.
 - c. They may act as sponsors in submitting session proposals for the Annual Meeting.

- d. Groups may request space to meet and plan group events in consultation with the Executive Director.
- e. They communicate the Affinity Group's activities to the Society at large.

C. Recognition and Standing (IX.C.1-4; X.C.1-5)

1. The Council may establish Affinity Groups upon submission of a group's application. The Council will consider the merits of each request in light of existing SAA groups and the specific statement of intent and goals of the applicant group.
2. New applications for recognition as an Affinity Group must be submitted no later than the posted deadline each year for submitting agenda items for the winter Council meeting, so that Council action can occur before the next Annual Meeting.
3. Application is made by petition to include the proposed name of the group, signatures in paper or electronic form of at least 4% of the total individual SAA membership, a publishable statement of purpose and goals of the Affinity Group, and a statement indicating why a separate formal group would be advantageous to the Society.
4. Council will review membership and activity reports on Affinity Groups annually to determine their continuing relevance and the Society's ability to support them. Council will use membership, group communication levels, annual report filings, elections and similar signs of activity to determine if support of the Affinity Group is sustainable. Council and the President may sunset any Affinity Group.
5. Acting with the advice and consent of Council, the President may dissolve an Affinity Group that does not maintain an official membership level of at least 4% of the total individual SAA membership for three successive years after providing due notice to the group's chair and vice-chair. The group's officers will have an opportunity to appeal to Council within 21 days of the issuance of notice to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the group.
6. Should an Affinity Group fall beneath the requirements to sustain official status, it may decide to become a Virtual Community group, a less formal status that might better suit its goals. An Affinity Group may petition the Council for a change in status at any time.

D. Membership and Meetings

1. Membership in an Affinity Group requires that an individual be a member in good standing in the Society. Members are entitled to access the group's online discussion lists and to participate in all sponsored activities. The SAA office will maintain and report on the official list of Affinity Group members as an aid in tracking member services. (IX.A.4.a-c) (IX.D.1-3; X.1.a, 2.a; in part)
2. Each Affinity Group is guaranteed space and A-V support at the SAA Annual Meeting. Groups may hold an annual membership meeting, but a significant portion of this time should be used for the group's professional interests and future program planning.
3. The SAA office will contact Affinity Group leaders, in time for publication in the Annual Meeting program, to request information on plans for the group's meeting at the Annual Meeting. (IX.H.3)
4. Affinity Groups will receive electronic communication support in the form of website hosting and electronic lists. Additional funding may be available through the process described in Section H.
5. Affinity Groups are encouraged to work creatively and collaboratively with each other and with other SAA component groups to plan and conduct programs at the Annual Meeting.

E. Governance

(IX.E.1.a-g in part; X.E.1)

1. Affinity Groups will adopt bylaws and report to the Council a governance structure that is consistent with their need. At minimum there must be a chair, a vice-chair/chair-elect, and a minimum of two steering committee members elected annually serving staggered terms ensuring at least one is elected annually. No person may serve as the senior leader of an Affinity Group for more than three successive years. Only SAA members who are current in their dues may vote or be elected to office. Affinity Groups may conduct their annual leadership elections online.
2. Affinity Groups may elect or appoint additional officers and members to the steering committee. Affinity Groups are encouraged to retain continuity and recruit leadership by designating other

- positions of responsibility (e.g., web coordinators, committee chairs), to carry out the program and work of the Affinity Group.
3. The term of office, the number of consecutive terms that a person may serve in one office or on the steering committee and vice-chair's succession to office will be set in the Affinity Group's bylaws.
 4. To ensure alignment with SAA's governance documents, bylaws and *amendments* should be reviewed by the executive director before the Affinity Group membership votes to adopt them. Once adopted, new or revised bylaws must be submitted for approval by the Council.
 5. Affinity Groups are encouraged to create task forces and working groups to execute the goals of the group, develop leaders, and recruit members into the Society.
 6. Affinity Group elections. (X.E.2)
 - a. Affinity Groups will conduct annual elections via an online ballot system provided by the SAA staff.
 - b. Formal calls for nominations will be issued by the Affinity Group leadership and collected by June 1.
 - c. Basic ballot information (e.g., introductory message to voters, listing of offices, number of vacancies for each, names of candidates, and candidate statements) will be submitted to the SAA staff by June 15.
 - d. Supplementary ballot information (e.g. photos, biographies, and statements), if desired, will be posted by the Affinity Group leaders to the group's website by July 1.
 - e. Online ballots containing basic ballot information will be prepared by staff and made accessible during the first week of July and will remain open for at least two weeks.
 - f. Affinity Group members who are in good standing on June 30 are eligible to vote.
 - g. Ballot results will be reported by staff to the Affinity Group leaders in order to be announced at the Annual Meeting.

F. Annual Reporting Requirements

(IX.F.1-4, X.F.1-4)

1. **Leadership Report:** The chair of each Affinity Group will convey to *the SAA Office* an electronic list of the names of the group's officers and steering committee members within 14 days of the close of the Annual Meeting. The chair will include in that list all individuals who should be subscribed to the official SAA leadership list.
2. **Affinity Group Annual Report:** Each Affinity Group, like all SAA groups, is required to present an annual report for review by the Council. Affinity Group annual reports must be filed with the SAA executive director within 45 days of the close of the Annual Meeting. The [Affinity Group Annual Report Template](#) must be used for annual reports, which briefly summarize the following:
 - a. A confirmed and accurate list of Affinity Group leaders and contact information
 - b. A verified count of Annual Meeting attendees (if applicable).
 - c. A summary of work accomplished in relationship to the goals for the year.
 - d. A summary of any activities relating to SAA's strategic plan.
 - e. Goals and plans for the coming year.
3. Affinity Group annual reports, including updates of purpose and activity statements, will be published on the group's website.
4. The Annual Report is a required filing from each Affinity Group. Failure to submit an annual report in a timely manner may lead to probationary status and the automatic loss of formal recognition by Council. Failure to file an annual report within one year of the close of the Annual Meeting will result in a notice from the president of the Affinity Group's dissolution. Affinity Groups receiving such notice may file an appeal with the Council

G. Consultation with the Council

(X.G.1-2; IX.G.1-2)

1. The Council is responsible for addressing Affinity Group matters, making recommendations about internal matters, and communicating to group leaders actions it has taken of concern to Affinity Groups.

2. Each SAA component group is assigned a Council liaison, who is the primary contact for the group's leaders with the Council. Liaisons are a way for Affinity Groups to communicate important matters to and from Council and they should be used for that purpose by group leaders. If appropriate, the Council liaison can serve as the group's advocate for requests of Council, and they are prepared to offer advice to group leaders on ways to maximize the group's effectiveness. Council liaisons do not typically become actively involved in the operations or communication of an Affinity Group, however, unless they are invited to participate or they recognize a potential difficulty or violation of policy.
3. (X.E.3) Council will consult with appropriate Affinity Group leaders in the decision-making and deliberative processes of the Society. Whenever possible, Affinity Group leaders should be included in appointments to committees and task forces
4. The SAA president will extend an invitation to Affinity Group leaders to attend the annual Leadership Orientation and Forum. Annual attendance by the group's leaders is expected and strongly encouraged.

H. Funding for Affinity Group Activities

(X.I.1-4; IX.2-5)

1. Affinity Groups may apply for funding from the SAA budget for special programs or activities that significantly advance the strategic priorities of the Society. (SAA's fiscal year extends from July 1 to June 30. Budget requests from Affinity Groups should be submitted to the group's Council's liaison and the executive director via the [SAA Component Group Funding Request Form](#) no later than March 1.
2. Funds allocated to an Affinity Group during one fiscal year are not carried over to the next fiscal year. If an allocation must be deferred to the next year, the Affinity Group *must use the Request Form* to request funding for that year.
3. In pursuing its work, Affinity Groups must receive authorization from the Council to spend any monies or commit any monies to be spent. Although exceptions can be made, the Council expects to appropriate money for a group's activities through the regular budget process.
4. If an Affinity Group wishes to seek resources (whether in cash or in kind) from any source outside SAA, Executive Committee approval must be obtained in every instance before approaching the source. Proposals should be routed through the group's Council liaison, with sufficient time for consideration by the Executive Committee, which will respond within 30 days

I. Affinity Groups as Component Units of SAA

(IX.H and J; X.J)

1. The use of SAA's name, logo, and auspices for publications, meetings, mailings, websites, social networks, electronic communications, and other activities is available only through specific provision of the Council and will conform to the [Uniform Guidelines for Use of the SAA Logo](#).
2. Although Affinity Groups are within the SAA structure, they are not empowered to take action in the name of SAA, or request money in the name of SAA or the group itself without specific prior authorization from the Council. This firm rule is required to protect SAA and its members from potential legal complications.
3. Affinity Groups leaders will become familiar with other governing policies of SAA (see especially http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/appendices/app_a. In particular, Affinity Group websites, e-mail discussion lists, and online social networks will conform to *Uniform Guidelines for SAA Websites and Online Communications* (IX.H.2 and IX.H.1 in part; X.H.1)

Report of the Council Working Group on Member Affinity Groups

Attachment 2. Proposed Amendment to Section X of the Governance Manual

Delete “Section X: Roundtables” and replace it with new “Section X: Virtual Community Groups” as follows.

Section: X: Virtual Community Groups

A. Mission and Purpose

1. Networking and Advocacy.
 - a. Virtual Community Groups serve as online communication networks to give voice to the concerns of archivists on particular areas of interest. As communities of interest, Virtual Community Groups form around specific intellectual challenges, practices, or current and emerging issues that generate participation by archivists in a helpful exchange of information in the online environment.
 - b. Virtual Community Groups exist as online groups only. Communication takes place in the form of the group’s electronic discussion forum and social media outlets. (X.A.2.b)
2. The Work of Virtual Community Groups. (X.A.3.c in part)

Virtual Community Groups serve SAA members with a vehicle for institutionally sponsored information sharing and a national forum on specific matters of practical interest. They are informal in nature. They communicate on matters important to a cohort of archivists is the main work of the group.
3. New Member Integration and Leadership Development (X.A.4.a-b; X.A.5)
 - c. Virtual Community Groups are the vehicle for new and prospective SAA members to become active in the work of the Society and the group, and for meeting members with common interests.
 - d. Although it is expected that the core of a Virtual Community Group is comprised of individual SAA members, anyone may participate in a group by joining in its electronic communications list and engaging in its discussions. SAA extends the privilege of joining its Virtual Community Groups to non-members as a recruiting incentive and a way to expose members to the insights of other professionals in related fields of information management.
 - e. The informal networking relationships that occur in Virtual Community Groups offer members opportunities to exercise leadership in working with colleagues to address professional issues.

B. Areas of Activity

(X.B.2.a-c)

1. Virtual Community Groups are charged to be active in generating professional conversation in electronic lists and online forums, maintaining social media presence, and networking to promote the group’s stated area of interest.
2. Virtual Community Groups may recommend to the Council, through reports, action items, or discussion items — submitted on the Council Report Template — an action or a position that the group believes appropriate for SAA. The Council remains the policy-setting body for SAA, and only it can promulgate a formal position for SAA or any of its constituent bodies.

C. Recognition and Standing

(X.C)

1. The Council may establish Virtual Community Groups upon submission of a group’s application. The Council will consider the merits of each request in light of existing SAA groups and the specific statement of intent and goals of the applicant group.
2. Application is made by petition to include the name of the group, signatures in electronic or paper form of at least 50 SAA members, a brief but publishable statement of purpose, and a statement indicating why a separate Virtual Community Group would be advantageous to the Society.

3. New applications for recognition as a Virtual Community Group must be submitted no later than the posted deadline each year for submitting agenda items for the winter Council meeting, so that Council action can occur before the next Annual Meeting.
4. Virtual Community Groups will be required to file for annual renewal by using a request form provided by the SAA office. *The annual report serves the primary purpose of requesting that SAA continue to support the group*, but Council may also request summary information on member activity and topic(s) discussed. The volume of communication, the number of subscribers, and participation rates may be used by staff to evaluate a group's effectiveness. Virtual Community Groups with active listservs and member participation will generally be renewed with the filing of an annual request for renewal.
5. The SAA office will notify Virtual Community Group coordinators of the filing date for an annual report and the group's request for continuation. Groups that do not file an annual request for renewal by December 31 of the reporting year will be dissolved. The group's coordinator will be notified of this step and will be given 21 days to appeal the decision to the Executive Director. Virtual Community Groups that have been dissolved may also petition for reactivation at a later time. SAA reserves the right to retain the records of the Virtual Community Group according to its Records Retention Policy and schedule.
6. Should a Virtual Community Group decide that a more formal structure and greater degree of activity are necessary to carry forward its work, it may petition the Council to become an Affinity Group. Such petitions should indicate a plan of work for specific projects that can be carried out more effectively through the formal structure.

D. Membership, Governance and Reporting

(X.D, .E, and .F)

1. SAA members may join an unlimited number of Virtual Community Groups. Nonmembers of SAA may participate in a Virtual Community Group by joining in its electronic communications list and engaging in discussions of and work on issues of interest to its membership.
2. Virtual Community Groups will identify a coordinator who will work with the SAA Office to establish SAA hosted listservs and web-based services. The coordinator is required to file an Annual Report and to ensure that all SAA policies are followed. The coordinator must be a member in good standing.
3. Virtual Community Groups are designed to be informal communication networks. They may not adopt bylaws or impose membership requirements. They may develop agreed-upon communication protocols so long as these guidelines do not conflict with SAA policies, especially the [SAA Code of Conduct](#) and policies listed in [Appendix A](#) of the SAA Governance Manual.
4. Each group will be required to file an annual report, which may serve as a request for continuation. The report should summarize briefly the number of subscriber members, the scope of communication and topics covered, and a statement of accomplishments if appropriate.
5. Virtual Community Groups will not be assigned a Council liaison, but the Group's coordinator may request the assistance of any member of Council and may also request that the President assign a Council member to represent the Group's interests in matters that may come before Council. Appropriate SAA staff members will also assist Group coordinators in communicating their concerns to Council.

E. Support for Virtual Community Group Activities

(X.I)

1. SAA will provide Virtual Community Groups with a technology platform and limited administrative support for their electronic communication and networking at a capacity level appropriate to SAA's staff and technology resources.
2. Virtual Community Groups will not ordinarily receive financial support to hold meetings or expand technology services beyond the capacity of SAA to provide like advantages to all other SAA component groups.
3. Virtual Community Groups are not authorized to spend any monies or commit any monies to be spent without specific authorization from the Council.
4. If a Virtual Community Group wishes to seek resources (whether in cash or in kind) from any source outside SAA, Executive Committee approval must be obtained in every instance before

approaching the source. Proposals should be routed through the Executive Director with sufficient time for consideration by the Executive Committee, which will respond within 30 days.

J. Virtual Community Groups as Component Units of SAA

(IX.H and .J; X.J)

1. The use of SAA's name, logo, and auspices for publications, meetings, mailings, websites, social networks, electronic communications, and other activities is available only through specific provision of the Council and will conform to [*Uniform Guidelines for Use of the SAA Logo*](#).
2. Virtual Community Groups, although they are within the SAA structure, are not empowered to take action in the name of SAA, or request money in the name of SAA or the Virtual Community Group itself, without specific prior authorization of the Council. This firm rule is required to protect SAA and its members from potential legal complications.

Society of American Archivists Affinity Group-Bylaws Template

(Adopted by the SAA Council, **DATE**)

At its **DATE** meeting the SAA Council adopted changes in the policies and procedures governing SAA component groups, including the following (SAA Governance Manual, IX.E.1, 4): “Affinity Groups will adopt *bylaws* and report to the Council a governance structure that is consistent with their need. At minimum there must be a chair, a vice-chair/chair-elect, and a minimum of two steering committee members elected annually serving staggered terms ensuring at least one is elected annually,” and “To ensure alignment with SAA’s governance documents, bylaws and *amendments* should be reviewed by the executive director before the Affinity Group membership votes to adopt them. Once adopted, new or revised bylaws must be submitted to the Council for approval.” To assist Affinity Groups in the process of developing bylaws, SAA has prepared an Affinity Group Bylaws Template. To view the entire SAA Governance Manual: <http://www2.archivists.org/governance>. Council has developed this template to assist Affinity Groups in drafting bylaws for approval by their members. The template includes the minimum information dictated by best practices, and also provides commentary [*bracketed and in italics*] on options that Affinity Groups may wish to consider.

I. NAME. The name of the Affinity Group shall be [X].

[Insert the name of the Affinity Group as it was approved by the Council. If you wish to propose a different name, please indicate by striking through the current name and underlining the proposed name.]

II. MISSION. The mission of the Affinity Group is [X].

[Insert the mission of the Affinity Group as it was approved by the Council. If you wish to propose changes in the mission, please indicate by striking through the old language and underlining the proposed language.]

III. MEMBERS. Membership in the Affinity Group shall be determined according to the guidelines established in Section IX. of the SAA Governance Manual.

[See Section IX here: <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section0940>]

IV. GOVERNANCE.

A. Officers.

[The following are examples of how the Affinity Group may wish to structure its leadership. Keep in mind that it is important to balance continuity and the passing on

of information with the benefits of incorporating new voices into Affinity Group leadership. On the matter of Affinity Group governance, the SAA Governance Manual (Section IX.E.1.) states that at minimum there must be two elected leaders (chair and vice-chair) and two steering committee leaders elected annually. No person may serve as the senior leader of an Affinity Group for more than three successive years. Only SAA members are eligible to serve as or vote for Affinity Group leaders.” Following are some examples of structures that are in compliance with the Governance Manual.]

[Example 1] The officers of the Affinity Group shall be a Senior Co-chair and a Junior Co-chair [or Chair and Vice Chair]. The Junior Co-chair shall be elected annually for a two-year term, serving in year one as Junior Co-chair and in year two as Senior Co-chair. In addition, a Steering Committee of [two] members shall be elected, each for a [three-year] term, with one member elected in each alternate year.

[Example 1 provides for a minimum measure of continuity and leadership development.]

[Example 2] The officers of the Affinity Group shall be a Chair, a Vice Chair, and a Secretary. The Secretary shall be elected annually for a three-year term, serving in year one as Secretary, in year two as Vice Chair, and in year three as Chair. In addition, a Steering Committee of [three/six] members shall be elected, each for a [three-year] term, with [one-third] elected in each year.

[Example 2 is more complex, but it provides for greater participation, a higher likelihood of ensuring continuity and overall leadership development in supporting the groups’ activities. Rotation of terms ensures that the steering committee turns over in a way that does not disrupt continuity]

- B. Duties of Officers.** Officers shall take responsibility for fulfilling the Affinity Group’s reporting and governance obligations as specified throughout those responsibilities specified in Section IX of the SAA Governance Manual.

[Refers to the new Section IX on Affinity Groups]

- C. Nominations.** The Chair shall issue a call for nominations, including self-nominations, for the position[s] of [X] every June to all Affinity Group members via the Affinity Group’s official email discussion list and website. A slate of candidates shall be established by the officer[s] and announced to Affinity Group members no later than June 15.

D. Elections.

[Option 1] Elections shall be conducted online with the assistance of the SAA staff and in accordance with the guidelines for Section elections as specified in Section IX. of the SAA Governance Manual. Availability of the online ballot and the deadline for voting shall be announced by the Chair to all

Affinity Group members via the Affinity Group's official email discussion list and website.

- E. Appointments.** Affinity Group members may be appointed to additional leadership roles (e.g., Newsletter Editor, Web Liaison, etc.) by majority vote of [X].

[The Affinity Group should decide which positions are elected and which are appointed. If you expect to have appointments you may 1) leave this section generic by stating that "Affinity Group members may be appointed to additional leadership positions" and describe what process you will implement or 2) simply describe here which positions are appointed and what process you will implement for appointments.]

- V. MEETINGS.** The Affinity Group may hold a meeting in conjunction with the SAA Annual Meeting and may meet at other times as deemed appropriate by the officer[s]. The time and agenda shall be communicated in advance via the Affinity Group's official email discussion list and website.

- VI. AMENDMENTS.** Amendments to these bylaws shall be determined by a majority vote of Affinity Group members in a referendum held in conjunction with the Affinity Group's annual election. Once adopted, new or revised bylaws shall be submitted for approval by the Council to ensure that they become part of the permanent record as a component of Council meeting minutes.

[Per the SAA Governance Manual (IX.E.4.): "To ensure alignment with SAA's governance documents, bylaws and amendments should be reviewed by the executive director before the Affinity Group membership votes to adopt them. Once adopted, new or revised bylaws must be submitted to the Council for approval." Inclusion of the language within the bylaws document ensures that this procedure is understood and completed.]