

**Society of American Archivists
Council Meeting
November 2-3, 2018
Chicago, Illinois**

**“Petition to SAA Council for Ethical Sponsorships”
(Prepared by SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont)**

BACKGROUND

On October 1 SAA member David Staniunas sent the following email message to Council members Meredith Evans, Michelle Light, and Steven Booth, SAA member Jessica Farrell, and me:

Greetings everybody: David Staniunas from Philadelphia here.

I've closed the petition we ran in August, after someone filled it out with the name "Anti Semite." The full text of the petition is available here: <https://goo.gl/forms/GF8OmNGf6bR4XMIP2>

Below, find the full names of 76 SAA members signatory to the petition.

Katherine Crowe
David Staniunas
Jessica Farrell
Mark Matienzo
Joshua Zimmerman
Maggie Schreiner
Bonnie Gordon
Casey Westerman
Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez
Paul Parker
Maya Pasternak
Mary Crauderueff
Supriya Wronkiewicz
Karl-Rainer Blumenthal
Timothy Walsh
Jennifer Bolmarcich
Anna Carson
Aaisha Haykal
Alexa Logush
Alice Sara Prael
Rachel Searcy
Helen Jacobson
Zakiya Collier

Gayle Schechter
Kelly Bolding
Alexandra Dolan-Mescal
Brandon Pieczko
Ryan Hendrickson
Elena Colon-Marrero
Chloe Pfendler
Katy Rawdon
Hilary Barlow
sumayya ahmed
Raymond Maxwell
Molly Brown
Stacy Wood
Alison Clemens
Grace Lile
Sarah Nguyen
Sam Winn
Genna Duplisea
Shannon Supple
Maureen Callahan
Helen Kim
Michael Rush
Courtney Dean

Gregory Wiedeman
Kelly Wooten
Diana Bowers-Smith
Chelsea Reil
Hillel Arnold
Faith Charlton
Martin Gengenbach
Chloe Raub
Eunice Liu
Grahamsimmons
Christiana Dobrzynski
Matthew Francis
J.E. Molly Seegers
Caitlin Christian-Lamb
Patrick Galligan

Rebecca Morgan
Erin O'Meara
Jessica Chapel
Barbara Morley
Rachel Pooley
Krystell Jimenez
Riley Griffin
Ryan Edge
Javier Garza
cheylon woods
Rachel Gifford
Maura Kenny
Lauren Goodley
John Bence
Matthew Gorham

Peace,
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ds

Because the Google form had been locked at that point, I asked Staniunas for a full-text version of the petition, which he submitted on October 1:

A petition to SAA Council for ethical sponsorships

Whereas, as archivists, we identify archives as contested sites of political and material power,

Whereas the State of Israel has systematically seized and sealed records of Palestinian organizations, and as part of continuous efforts to expel Palestinians from “Greater Israel,” has looted personal papers of Palestinian families,

Whereas control of Palestinian archives directly inhibits Palestinian efforts to interpret history, thereby enshrining the Zionist narrative – “the land without people for the people without land,”

And whereas, in advance of the 2017 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, the organization solicited and received funding in support of the conference from HP Experience,

We, the undersigned, archivists & archives workers & members of SAA call on Council to dissolve any business relationship with units of the former Hewlett Packard Company – namely, HP Inc., Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE), and DXC Technology – which support the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and facilitate mass incarceration in the United States. [emphasis added]

We further call on Council to establish an ethical sponsorships policy, as a means to vet future sponsors, thereby to select and sustain ethical partnerships. [emphasis added]

Rationale

Acknowledging the work of panelists in 2017’s annual conference forum, “The Liberated Archive,” a group of archivists identified internal contradictions between the forum’s tenor, and

the material support the conference and forum received from HP Experience. We seek to align archivists' exhortations with their actions.

HP is the primary contractor for Israel's ID cards and checkpoints along the illegally-constructed wall in the West Bank. HP software supports the illegal Israeli naval blockade of Gaza. American denominations, including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (2014) and the United Churches of Christ (2015), have therefore divested from HP.

The indignity, injury, and death meted out to the Palestinian people far outweighs any offenses against the historic records of individual Palestinians, or of the Palestinian National Movement. Nevertheless, Palestinians and their memory-work and their cultural production are consanguine; expropriation and destruction of archives are categorically offenses against people.

As a people in exile and a people under occupation, the construction of institutions of memory has held a place of esteem in the minds of Palestinians. Here is Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki, on the construction of Palestinian cultural institutions in Beirut in the 1970s:

<<There was not a Palestinian alive between the battle of Karameh in 1968 and the siege of Beirut in 1982 who was not radically transformed at the core. Our society had experienced a dynamic awakening at its vital centers of query and apprehension. Our national folk troop had found in music and dance a liberating function of culture and was recreating dabki dances and the use of our musical instruments, the yarghoul and the oud. The Palestine Film Institute was projecting lucid imagery on the screen and showing how a society, once held inert by its sense of refugeeism, could, through national struggle, impose coherence on the botched landscape of its everyday reality. The Palestine Research Center had amassed the world's largest library on Palestinian history, along with a large number of artifacts, artworks, and old manuscripts dealing with our culture. A whole institute employing hundreds was established to resurrect the ancient art of embroidery. Our poetry, fiction, belles lettres, science, and system of education were enriched at their core of meaning. [Soul in exile, p.7-8]>>

The history of Palestinian archival collections necessarily mirrors the series of attacks and indignities visited on the Palestinian people. For instance, the Palestine Research Center was organized in Beirut by the PLO in 1965, working in exile. In September 1982, the Israeli Army invaded Beirut, and Israeli soldiers "systematically looted the contents of the library and pursued the Center's workers around the city." PRC librarians and archivists retrieved fragments of the PRC collections and returned them to the site. In July 1983, Israeli bombers levelled the building. The PRC resumed operations in Nicosia, Cyprus in 1985; it closed in 1993; it re-opened in Ramallah in 2011.

Historian Hana Sleiman argues that "archives do not perpetually serve the narrative of their creator. Rather they come to serve the narrative of their captor." Control of archives allows a people to fully author historical narratives; absent this control, the captor can seal the captive's story. The exemplary volume here is Raphael Israeli's *PLO in Lebanon* (1983), which used looted Palestinian documents to describe Israel as having liberated Lebanon from Palestinian oppression.

It is not a professional ethic of neutrality, but of solidarity which governs archivists' actions in this sphere. Ariella Azoulay directs us to the task:

<<Potential history begins when the archive is not accessed as a depository of documents out of which "infiltrators" – or "refugees," "absentees," or "wanted persons" for that matter – could be traced, but rather as a site for the ongoing struggle over sovereignty. If one sides with civil rather

than national sovereignty, one would not enter the archive without Palestinian companions, joining the civil struggle in which they are engaged and rehearsing together the performance of civil sovereignty.>>

Thank you, ds

Relevant SAA Policies and Procedures

Following are existing SAA policies and procedures that may be relevant to the Council's consideration of this member-submitted petition:

Per the [SAA Constitution](#), Article VI, Meetings: "2. Resolutions passed at the annual business meeting or submitted in writing and signed by 1% of the eligible voting members which request the Council to take a specific action must be formally considered and voted upon by the Council in a timely fashion. The membership shall be notified of the results of that deliberation in the first communication sent to the membership following the Council's vote. If ten (10) percent of the membership disagrees with the Council's decision and files a petition to that effect with the executive office within ninety (90) days of the Council's notification, a special referendum shall be conducted within one hundred and eighty (180) days and the results of a majority vote of the members voting in this referendum shall be binding provided that at least thirty (30) percent of the eligible members shall have voted.

Per the [SAA Bylaws](#), 11. Member Referenda: "A. Member dues changes and resolution of motions filed with the Executive Director in accordance with Article IX or Article X of the Constitution shall be determined by member referendum." This section describes details of conducting a member referendum on dues changes or amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws. It is silent on the details of a member referendum conducted to address other matters, but may provide sufficient guidance to ensure a fair hearing.

Per [Section IV of the SAA Governance Manual](#), the Council is the elected governing body of the Society of American Archivists. Together with the Society's officers and the executive director, it is responsible for the Society's governance, legal compliance, and financial well-being. Among the Council's duties are "1.h. Formally consider and vote on all resolutions of the business meeting which request the Council take a specific action. Notify the membership of the results of the deliberation" and "3. Establish, review, and approve SAA policies."

Previous Council Actions

At its August 13 meeting in Washington, DC, the Council approved formation of a Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Exhibits, Sponsorships, and Advertising:

THAT a task force be formed to develop guidelines for staff use in considering vendor exhibits, sponsorships, and advertising, and

THAT the task force be appointed no later than September 1 and comprise six individuals representing the diversity of our organization, and

THAT the task force's final report be considered at the November 2018 Council meeting.

On September 12, the Executive Committee approved the following charge:

Task Force to Develop Guidelines for Exhibits, Sponsorships, and Advertising

Purpose

The task force is responsible for drafting guidelines for staff use in considering vendor exhibits, sponsorships, and advertising.

Selection, Size, and Length of Term

The task force comprises six individual SAA members, appointed by the SAA President, who represent the diversity of the organization. One individual member will serve as chair. Terms begin on September 15, 2018, and end upon the Council's review of the proposed guidelines. The SAA Executive Director serves *ex officio* on the task force.

Reporting Procedures

Periodic updates to the Council via its Executive Committee are welcome. A final report is due to the Council for its November 2018 meeting (i.e., no later than October 26).

Duties and Responsibilities

To fulfill its purpose as described above, the task force is charged to:

- Research current best practices in evaluating vendors that wish to exhibit, sponsor, or advertise with professional associations.
- Develop clear and specific guidelines that the SAA staff may apply when considering vendor exhibits, sponsorships, and advertising.
- Consider the appropriateness of applying an "ethical" standard to prospective vendors.

Meetings

The task force will carry out its charge via electronic mail and conference calls.

Due to a variety of issues, I have not been able to complete the roster of invitees as proposed by Meredith Evans and Michelle Light. Four individuals have agreed to serve; two positions remain open at this time. Thus the Council may wish to modify the charge.

DISCUSSION

How does the Council wish to proceed in response to the petition?