

**Society of American
Archivists Council Meeting
October 31 – Nov 1, 2023
Hybrid Meeting (Chicago, IL)**

Annual Report: Awards Committee

(Prepared by Committee Co-Chairs Megan Keller Young and Jane LaBarbara)

COMPLETED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

Annual awards cycle: In 2023, the awards cycle resulted in 177 nominations, an increase from 126 nominations in 2022 and 140 nominations in 2021. The Awards Subcommittees continued the same pattern of outreach as in previous years. The co-chairs are hoping to be able to collect data from SmarterSelect about how the applicants found out about the award(s) and share that information with the subcommittees so that they can make decisions about what targeted advertising works best. It appears that this information is already available in individual applications – can it be aggregated and shared with the subcommittees? Or could the applications be made available to the co-chairs?

The standardized timeline to notify awardees continues to work well. Going forward, the co-chairs plan to post monthly updates to keep everyone on track. Outgoing co-chairs were encouraged to onboard their successors, and to upload their publicity contact lists into SAA Connect to streamline the process.

Notable changes to awards criteria and committee procedures:

The Preservation Publication subcommittee now awards \$750 and a certificate.

For the next awards cycle, the following subcommittees have proposed changes.

The **Oliver Wendell Holmes Subcommittee** would like to make the following changes: Ask about country of residence for eligibility so we aren't making assumptions about an applicant's nationality; re-word prompts to align with assessment criteria (outstanding characteristics vs. demonstrates personal achievement); expand the Purpose and Criteria for Selection section of the award description to more closely align with the other travel awards and provide clarity to potential applicants.

The **F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship Subcommittee** would like to make minor changes to their award application description:

- 1) Announcements of the Ham scholarship (and all the scholarships!) should urge the students to carefully read the [award description](#), especially on eligibility.

- 2) The Ham award description on the SAA website already indicates that the scholarship funds must be paid to the student's academic institution and not the student, perhaps that language can be emphasized by boldface text or underlining.
- 3) The description of the essay should be slightly revised to read *an essay (no more than five pages in length) that demonstrates what it means to "think like an archivist."* [Deleted: the applicant's ability to].

The SAA **Archival Innovator Award Subcommittee** proposes the following change to the wording of the award application:

- From: How does the nominee meet one or more of the following criteria
- To: How does the nominee meet the following criteria.

Reasoning: The rubric in scholarship finder penalizes candidates who do not address all the criteria. That is not clear based on the award nomination/application wording. It also better reflects the wording on the "purpose and criteria for selection." <https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-innovators>
"Nominee(s) should meet as many of the following criteria as possible."

Awardee recognition at the 2023 Annual Meeting:

Awardees will be recognized during Plenary 1 on July 27.

ONGOING PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Awards Committee looks forward to another awards cycle and hopes that continued outreach will result in the number of nominations continuing to increase.

INITIATIVES ASSOCIATED WITH THE 2020-2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

The mission of the Awards Committee to recognize leaders and achievers in the archives field via professional recognition and financial assistance supports the following goals of SAA's Strategic Plan:

GOAL 1: Advocating for Archives and Archivists

1. Provide leadership in promoting the value of archives and archivists to institutions, communities, and society.
2. Educate and influence decision-makers in any setting about the importance of archives and archivists.

By publicly recognizing leaders and achievers in the archives profession and highlighting their work, the SAA Awards Committee promotes the work of archivists in our society.

GOAL 2: Enhancing Professional Growth

2.1 Mentor and support the career development of members to assist them in achieving their goals.

In giving financial awards such as scholarships, cash awards, and conference registration and travel reimbursement, the Awards Committee provides opportunities for members to participate in professional development and complete their educational goals.

GOAL 3: Meeting Members' Needs

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

As SAA's largest committee, the Awards Committee offers opportunities for participation and leadership to a large group of members. Serving on one of its subcommittees is a common first step into SAA leadership.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The Awards Committee has no questions about the Council discussion.

APPENDIX 1. Final Report, 2023 F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship Award Subcommittee

Winner

We selected Olivija Liepa, a dual master's student in Public History (NYU MA with an Archives concentration) and Library and Information Studies (Long Island University). The Committee was impressed with Liepa's nuanced understanding of archival theory and practice as expressed in the three frameworks through which she described archival thinking: "the ability to think like a time traveler,"; "the ability to communicate the essence of a record and think critically about this work" and "flexibility and the ability to prioritize."

Applicants

We had twenty-seven applicants this year, compared to 13 in 2022, 26 in 2021, and 27 in 2020. We attribute the return to the numbers of previous years to more frequent reaching out to education programs, archival educators, and SAA groups. We completed three rounds of communications to all these groups. We eliminated one student from a Canadian program. We eliminated six students who had not completed the required archives course by the February deadline.

We sometimes had difficulty determining academic qualifications for a variety of reasons: course descriptions did not always clearly match the SAA GPAS (Graduate Program in Archival Studies) elements, more advanced courses sometimes preceded introductory courses, and programs in general did not always appear to qualify under the SAA guidelines. So, we treated applications on a case-by-case basis and discussed questions among ourselves. Frankly, we think that programs are unaware of the guidelines, unaware of an award like this, and schedule courses in a way that complicates program planning for the individual student.

The twenty-seven applicants represented the following institutions:

Clayton. ate University (1)	Kent State University (2)
Emporia University (1)	Long Island University (1)
Drexel University (1)	Louisiana State University (3)

Queens College (1)
Simmons University (3)
Southern New Hampshire University (1)
Syracuse University (1)
UCLA (3) (including one PhD)
University of Alabama (2)
University of Missouri (1)

University of Maryland (1)
University of North Carolina (1)
University of North Texas (1)
University of Oklahoma (1)
University of Southern Mississippi (1)
University of Toronto (1)

We sent emails to all students who did not win the award, and one student requested additional feedback. Susan Davis responded with an explanation of where her essay fell short.

Publicity

The committee continued its customary pattern of sending announcements to all the graduate program and student chapters listed in the SAA Directory, with an initial announcement in early December, another in early January, and a third in early February. We also sent notices to the Archival Educators Roundtable and SNAP Roundtable on a similar schedule. The Ham scholarship was included in the general awards announcements in *Archival Outlook* but not as a separate announcement (SAA decision).

The Awards application database included a place for students to indicate where they learned of the award. Some of these categories overlap, but far more students identify the scholarship from the SAA website than other avenues. The number of students who checked each box is noted below. Some students checked more than one category.

SAA Website - 19

Professor/Advisor - 0

In the Loop - 0

Letter to department - 0

Email from institution - 2

Program blog or network - 0

Faculty member – 8 (not sure of the difference between Faculty member and Professor/Advisor)

Student chapter - 0

Other or no box checked – 2

Issues to Address

We were relieved that the total number of applications reached earlier years' numbers. It is sometimes hard to track down the educator responsible for a given program; some are adjuncts and change regularly. In a couple of cases the Dean or Program Director was helpful. And we received applications from new institutions, some of which we had to eliminate. We have still been unsuccessful in getting applications from a couple of highly regarded institutions, despite direct emails to the educator (University of Michigan, for example). And the number and/or activity level of student chapters had clearly declined. That is certainly due, in part at least, to the increase in online programs.

It continues to be difficult to determine whether a program meets SAA guidelines for graduate education programs. The Education Committee's curriculum checklist (2020) has been very helpful, but many programs have changed in the interim. In addition, determining when archival

courses are offered in a specific program requires a careful examination of the student's transcript. Surprisingly, students took advanced courses before an intro one. And students go through programs at their own pace. So, the task is not only determining if the student has taken the requisite course, but also whether they will be able to apply the award to their program, based on anticipated graduation. In some cases, we have contacted the student to inquire. Fortunately, our first-choice applicant clearly met all requirements. That may not always be the case in the future.

Recommendations for Next Year

For the Awards Committee and SAA staff:

We would like to make minor changes to the Ham award application description:

Announcements of the Ham scholarship (and all the scholarships!) should urge the students to carefully read the award description:

<https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-ham> especially on eligibility. The Ham award description on the SAA website already indicates that the scholarship funds must be paid to the student's academic institution and not the student, but perhaps that language can be emphasized by boldface text or underlining. The description of the essay should be slightly revised to read *an essay (no more than five pages in length) that demonstrates what it means to "think like an archivist."* [Deleted: the applicant's ability to].

For the Ham Committee:

The Committee should discuss their rating criteria for academic and professional achievement and cover letter.

Respectfully submitted,

2022 SAA F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship Subcommittee
Susan Davis, Chair; John Fleckner, and Barbara Teague
30 July 2023