

INTRODUCTION TO PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

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## Introduction to President Elizabeth Adkins

Bruce Bruemmer

**G**ood morning. For most of you, this plenary represents the focal point of the SAA Annual Meeting. And, it gives a pitiable few another year to play the game, “Rank that Presidential Address.” I imagine that the tasks of overseeing the society, working one’s day job, and crafting words that will inspire the archival masses have added to the stress level of many a presidential summer. I have peeked at Elizabeth’s speech; I know she is in fine shape. So, I would like to take this opportunity to suggest four ways SAA might improve future presidential addresses by looking at the overlooked presidential introduction.

First, let’s be brief and dispense with the obvious. Few SAA presidents are elected without some measure of overachievement, and I don’t want to cheapen Elizabeth’s accomplishments by droning on. I could stand here and tell you about her stellar work at Ford Motor Company, Kraft Foods, and Laird Norton; her contributions to the profession; and her fine portfolio of presentations and articles. Instead, I have taken the innovative step of videotaping her curriculum vitae outside the Ford plant in the Twin Cities. It is currently available on YouTube under the search phrases “Elizabeth Adkins” and “SAA president.” (Please note, for God’s sake, that this isn’t Elizabeth “Atkins” who does the zombie love video two selections lower.) For now it should be sufficient to state simply that Elizabeth is one of the smartest and most talented people that I know, or in the words of one comment already on YouTube, a “Brilliant articulation for a brilliant woman! Congrats Elizabeth . . . you are a rocking archivist!”

Second, let’s revel in provenance. While we can congratulate ourselves on electing Elizabeth, the real reason she is here is sitting in the front of this room.

Bruce H. Bruemmer, director of Corporate Archives at Cargill Incorporated, introduced President Elizabeth Adkins at a plenary session on 30 August 2007 during the 71st Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Chicago.

Foremost is Elizabeth's father, Herbert Woodger. Someone asked Elizabeth about the best part of being president of SAA, and she was about to say the Presidential Suite, when she thought twice and said, "The address; when I will get to have a shining moment in front of my father." We are delighted to have him here with us this morning. Also attending are Walter and Barbara Korntheuer, Elizabeth's uncle and aunt. Elizabeth noted that Walter talked her through the salary negotiation process when she started at Laird Norton, so perhaps we could ask Walter to volunteer at the SAA career center later on. And finally, Fred Adkins, Elizabeth's husband, who deserves our thanks for using all of his sales skills to look like he really cares about the nature of records at the dinner table for nearly twenty-four years.

Third, a few colleagues have reminded me that some presidential introductions turn into a veritable saccharin love fest. Now, we speak of diversity. In Minnesota, I live daily with Lutherans, and I know that we need to respect their desire to keep a lid on public displays of affection, at least until the weather turns a little colder. So let's instead dwell on one of Elizabeth's faults. She can seem and be too serious at times. When I first met her, I was in academia and she was working as the archivist for Kraft Foods. The fact that someone didn't grasp the natural humor of Velveeta and Miracle Whip concerned me. It didn't occur to me at the time that these products represent innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship, and that their success means jobs for people like archivists. I've learned two important things in life: don't poke fun at the royal family in front of someone from the U.K. and don't make fun of brands in front of a corporate archivist.

Elizabeth was nice and all, but I couldn't crack this seriousness until the SAA meeting in Montreal. Kathy Marquis and I were reviewing a huge number of videotapes for a program session to investigate the image of archivists, and we were weary after watching the fifteenth video demonstration of mylar encapsulation. In walks Elizabeth with two more videotapes for us. One was about the Kraft Foods Archives, the other was about the history of Kraft. In the latter, the production concluded with an inspirational quote from the founder of Kraft. Kathy and I instantly hit the floor in laughter when we heard for the first time, the immortal J. L. Kraft phrase, "What we say we do, we do do." When I looked up from the floor, I saw Elizabeth's face twitching, ready to defend the corporate founder, but instead she blurted out, "Okay! Okay! It IS a STUPID QUOTE!" We've been close friends ever since. My apologies to Kraft, a fine company (and great customer of Cargill's).

Fourth, a good presidential introduction should set up its own theme, like a good warm-up band. Let's try leadership. This quality is currently in vogue among human resource managers, all of whom seem to excel at beating the life out of every good human concept. I have worked as an archivist in academia, government, and the private sector, and HR is the same everywhere. I swear, on some distant planet right now, there is an HR department overly dissecting the

added value of leadership and putting it into some pedantic PowerPoint. Thank God HR hasn't discovered "love" as a desirable employee trait, lest they be working to take all the fun out of that, too.

I have found two really good definitions of leadership that I will share with you. The first is from Bart Giamatti, a past president of Yale University who became commissioner of baseball and presided over the Pete Rose gambling scandal, arguably the worst crisis to hit baseball since the 1919 Black Sox. Giamatti said, and if you are out there Bud Selig, listen carefully:

Leadership is an essentially moral act, not, as in most management, a protective act. Leadership is an assertion of vision, not simply an exercise of style. It is the moral courage to assert a vision of the institution in[to] the future, and *the intellectual energy to persuade the culture of the wisdom and validity of that vision.*<sup>1</sup>

The other definition of leadership I can't put into words, so I will just introduce her. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Elizabeth W. Adkins, president of the Society of American Archivists.

<sup>1</sup> James Reston, Jr. *Collision at Home Plate: The Lives of Pete Rose and Bart Giamatti* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 223.

## PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

# Our Journey Toward Diversity— and a Call to (More) Action

Elizabeth W. Adkins, CA

## Abstract

SAA has been working to address diversity concerns for more than thirty-five years. In this expanded version of her presidential address at the 2007 Annual Meeting in Chicago, Elizabeth Adkins shares her perspectives on SAA and diversity: how SAA has defined diversity, where SAA and the archives profession stand on diversity, how the profession compares to related fields, and what SAA has done so far to address diversity concerns. She provides an action plan—including a new SAA-sponsored minority scholarship for graduate archival education—and invites SAA members to demonstrate SAA's commitment to diversity by modeling inclusiveness in all that they do.

Not long after I learned that I had been elected president-elect of SAA, I started to wonder how long it had been since a corporate archivist had served as SAA's president. So I checked the list of presidents on SAA's website—and learned that the last corporate archivist to serve in this position was Firestone archivist William Overman, who was elected to the post in 1957. In fact, he and I are the only corporate archivists to serve as SAA's president in the organization's seventy-one-year history.

This paper is the expanded version of Elizabeth W. Adkins's presidential address delivered 30 August 2007 during the 71st Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Chicago. The author would like to thank the following individuals for their valuable input into the research and early drafts of this paper: Brenda Banks, Thomas Battle, Nancy P. Beaumont, Danna Bell-Russel, Amy Cooper Cary, Nancy Dunn, Tim Ericson, John Fleckner, Anne Gilliland, Mark Greene, Rebecca Hankins, Dalena Hunter, Karen Jefferson, Randall Jimerson, Joan Krizack, Andrew Lau, Wilda Logan, Kathy Marquis, Kathryn Neal, Richard Pearce-Moses, Mary Jo Pugh, Deborra Richardson, and Joel Wurl. Thanks also to Tim Cary and Michael Doyle for their help in pulling information and illustrations from the SAA Archives, housed at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee. The author's deepest gratitude goes to Bruce Bruemmer for providing what was certainly the most memorable introduction to a presidential address in SAA's history.

Some might say that my election as a corporate archivist was a bit of a victory for diversity within SAA. Others might say that the institution in which I'm employed is less significant than the fact that I am a woman—one of sixteen female presidents of the Society's sixty-two. Others might say that none of that matters; the real diversity issue for SAA and the profession is the number of people of color who are employed as archivists and who serve in SAA leadership positions. And still others might argue that diversity is not really about skin color, gender, or employing institution; it's about the advantages of embracing the wide variety of perspectives and beliefs found in a range of people—attitudes that can't be discerned simply by looking at a person or the name of his or her employer.

So what do we mean at SAA when we use the term *diversity*, and how can SAA help encourage it? I decided to tackle these and related questions during my term as president. It's a daunting topic and much bigger than I can completely address in the short time I have for this presentation. It's also been a somewhat uncomfortable topic for SAA leadership over the years, because while it's easy to embrace the value of diversity, it's difficult to change the demographic makeup of a profession. But I believe it's essential for our future success.

SAA has been working to address diversity concerns for more than thirty-five years, sometimes effectively and sometimes not so effectively. Today I want to share some perspectives on how we've defined diversity, where we stand on it, how we compare to related professions, and what we've done to address it so far. But most important, I want to suggest what we can do now to elevate our commitment to diversity and act on it, both in SAA and within the archives profession.

### Defining Diversity

Before we can agree how we should address our performance on diversity, we need to agree on what we mean by the term *diversity*. Many groups put forth diversity definitions, most of which list demographic characteristics important to their members. The most common characteristics listed in the definitions found on the Web were race, ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, religion, socioeconomic level, and physical abilities. But some organizations also listed such factors as language, politics, organizational philosophy, intelligence, occupational skills, educational attainment, personality, work style, marital status, and geographic location.<sup>1</sup> While different organizations express the spirit of diversity differently, most reflect an ideal of embracing multiple viewpoints and lifestyles:

- The National Archives and Records Administration states, "Diversity is a workforce perspective in which unique backgrounds, beliefs,

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, [http://www.purdue.edu/hr/LeadingEdition/LEdi\\_405\\_diversity\\_terms.htm](http://www.purdue.edu/hr/LeadingEdition/LEdi_405_diversity_terms.htm), accessed 10 October 2007; [http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs\\_central/glossary/](http://www.girlscouts.org/program/gs_central/glossary/), accessed 10 October 2007; and <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCEC/Diversity/DefinitionofDiversity/default.htm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

values, skills, attributes, characteristics, and similarities of all people are appreciated and valued.”<sup>2</sup>

- The Council for Exceptional Children announces, “Diversity means understanding and valuing the characteristics and beliefs of those who demonstrate a wide range of characteristics.”<sup>3</sup>
- The National Park Service declares, “Diversity in the National Park Service means valuing employees in all occupations, at all levels and providing them the opportunities for working at their full potential and making their maximum contributions toward achieving the organization’s mission and goals.”<sup>4</sup>
- Scientists have a particularly interesting view of diversity, since biodiversity plays an important part in the health of the planet. One scientist from the Los Alamos National Laboratory provides this scientifically based definition of diversity: “Diversity is a property of a group, not of an individual, and is defined to be the degree of unique contributions within a group in which its constituents have a common ‘world view’. . . . Applying this definition, if all the individuals within a group have identical contributions, then the group has zero diversity, although the contributions of the individuals may encompass all possible variations of the system.”<sup>5</sup>

This last definition addresses an important concept: diversity of viewpoints. When you share a point of view with another person or persons, it establishes a bond. This feeling of connection is an important component in forming an association like the Society of American Archivists. It’s that sense of community that makes us want to get together and discuss areas of common interest. As we develop this sense of community, however, we have to watch for the danger of assuming that we all share the same point of view. So, diversity for SAA may mean striking a balance between defining values that we all can embrace while making sure that the values are stated broadly enough to include all people who are needed to enrich our discussions and work products. While disagreement about our values is healthy, and debate is necessary, we need to conduct ourselves in a way that respects all viewpoints.

How has SAA defined diversity? SAA’s *Glossary of Archival Records and Terminology* includes this concise definition: “Variations within a group resulting

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.archives.gov/eo/policy/diversity-faq.html>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCEC/Diversity/DefinitionofDiversity/default.htm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nps.gov/history/crdi/diversityNPS/wrkfrce.htm>, accessed 10 October 2007. The National Park Service’s website covers not just workforce diversity, but diversity as reflected at the parks and among its visitors. See <http://www.nps.gov/history/crdi/diversityNPS/intro.htm> for details, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>5</sup> From a website posted by Dr. Norman L. Johnson of the Los Alamos National Laboratory: [http://ishi.lanl.gov/diversity/Glossary1\\_div.html](http://ishi.lanl.gov/diversity/Glossary1_div.html), accessed 10 October 2007.

from differences among members of that group.”<sup>6</sup> SAA’s Task Force on Diversity issued a more expansive definition in its final report to the Council in 1999:

The membership of the Society of American Archivists should reflect the demographic range of the archival profession and the American public. The diversity of those populations results from personal and cultural background, socioeconomic status, and physical limitations. These may include diversity as it relates to individual members such as gender, race, ethnicity, geographical location, age, or physical abilities. Diversity may also reflect characteristics more specific to the archival profession such as areas of archival interest or repository type. In the spirit of inclusiveness, SAA should be committed to increasing the participation of individuals from groups currently under-represented in the Society and the profession.

SAA values the participation of diverse individuals and groups, because of the strength it brings to the work of the Society itself, and the importance of professional diversity in ensuring our stewardship of an inclusive historical record. SAA can encourage diversity in the broader archival profession through its leadership by identifying and raising issues and by helping to establish guidelines, policies, and practices relating both to the diversity of our profession and the historical record.<sup>7</sup>

### The Importance of Diversity in the Historical Record

SAA needs to consider three important aspects of diversity: diversity within the profession, diversity within SAA, and diversity in the historical record. During this address I will focus on diversity within the profession and within SAA for two reasons. First, far less has been published on these aspects of diversity than on diversity of the historical record.<sup>8</sup> Second, as Kathryn Neal pointed out in one of the few articles written on diversity within the profession,

<sup>6</sup>Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 125.

<sup>7</sup>From the final report of SAA’s Task Force on Diversity: [http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity\\_final.asp](http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity_final.asp), accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>8</sup>The importance of diversity in the documentary record was initially addressed in the 1970s and has recently enjoyed a resurgence of interest in archival literature. Examples include F. Gerald Ham, “The Archival Edge,” *American Archivist* 38, no. 1 (January 1975): 5–13; William T. Hagan, “Archival Captive—The American Indian,” *American Archivist* 41, no. 2 (April 1978): 135–42; Ian Johnston, “Whose History Is It Anyway?” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 22, no. 2 (2001); Elisabeth Kaplan, “We Are What We Collect, We Collect What We Are: Archives and the Construction of Identity,” *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 126–51; Judith Schwartz, “The Archivist’s Balancing Act: Helping Researchers While Protecting Individual Privacy,” *Journal of American History* 79 (June 1992): 179–89; Sue McKemmish, Anne Gilliland-Swetland, and Eric Ketelaar, “‘Communities of Memory’: Pluralising Archival Research and Education Agendas,” submitted for publication in *Archives & Manuscripts*; Katie Shilton and Ramesh Srinivasan, “Participatory Appraisal and Arrangement for Multicultural Archival Collections,” UCLA graduate school paper, accepted for publication in *Archivaria* in 2007; Joel Wurl, “Ethnicity as Provenance: In Search of Values and Principles for Documenting the Immigrant Experience,” *Archival Issues* 29, no. 1 (2005): 65–76; Jennifer Osorio, “Proof of a Life Lived: The Plight of the Bracero and What It Says about How We Treat Records,” *Archival Issues* 29, no. 2 (2005): 95–103.

Expanding the numbers of staff members of color and tapping their potential should (and no doubt would) enhance the overall functions of archives and manuscript repositories. New ideas would likely be stimulated in areas that include, but certainly are not limited to, donor relations (for instance, how to approach and document members of growing communities of color most effectively) and reference/access (determining how to improve services as user groups become increasingly diverse, or how to attract a more diverse pool of researchers if society's changing demographics are not reflected).<sup>9</sup>

In other words, without a diverse pool of talent in the archives profession, we will less likely be able to ensure diversity in the historical record.

Archivists, along with librarians and museum professionals, share responsibility for ensuring that the holdings of our cultural institutions reflect the diversity of our society and for making sure that the services we offer take diversity into consideration. As Lonnie Bunch, then president of the Chicago Historical Society, said in 2002, "Ultimately, cultural institutions are special places: touchstones of the past, keepers of our collective memories, sites that enrich and places that inspire. Yet without fully embracing the challenges of diversity, these institutions cannot be the glue that helps to bind a city or a nation together. Without fully embracing diversity, they cannot be the safe places that help us to conceptualize our world and to visualize the possible."<sup>10</sup>

### **Demographic Diversity in the Profession and in SAA**

Returning to the definition provided by SAA's 1999 Task Force on Diversity, our diversity efforts require us, at minimum, to look at gender, race, ethnicity, geographical location, age, physical abilities, areas of archival interest, and repository type. While it is not called out in the task force's definition, I would argue that we should also take into account sexual orientation and identity.

Only a few of these characteristics have been tracked through the years. So, one of the first challenges we face when talking about diversity in the profession is comparing where we stand now with the past. The 2004 census of the archival profession, the A\*CENSUS (officially titled the Archival Census and Education Needs Survey in the United States), provides the most detailed assessment of the profession's demographic base, based on responses from 5,620 individuals. Less ambitious surveys were conducted in 1956 and 1982, and the results of each survey effort are compared in a detailed analysis of A\*CENSUS, published in volume 69, number 2 of the *American Archivist*.

<sup>9</sup> Kathryn M. Neal, "The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment," *Archival Issues* (1996): 145–58.

<sup>10</sup> Presentation by Lonnie Bunch to the Joyce Foundation board of directors on 4 December 2002. Bunch is now director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



The A\*CENSUS results provide a fascinating, detailed snapshot of a profession in transition. One of the most startling trends is the rise of women in the profession. In 1956, 33 percent of archivists who responded to a survey of SAA members were women. By 1982, the proportion of female respondents to a similar survey had risen to 54 percent. In the A\*CENSUS, women represented 66 percent of the respondents.<sup>11</sup> This trend is not healthy for the profession, because the perspective of men is needed to determine how we approach our work and our documentary record. And from a pragmatic point of view, women, unfortunately, are not paid as well as men, so the lack of gender balance is probably driving down our salaries.

Another obvious trend seen in the A\*CENSUS results is the effect of the baby boom generation. Of the 4,776 individuals who provided their age in response to the questionnaire, 50 percent were fifty years old or older; only 26 percent were under forty.<sup>12</sup> Baby boom archivists began retiring in the last few years, and many more will be leaving the field within the next ten years. If we don't attract a significant number of young people into the profession and work to equip today's younger archivists to move into leadership roles, the future of the profession could be at great risk.

As for race and ethnicity, the good news is that we can report some progress. The bad news is that the profession started out at an exceptionally low level of minority participation. A 1982 survey showed a total of only 2.8 percent nonwhite archivists. Twenty-two years later, 7 percent of the archivists responding to the 2004 A\*CENSUS were nonwhite. SAA has done only slightly better than the profession at large, with just under 10 percent of its members identifying themselves as belonging to one or more minority ethnic or racial groups. Compare these numbers with the U.S. average of 25 percent nonwhites, and you know that both SAA and the profession have a very long way to go to achieve racial and ethnic diversity. And the discrepancy will only become more pressing in the future, because America's younger population is increasingly nonwhite, including 37 percent of our kindergartners.<sup>13</sup>

Why should such an appallingly low proportion of nonwhites in our ranks matter? Corporate America has been asking this question for several decades, with varying levels of success. What often motivates an organization to address racial and ethnic diversity is a sense that it is "the right thing to do." But companies have gradually discovered another set of benefits to diversity—basically, it's good business. Because racial and ethnic minorities make up an increasingly larger proportion of American society, companies who ignore their impact on

<sup>11</sup> Victoria Irons Walch, "A\*CENSUS: A Closer Look," *American Archivist* 69 (Fall/Winter 2006): 331.

<sup>12</sup> Walch, "A\*CENSUS," 331.

<sup>13</sup> Victoria Irons Walch, "A\*CENSUS: A Call to Action," *American Archivist*, 69 (Fall/Winter 2006): 314.

the workforce, on products and services, and on the supply chain do so at their own peril. Many companies realize this and embrace diversity as a potentially competitive advantage.

I can point to my own employer, Ford Motor Company, as an example. Although Ford has long been noted for providing factory jobs with good pay to a large number of African Americans, dating as far back as the 1920s, its record in the white-collar workforce is less notable. When I arrived at Ford Motor Company nearly eleven years ago, my impression was of a place filled with many male, white, long-term employees who knew their way around what is a very tough and demanding business. It could be intimidating to those of us who were not “on the inside” of Ford’s corporate culture.

Some early efforts to correct the situation only led to resentment and reverse discrimination lawsuits. But at the start of the millennium, Ford recast its diversity efforts more successfully. In an annual ranking exercise, DiversityInc placed Ford Motor Company among the top fifty companies noted for their diversity based on responses to more than 200 detailed questions on human capital, CEO commitment, corporate communications, and supplier diversity. In 2003, Ford Motor Company was recognized as *the* Top Company for Diversity in that ranking, and it most recently came in at number five.<sup>14</sup>

How has Ford managed to make such great strides in diversity? As a former Ford general counsel said in a 2003 speech at the University of Michigan, “Properly communicated and understood, our diversity policies are about inclusion and fair evaluation of all people . . . Our pursuit of diversity is fully in line with merit-based evaluation. Our goal again is the best and brightest, and only by seeking talented employees from all backgrounds can we reach that goal.”<sup>15</sup> Going even further, Ford’s executive chairman, Bill Ford, pointed out, “Our diversity is essential to our mission. We need many unique skills, talents and ways of thinking and looking at the world to help us succeed.”<sup>16</sup>

This “bottom-line” approach to diversity has implications for SAA and the archival profession. Every group wants the best and the brightest working for and with them. There is a lot of competition with other professions and career paths. If our profession projects real or perceived barriers to people of color, it will lose out to the competition. The archives profession cannot make its full contribution to society if many highly capable people view it as closed or irrelevant to them.

<sup>14</sup> “The Top 50: The Nation’s Most Credible Diversity Business List,” <http://www.diversityinc.com/public/department160.cfm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>15</sup> From an untitled speech by Dennis Ross, 22 October 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Quote from Bill Ford can be found on DiversityInc’s website: “2007 Top 50 Profiles; No. 5: Ford Motor Company,” see <http://www.diversityinc.com/public/1804.cfm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

### Benchmarking with Other Professions

Archivists aren't alone in the struggle to become more diverse. Of our "sister" professions, we may have the most to learn from librarians. The American Library Association established a Committee on Diversity in 1981, and its Office for Diversity is one of fifteen administrative offices of the association. Yet even after twenty-six years of diversity efforts, an analysis of the 2000 U.S. Census commissioned by ALA revealed that only 11 percent of credentialed librarians are nonwhite. Like archivists, librarians are predominantly female, and increasingly forty-five years old and older.<sup>17</sup>

A series of museum workforce surveys conducted between 2002 and 2006 reveals similar statistics for museum professionals. These surveys, conducted in various geographical locations and specialties of the museum profession, reveal that 81 to 90 percent of museum executives and managers are white.<sup>18</sup> In 2003, the American Association of Museums (AAM) identified diversity as one of the association's eight strategic issues. In May 2004, the AAM board approved the formation of a new Committee for Diversity in Museums, the board's first new standing professional committee in twenty years.<sup>19</sup> AAM's diversity committee had its roots in a 1998 ad hoc coalition of Professional Interest Committees. Its mission is "to represent, recognize, and embrace the diverse constituencies that museums serve, or seek to serve, and to ensure their representation and leadership throughout the museum profession." AAM has joined forces with eight

<sup>17</sup> "Diversity Counts," report prepared by ALA's Office for Research and Statistics and Office for Diversity, January 2007, 5. The same analysis revealed that 16.8 percent of noncredentialed librarians are nonwhite.

<sup>18</sup> "Summary of Museum Workforce Surveys," an appendix to the American Association of Museums' "Museums and Diversity National Initiative: Guide to Diversity Planning," as provided to the author via email on 15 August 2007 by Helen J. Wechsler, director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects of the American Association of Museums. The surveys included 1) 2006 Association of Children's Museums Diversity Survey, which showed that about 90 percent of executive/management-level staff were white, non-Hispanic, while 62.9 percent of maintenance/security staff were white, non-Hispanic; 2) 2006 Association of Children's Museums Compensation and Benefits Survey, which showed that 90 percent of executive directors were white, non-Hispanic; 3) "Science Center Workforce 2001: An ATSC Report," which showed that 87 percent of the executives and managers are white and 85.3 percent of board members were white; 4) California Association of Museums, 2002 Salary Survey of Museum Personnel, which showed that 81 percent of executive management were white and board members 88 percent white; and 5) Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in Private Industry, Museums, Historical Sites and Like Institutions, which showed that 75 percent of all employees were white and 88 percent of officials and managers were white.

<sup>19</sup> "Diversity and Museums," posted on the American Association of Museums website: <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/div/index.cfm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

other museum service organizations to form the Museums and Diversity National Initiative.<sup>20</sup>

IT professionals have a different diversity focus than do librarians, museum professionals, or archivists. Their big concern is a growing deficit in the ratio of female IT professionals to male IT professionals. Currently, only 29 percent of IT professionals are women, and that number is declining.<sup>21</sup> This trend has been reflected in the digital library field, where an analysis six years ago showed that 66 percent of the personnel in charge of computer systems for research libraries at that time were men, up from 53 percent in 1991. In contrast, men headed only 37 percent of the serials departments.<sup>22</sup>

A search for the term *diversity* on the website of the ARMA International resulted in one hit, to a document no longer online, so perhaps diversity has not been as much of an interest for records managers as for some other related professional associations. My casual observation of attendees at ARMA meetings indicates a preponderance of corporate members, with a fairly good mix of age, gender, race, and ethnicity, although the ARMA board does not necessarily reflect that good mix. However, ARMA has called out diversity and inclusiveness as values in its current strategic plan.<sup>23</sup>

From this brief analysis, it seems fair to say that achieving diversity is not at all easy and that many groups and associations are trying to find ways to address it.

### History of SAA's Diversity Efforts

During SAA's 1996 annual meeting, President Brenda Banks provided a fascinating overview of SAA's history in honor of its sixtieth anniversary.<sup>24</sup> As she explained, SAA's founders initially intended to form a national "institute for

<sup>20</sup> The other museum service organizations are the American Association for State and Local History, American Public Gardens Association, American Zoo and Aquarium Association, Association of African American Museums, Association of Art Directors, Association of Children's Museums, Association of Science-Technology Centers, and the Council of American Jewish Museums. Information provided to the author via email on 15 August 2007 by Helen J. Wechsler, director of Strategic Initiatives and Special Projects of the American Association of Museums.

<sup>21</sup> "Diversity Deficit in Information Technology Identified as 'Growing Gap'," posted by shannonleskin on Tuesday, 23 May 2006, on PNN Online: <http://pnnonline.org/article.php?sid=6741>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>22</sup> "Technology, Gender and the Academic Library," netConnect talks to Lori Ricigliano, 15 April 2003, in *LibraryJournal.com*, <http://libraryjournal.com/article/CA286647.html>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Information on ARMA's strategic plan was provided to the author during a telephone conversation with ARMA president Carol Choksy in July 2007. ARMA used to be an acronym for the Association of Records Managers and Administrators. See <http://www.arma.org>, accessed 4 April 2008.

<sup>24</sup> Brenda Banks's successor as SAA president, Nicholas Burckel, continued the analysis of SAA's history in his presidential address, "The Society: From Birth to Maturity," including a thoughtful analysis of SAA's shifting demographic base. See <http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/burckel-2-1.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007, for a copy of his address, published in *American Archivist* 61 (Spring 1998): 12–35.

the leading practitioners of archival administration.” But the founders quickly realized that such an approach was unworkable, so they broadened membership eligibility to include archival practitioners but required the SAA Council to approve their membership. Then, in the mid-1950s, membership was opened to anyone who had an interest in archives. As the years and the decades passed, the exclusive, elitist approach to SAA membership gave way to a more open, egalitarian one. SAA has grown from an organization of ninety-six men and twenty-nine women to an organization with nearly 5,000 members<sup>25</sup> representing a wide array of personal and professional backgrounds.<sup>26</sup> But SAA’s early exclusive culture (which some say still exists, despite decades of conscious effort to get away from it) represented the exact opposite of the inclusiveness needed to facilitate diversity.

I don’t know when the first person of color joined SAA, but the first very well may have been Dr. Harold T. Pinkett. Dr. Pinkett, who lived from 1914 to 2001, was the first African American appointed as an archivist at the National Archives, where he worked from 1942 through 1979. He was a trailblazer in many ways, both as an archivist and as a history professor. He was named an SAA Fellow in 1962, only five years after the honorary title of Fellow was first bestowed. He was editor of the *American Archivist* from 1968 through 1971 and served as a member of the SAA Council from 1971 through 1972.<sup>27</sup>

SAA first attempted to come to terms with diversity in the 1970s. The Committee for the 1970s was formed in 1970, in part as a response to the perceived need for change in SAA structure and priorities as a result of the social unrest of the 1960s.<sup>28</sup> The final report of SAA’s Task Force on Diversity, issued in 1999, notes:

In 1972 SAA adopted the report of its Committee for the 1970s. Included among the Committee recommendations was a positive injunction to the nominating committee to make the Council more representative of and responsible to the diverse interests of the SAA by considering “archival interest, age, sex, geography, nationality, ethnicity, and race in the selection of a slate of candidates.” The report also urged that “no person should be nominated as a candidate for an SAA office who, in her or his job, flagrantly espouses or practices

<sup>25</sup> Shortly after this address was given, SAA’s membership surpassed 5,000.

<sup>26</sup> Brenda Banks, “Seeing the Past as a Guidepost to Our Future,” presented at SAA’s 1996 Annual Meeting, see [http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/banks.asp#N\\_1\\_](http://www.archivists.org/governance/presidential/banks.asp#N_1_), accessed 10 October 2007, for the text of the presentation, published in the *American Archivist* 59 (Fall 1996): 392–99. A major source for her presentation was J. Frank Cook, “The Blessings of Providence on an Association of Archivists,” *American Archivist* (Fall 1983): 374–99.

<sup>27</sup> Douglas Helms, “Harold T. Pinkett, 1914–2001,” *The Journal of Negro History* 86, no. 2 (Spring 2001): 201–2.

<sup>28</sup> For an overview of the impact of the committee’s work, see Philip P. Mason, “Archives in the Seventies: Promises and Fulfillment,” *American Archivist* (Summer 1981): 199–206.

discrimination in regard to race, sex, nationality, or political or religious ideology.” In a section on social relevance, the Committee urged that “SAA should be actively committed to the social goals of racial justice, equal employment, and reasonable access to research materials” and “that the Society appoint a standing committee on minority groups to press for the rights and advancement of minorities in the archival profession.”<sup>29</sup>

Established in 1972 as an outgrowth of the Committee of the 1970s, the Committee on the Status of Women recognized the need to address the underrepresentation of women in SAA leadership positions. From 1936 to 1972, women represented 15.9 percent of SAA’s officers, 17.6 percent of Council members, 15.3 percent of Program Committee members, 18.4 percent of Local Arrangement Committee members, 10.9 percent of annual meeting program participants, and 13.9 percent of the authors of articles published in the *American Archivist*. During that same time, they represented 28 to 33 percent of SAA membership. While women were honored as Fellows starting with the first class of Fellows in 1957 (which included Margaret Cross Norton), no other awards were granted to women for the first thirty-six years of SAA’s history.<sup>30</sup>

The stated goal of the Committee on the Status of Women was that “the number of women archivists shall roughly equal the number of men archivists in presentations at annual meetings, committee and project work, employment in positions ranging from entry level to top management, publications, salaries, educational requirements and opportunities, etc.” We’ve managed to overshoot on some of our goals in this area, as women now dominate the profession and SAA committees; however, as is the case with the rest of American society, the problem of salary disparity remains.<sup>31</sup> And, as for the top leadership position in SAA, nine of the ten presidents who preceded me were men, as are both of my successors, although the Nominating Committee works hard to present female candidates to the membership.<sup>32</sup>

A Women’s Caucus open to anyone was formed at the same time as the Committee on the Status of Women, with a similar focus and overlapping concerns. The Committee on the Status of Women remained a standing committee of SAA until 1998, when the Women Archivists Roundtable was created to “ensure that the Society of American Archivists conscientiously deals with issues

<sup>29</sup> From the final report of SAA’s Task Force on Diversity, issued in 1999. See [http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity\\_final.asp](http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity_final.asp), accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Michele F. Pacifico, “Founding Mothers: Women in the Society of American Archivists, 1936–1972,” *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 370–89.

<sup>31</sup> Currently seven women and five men are on the SAA Council. An analysis of leadership positions listed on SAA’s website in August 2007 shows that of the 254 individuals serving on committees or working groups, 63 percent are women and 37 percent are men, which is very close to the overall proportion of men and women in the Society.

<sup>32</sup> To my knowledge, only one person of color, Brenda Banks, has served as SAA’s president.

that affect the status of women within the profession and the Society. The Roundtable also provides a society-acknowledged forum for individual members to address issues of concern in this area.”<sup>33</sup>

In 1972, the organizers of the annual meeting program endeavored to reach out to women, minorities, and junior staffers as speakers. In the next year, SAA adopted a resolution eliminating discrimination within the Society on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, lifestyle, or political affiliation. In the late 1970s, Professional Affinity Groups were formed to address the particular professional and personal interests of SAA members; these later evolved into today’s sections and roundtables. Today we have thirty-seven sections and roundtables representing the diverse interests, demographics, and work settings of our members.

While the 1970s produced many positive changes for SAA, this period also saw the loss of one group of archivists who should be more broadly represented in our membership. Government archivists split away from SAA in 1974 to form the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators, which a decade later changed its name to the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators. The result of this divergence is that while 32 percent of all archivists work in government archives, only 21.5 percent of SAA’s members are government archivists. This, too, is a diversity issue, because the membership of SAA falls short of reflecting the occupational profile of the profession at large.

SAA’s first efforts to address racial and ethnic diversity began collaboratively, with the establishment of a joint SAA/AASLH/AAM Committee on Opportunities for Minorities in 1978. The work of the committee languished, impeded in part by a lack of funds to support travel for SAA’s representative to the committee. During SAA’s 1981 annual business meeting, members passed a resolution that “the President and Council of SAA appoint a task force to consider the role of minorities and to make recommendations to the Joint SAA/AASLH/AAM Committee on Opportunities for Minorities.”<sup>34</sup> Two days later, the Council approved the formation of an SAA task force to supplement the work of the joint committee. The chair of the Task Force on Minorities was Thomas Battle, who is currently chair of SAA’s Diversity Committee.

Over its six-year tenure, the task force submitted numerous proposals to the SAA Council. Some of its recommendations were eventually adopted, such as forming a Membership Committee, providing orientation for new members at the annual meeting, and establishing a single-day registration fee for the annual meeting. But other recommendations (such as establishing a scholarship or

<sup>33</sup> Overview provided in “Sex in the Archives: The Majority Report,” paper presented by Sarah Keen at the 2004 SAA Annual Meeting, Boston, Massachusetts.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes of the 1981 Annual Business Meeting, *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 241.

fellowship to support the development of minorities in the profession) required financial investment that was not forthcoming. In 1987, the task force was disbanded after submitting a successful recommendation that a new Minorities Roundtable be established. The Minorities Roundtable first met in September 1987, with a focus on the concerns of archivists of African, Asian, Latino, and Native American descent. Roundtable members were dissatisfied with the name of their roundtable and changed the name first to the Third World Archivists Roundtable, then to African American and Third World Archivists Roundtable, and finally, in 1994, to Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable, the name it carries today.

The Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable slowly helped make inroads into the issues of racial and ethnic diversity in SAA. The roundtable sponsored program sessions at annual meetings and issued an Archivists of Color directory. The group sponsors an electronic newsletter and a moderated electronic discussion list, both available through SAA's website. As Deborra Richardson from the Smithsonian Institution told me, "When I joined SAA in the 1990s, I knew every archivist of color in the organization. Now there are many members. I see new faces every year, and I do not get to meet them all."<sup>35</sup>

The roundtable also successfully proposed that SAA provide financial assistance via an award to graduate or undergraduate students of African, Asian, Latino, or Native American descent, who, through scholastic and personal achievement, manifest an interest in becoming professional archivists and active members of the Society of American Archivists. Established in 1993 and first awarded in 1994, the award was named in honor of Harold T. Pinkett in 1998. It provides full registration to the SAA Annual Meeting and related expenses for hotel and travel. Kathryn Neal, who went on to serve on the SAA Council from 2003 to 2006, received the first award. Seventeen other deserving students have followed—including Janel Quirante of the University of Hawaii at Manoa and Bergis K. Jules of Indiana University this year. Unfortunately, fewer than half of past award winners are still SAA members—which indicates that work needs to be done to retain talented minority archivists.

In 1995, SAA established a Task Force on Organizational Effectiveness (TFOE), which conducted a thorough review of SAA's governance and organizational structure. The task force disagreed on the question as to whether to recommend a committee on diversity. As the final report, issued in January 1997, noted:

Proponents of a Diversity Committee believe that the SAA should do more to address all aspects of diversity in the archival profession, including recruiting a more diverse membership, investigating ways to ensure diversity in archival

<sup>35</sup> Deborra Richardson in an email to the author, 7 August 2007.



collections, and serving users with diverse needs. In the past, SAA has established such “issue-oriented” committees as it did with the Committee on the Status of Women.

Opponents of the Diversity Committee pointed out that the Committee would not carry out a programmatic or administrative goal of SAA. Such a committee would overlap with and duplicate efforts of other SAA units, in particular the membership committee, appointments and nominating committees, the education committee, with advocacy, publication and editorial groups, and with Council. Moreover, its liaison and coordination responsibilities with respect to other groups adds excessive detail into the proposed organizational structure which is precisely the type of problem that TFOE was charged to address. Finally, some TFOE members questioned whether such a committee was needed in light of other SAA units which should take responsibility for diversity issues (such as the Membership Committee, Archivists and Archives of Color RT, the Lesbian and Gay Archives RT, the Women’s Religious Archives RT,<sup>36</sup> and the SAA Women’s Caucus). Because we were unable to reach an agreement on this issue, TFOE refers it to Council with no specific recommendation for further action.<sup>37</sup>

The Council debated the merits of the idea of a diversity committee and solicited input from SAA members. In August 1997, rather than establishing a standing committee, the Council considered a motion to establish a Task Force on Diversity. Council members debated the idea, weighing it against the press of other SAA priorities. Part of the problem Council members faced was the various interpretations of the term “diversity.” To resolve the dilemma, they decided to establish the task force and ask it to come up with a definition. The Council members also asked the task force to investigate “how and to what extent issues of diversity are being addressed by the Society,” with any further action to be addressed by the Council.<sup>38</sup>

The Task Force on Diversity, chaired by former SAA president Brenda Banks, submitted its final report to the Council in February 1999.<sup>39</sup> The report provided the definition of diversity noted above and presented a detailed set of recommendations for Council consideration. Among the recommendations were: develop an official SAA position statement on diversity, incorporate

<sup>36</sup> Although this is the group referenced in the task force report, to my knowledge no such body has ever existed. It may be that the intent was to refer to the Women Archivists Roundtable.

<sup>37</sup> Task Force on Organizational Effectiveness Final Report to SAA Council, January 1997. See <http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/tfoe.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007, for a copy of the report.

<sup>38</sup> SAA Council Minutes, 26 August 1997 at <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/min082697.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>39</sup> Other members of the task force were Anne P. Diffendal, John Fleckner, Karen Jefferson (as a Council representative), Deborah M. King, Joan D. Krizack, Kathleen Roe, and SAA executive director Susan Fox.

diversity into SAA's strategic planning process, reinforce and expand existing activities that support diversity, and identify and establish new initiatives to support diversity. The report included dozens of suggestions for expanding existing efforts or starting new initiatives.<sup>40</sup>

The Council reviewed the report and voted to accept it. Council members discussed how to monitor ongoing progress on diversity and which task force recommendations could be addressed. They agreed to revisit the discussion at their June meeting. At the June 1999 meeting, the Council officially adopted the position statement recommended by the task force:

The Society of American Archivists is committed to integrating diversity concerns and perspectives into all aspects of its activities and into the fabric of the profession as a whole. SAA also is committed to the goal of a Society membership that reflects the broad diversity of American society. SAA believes that these commitments are essential to the effective pursuit of the archival mission "to ensure the identification, preservation, and use of the nation's historical record."<sup>41</sup>

A review of Council meeting minutes for the next several years indicates that Council members integrated discussion of diversity into many of their deliberations, although they struggled with deciding which of the many specific ideas of the Diversity Task Force should be implemented. So SAA's progress on diversity moved forward in a somewhat ad hoc manner. Although diversity considerations were becoming embedded into the Council's collective conscience, unfortunately few specific actions were taken on the task force recommendations. And not much of what was being done was communicated to the membership.

In January 2000, the Council's commitment to diversity was tested in a controversy regarding the hotel scheduled to host the 2000 annual meeting in Denver—the Adam's Mark. The Department of Justice charged the chain with civil rights violations, and Council members agonized over whether SAA should continue with plans to meet at an Adam's Mark hotel that summer. As recorded in meeting minutes from late January 2000, SAA president Tom Hickerson

<sup>40</sup> Task Force on Diversity Final Report to SAA Council, February 1999 at [http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity\\_final.asp](http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/diversity_final.asp), accessed 10 October 2007. The report as posted differs from the description of the report as captured in the SAA Council Meeting Minutes from 12–14 February 1999 (see <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/min021499.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007). The minutes report that there were three recommendations in the task force report: 1) that efforts in diversity should be tied into the strategic plan and spread out among all Society activities; 2) the establishment of a Committee on Diversity to monitor diversity goals; 3) that SAA issue a position statement on diversity. As posted on SAA's website, the task force report does not refer to the establishment of a diversity committee. According to former task force member Joan Krizack, while there was some debate about the wisdom of including a recommendation to establish a diversity committee in the task force report, such a recommendation was not included in the report.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.archivists.org/statements/diversitystatement.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

“asked Council, when considering the matter of Adam’s Mark, to begin with the question of principle rather than with the question of fiscal harm to SAA. The most important factor to consider would be whether or not any of SAA’s members would be adversely impacted by holding the meeting in an inhospitable environment.” That said, it was impossible to ignore the \$300,000 penalty that SAA would incur if it pulled out of its contract with the Adam’s Mark. Council members debated and reached a consensus that the general manager of the Denver hotel should write a letter to individual SAA members pledging that they would be treated fairly. The Council agreed to bring in a high-profile plenary speaker to address the issue of diversity. All future contracts would include a clause addressing equal rights. Several other steps were taken by the SAA president to raise awareness among SAA members and the profession at large, the Adam’s Mark hotel, and the public.

After much discussion at its January 2000 meeting, the Council passed a resolution reiterating a 1992 resolution prohibiting “discrimination on the grounds of race, color, creed, gender, national origin, age, marital status, family relationship, individual life style, and disability” within SAA. Another provision of the 1992 resolution incorporated into the 2000 resolution declared that “SAA will vigorously pursue a policy of non-discrimination and equal opportunity through its programs, activities, services, operations, employment, and business contracts.” The 2000 resolution also described the situation of the Adam’s Mark hotel chain and then resolved “that if either the Adam’s Mark fails to reach a corrective settlement with the Department of Justice or is found guilty of discrimination, the Society will refrain from conducting any future activities of the Society on the properties of the Adam’s Mark Hotel chain.”<sup>42</sup>

This anguished experience demonstrated some important insights about effectively managing dialogue on diversity issues. SAA leaders conferred with members at large and solicited the advice of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable, whose members helped locate a plenary speaker on diversity, Maurice Banks of the U.S. Department of Transportation. SAA received some concessions from Adam’s Mark management, including free lodging for recipients of the Harold T. Pinkett Minority Student Award and the Oliver Wendell Holmes Travel Award for Overseas Archivists. The hotel also agreed to pay for a mailing from President Tom Hickerson, accompanied by a letter from the hotel manager that assured all guests would receive equal and fair treatment.<sup>43</sup> Concerns about SAA’s best course of action were alleviated in March 2000, when the Justice Department settled its lawsuit with the Adam’s Mark hotel chain,

<sup>42</sup> SAA Council Meeting Minutes, 28–29 January 2000 at <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/min012800.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>43</sup> Update on the Adam’s Mark Hotel from SAA president Hickerson, 6 March 2000 at <http://www.archivists.org/news/news-archives02.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

after the chain agreed to implement nondiscrimination policies, attract more minority customers, and pay \$8 million in monetary relief.<sup>44</sup>

While the Adam's Mark incident showed sensitivity to the issues raised by the Diversity Task Force, it also may have also had the effect of distracting the Council from the specific recommendations in the task force's report. Discussion of the report disappeared from the Council's agenda, and no action was taken on many of the recommendations. By 2002, members of the former task force became increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress on their recommendations. At the annual meeting in Birmingham that year, former task force members introduced a resolution calling on the SAA Council to explore the status of diversity in the Society and report to the membership, including any efforts made by the Society since the task force made its recommendations. The resolution also requested that the SAA Council establish goals and benchmarks to measure the Society's efforts in the area of diversity and report periodically to the membership.<sup>45</sup>

In response to the resolution, the Council appointed a subcommittee to investigate the status of SAA's diversity efforts. In its final report presented at the May 2003 Council meeting, the subcommittee concluded that some aspects of the Diversity Task Force's recommendations had been addressed, but others had not, and that actions were not effectively reported back to the membership. As a first step, thirty-one years after the Committee for the 1970s first proposed the idea of a standing committee to address minority issues, the Council voted in May 2003 to establish a Committee on Diversity.<sup>46</sup> And, in August 2003, the Council approved the following charge:

The SAA Committee on Diversity works to ensure that the organization's services, activities, policies, communications, and products support the goal of a more diverse SAA and professional archival community. It functions as a catalyst for new diversity-related initiatives, developed in coordination with various SAA entities, and as the organization's "conscience" in monitoring, evaluating, advocating, and reporting on matters pertaining to the diversity of archival practitioners and documentation.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> "Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Against the Adam's Mark Hotel Chain," press release, <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2000/March/134cr.htm>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.archivists.org/statements/res-diversity.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>46</sup> SAA Council Meeting Minutes, 20–21 May 2003 at <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/min052003.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>47</sup> At the August 2006 Council meeting, the Diversity Committee's charge was revised so that the last sentence now reads, "It functions as a catalyst for new diversity-related initiatives, developed in coordination with various SAA entities, and monitors, evaluates, advocates for, and reports on matters pertaining to the diversity of archival practitioners and documentation."

Since 2002, diversity has been a consistent focus of Council discussions. The Council has approved numerous motions in support of diversity, resulting in the following actions and decisions:

- Diversity has been and will be incorporated into every Council agenda for the foreseeable future.
- The Council, SAA staff, and all SAA units must report on diversity initiatives.
- The president-elect and the Appointments Committee are required to report on the demographics of all committee appointments and on what was done to seek diversity in committee appointments.
- The Program Committee and Host Committee must report on efforts to address diversity issues in the planning and scheduling of annual meeting programming.
- The Diversity Committee has been asked to provide a report on the state of diversity at the annual business meeting each year.

In addition, my predecessor as SAA president, Richard Pearce-Moses, initiated a practice followed by his successors, which manages the appointments process to encourage involvement of a wider range of members in SAA activities. One of the responsibilities of the president-elect is to work with an Appointments Committee to appoint members to standing committees and other SAA groups. Given the number of groups in our organization, that can add up to a lot of people—last year I appointed more than seventy-five people to SAA positions. The natural tendency of the president has been to appoint people he or she knew, which meant the same people often were appointed to multiple committees. Pearce-Moses' innovation was to post an application form online and to invite SAA members to apply for the various openings to be filled. This process yielded many names that my Appointments Committee and I would not otherwise have considered, and we made sure to appoint a good number of these people. Incoming president Mark Greene and his Appointments Committee continued this new tradition.

Although the benefits of the new procedure are obvious, it has two downsides. First, many more applicants apply for each open position than are needed, which may end up disappointing a great many applicants. But that's a good problem to have, since it indicates the membership wants to be involved in SAA leadership. Second, we do not know the demographic characteristics of applicants—which makes the Council-mandated diversity analysis of appointments a bit challenging. We're trying to address this shortcoming by asking all members to submit demographic information about themselves voluntarily for inclusion in SAA's membership database. Using a "color blind" process, however, to solicit applicants and make appointments might ultimately be the best way to ensure that we are using nondiscriminatory practices in building SAA's leadership base.

Another healthy development over the last decade has been the growth of SAA student chapters and the increasing numbers of students who come to SAA annual meetings. The Council approved the concept of student chapters in 1993. The first were at the University of Michigan, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of Texas at Austin. The impetus to create student chapters was a grassroots movement. Some people in SAA opposed the idea because it offered many SAA services at a discount rate, resulting in diminished income. What a shortsighted view! Since then, Council members have come to recognize students and student chapters for what they are—our future leaders, and a source of new energy and commitment for our current committees and volunteer efforts. We need their involvement to navigate successfully the current and upcoming retirement of the baby boomers. We now have nearly thirty student chapters, with more applications coming every year, and 20 percent of our individual members are students. More than 10 percent of the attendees at this year’s annual meeting are students. I hope the students are bringing more demographic diversity to SAA.

In February 2005, the Council embarked on a new strategic planning effort to identify and analyze a “radar screen” of challenges or threats to the profession—disruptive forces likely to have a significant impact on the profession if not addressed. Diversity was identified as one of the three highest priorities among the “radar screen” issues. In continuing strategic planning discussions since 2005, Council members crafted the following issue statement to explain why diversity is so important to the profession: “The relevance of archives to society and the completeness of the documentary record hinge in part on the profession’s success in ensuring that its members and the holdings that they manage reflect the diversity of society as a whole.” Last year, the Council identified several proposed activities to support the diversity strategic priority, including an initiative to reach out to students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and at the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities.<sup>48</sup>

### **What Next?**

Where are we now, and where do we go from here? After a long and somewhat torturous journey, diversity is now a front-and-center priority for SAA. But declaring it a priority and doing something about it are two different things. While the actions taken to date are important, we have much more

<sup>48</sup> Richard Pearce-Moses and Randall C. Jimerson, “Facing the Future: SAA’s 2006–2007 Strategic Priorities,” *Archival Outlook* (July/August 2006), 8–9.

work to do. Eight years after its report issued, many of the recommendations of the Task Force on Diversity remain unaddressed. The Diversity Committee looked to the task force report as the basis for additional recommendations to the Council, but the committee has been somewhat stymied by turnover in its ranks. The Council and the Diversity Committee have also struggled with what the committee's role should be. Should the Diversity Committee monitor and make recommendations to the Council, or should it do some of the work required to move the organization forward on the diversity front?

The charge states that the committee should monitor, evaluate, advocate for, and report on matters pertaining to the diversity of archival practitioners and documentation. That's an important role, but it is also nebulous, making it difficult for the committee to remain focused and engaged. I believe that the charge also means that the Diversity Committee should be a sounding board and a strategic resource for the Council. While the Council should avoid overloading committee members with specific tasks, sometimes it makes sense to give them projects to advance the cause of diversity within SAA.

That said, I believe that the responsibility for determining how to advance SAA's diversity efforts sits squarely on the shoulders of the Council. The time has come to address publicly every one of the recommendations of the Task Force on Diversity. We may not accept every one, but we do at least need to acknowledge them.

Let's start with the recommendations already acted upon:

- As noted above, we issued a position statement on the importance of diversity to SAA and the profession, and diversity is now integrated into SAA's strategic planning process.
- Diversity has been called out as a topic of interest for annual meeting session proposals, resulting in more topics representing diverse communities, as well as sessions designed to help archivists understand issues related to diversity in the workplace and in SAA. The SAA staff included a "Celebrating Diversity" flyer in annual meeting registration materials for the past four years, pointing out diversity-related sessions and events at the annual meeting. We need to continue this effort.
- The task force recommended including at least one new or lesser-known member on each committee and task force as an intern to increase participation by newcomers. We've addressed the intent of this recommendation through the open application process for appointments. Although this is a slightly different approach than the task force suggested, it achieves the same end.
- The task force called for collecting benchmark data and establishing a census profile of diversity within SAA. I've included benchmarking in this presentation, and the A\*CENSUS created a more detailed profile of

the profession than we have ever had.<sup>49</sup> We are also working to capture demographic information in our membership database, through information submitted voluntarily by members.

- We are monitoring the Society’s progress on diversity through existing organizational units, reporting systems, and Council committees.
- We made a first step in addressing the educational needs of non-archivists who serve underrepresented groups. The “Lessons from Pilgrim Baptist Church” workshop last year was designed to train participants in documenting their communities and preserving their heritage. There are plans to offer a similar program later this year, tentatively titled “Religious Archives Workshop for Underserved Communities.” We need to explore similar opportunities for other communities.
- The task force recommended a “diversity fair” at the annual meeting. The 2002 meeting in Birmingham included such an event, with tables set up in the exhibit area to display materials on diversity. In Washington, D.C., in 2006, diversity was one of three components for exhibits. Our efforts as well as our responses in this area have been somewhat disappointing. We can do better. I am asking the SAA staff to consider ways to incorporate more diversity content into the exhibit programs at the annual meeting. I hope our membership will respond appropriately.

Most of the remaining task force recommendations will take investment in infrastructure and SAA programs to make them work. Some of the ideas can be incorporated as presented; others will act as a springboard for similar efforts. Still others may no longer represent the most effective avenues toward a greater focus on diversity. My thoughts on how to move forward with some of the ideas in the report follow:

#### *Outreach on College and University Campuses*

- The task force suggested that college and university archivists promote archival materials for use in minority studies programs, as a way to encourage interest in research projects, as well as introduce students to the profession. I am asking the College and University Archives Section to consider this idea and to propose ways to approach it.

<sup>49</sup> In her diversity analysis of A\*CENSUS results, Brenda Banks argues that the right questions were not asked of the right people to determine why minority representation in the profession is so low. She feels that we needed to be asking people outside the profession about their knowledge of the profession, to help determine the kind of information needed to persuade minorities to consider a career in archives. She also argues that more questions needed to be asked of practicing archivists regarding their level of satisfaction with their career choice.



This effort could include reaching out to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and to the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities. We may want to consider ways to accomplish this kind of outreach to other programs besides minority studies.

#### *Improving SAA's Website*

- The task force report offers several suggestions for enhancing the SAA website to attract potential new archivists, including members of underdocumented and underrepresented communities or groups. While we may not follow the specific tactics suggested by the task force, clearly the website can play a critical role in recruiting the best and the brightest to our profession and our association. SAA is developing plans to restructure the site and develop more content. I am certain that diversity will be carefully considered in the new design and content.
- The task force suggested that we develop Spanish, French, and Chinese language materials on the site. Our resource constraints may force us to limit our efforts to Spanish-language materials for now, as part of the website redesign.<sup>50</sup>

#### *Alternative Entry Points into the Profession*

- Much of the work done over the last several decades to establish educational criteria for the profession that emphasize a master's degree incorporating archival coursework may have unintentionally created a barrier for members of minority communities to enter our profession. The task force report discussed the need for alternative entry points into the profession. I am asking the Continuing Education Subcommittee of the Committee on Education to explore options for SAA to lead efforts similar to the very successful Historically Black Colleges and Universities Archives Institute and the Western Archives Institute targeted to

<sup>50</sup> As much as I would like to see work on the website redesign begin immediately, SAA's limited staff and budgeting resources require all of us to wait a bit longer before it becomes a reality. SAA has just installed a new Association Management Software system that interacts with some of the content on SAA's website, and the SAA staff is still working out the kinks on that. In addition, they are looking into installing a Content Management System that will provide the infrastructure to post and update content. It will take a while to bid out and install the system, and getting that done will completely consume the staff's time for a while to come. It makes sense to wait until that infrastructure is in place before attempting an ambitious redesign of the website. In the meantime, the staff has been brainstorming and collecting ideas for how to proceed with a redesign.

Native Americans—both of which involved SAA leaders, but were not sponsored by SAA.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Financial Aid*

- Two ideas can and should be incorporated into the priorities for the SAA Foundation: 1) increasing financial aid to attend SAA meetings and workshops and to complete graduate archival education; and 2) promoting planned giving to support scholarships for underrepresented communities. More on this topic in a moment.

#### *Archival Education*

- The task force recommended that the Archival Educators Roundtable recruit minorities, include documentation of diverse groups as a topic in appropriate courses, and encourage practicing minority archivists to consider entering the archival education field. These initiatives need to be done on a program-by-program basis and will take a long time to achieve. I am asking the Committee on Education's Graduate Education Subcommittee to consider ways to capture best practices among graduate archival education programs in the area of diversity. My research leads me to believe the place to start is the UCLA Department of Information Studies, which has attracted a high proportion of underrepresented groups to its program. Students there are exploring complex issues associated with diversity in archival programs, education, and the profession. The university has embarked on a collaborative effort with Monash University in Melbourne, Australia, and Renmin University in Beijing, China, to explore recordkeeping and archival education needs of indigenous, ethnic, and other marginalized communities in Pacific Rim nations, and to assess how well existing programs meet their needs. Their findings raise concerns about commonly accepted archival theory and practice in North America and Europe.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Former SAA president Brenda Banks spearheaded an initiative to support training in basic archival practices and policies for staff at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. This project was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. It ran from 1999 through 2005 and involved three weeks of classroom training spread out over a year, with twenty to twenty-five participants per year. A number of SAA leaders were involved in the project, and it was sponsored by Banks's alma mater, Spelman College. In 2003, the California State Archives and the Society of California Archivists cosponsored a special two-week Western Archives Institute for tribal archivists, which SAA leaders helped facilitate.

<sup>52</sup> See Anne Gilliland, Sue McKemish, Kelvin White, Yang Lu, and Andrew Lau, "Pluralizing the Archival Paradigm: Can Archival Education in Pacific Rim Communities Address the Challenge?" in this issue of *American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 87–117.

- The work of UCLA, Monash University, and Renmin University also addresses the task force recommendation to include diversity issues in the Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies. I am asking the Graduate Education Subcommittee of the Committee on Education to take on this task.
- I am asking the Continuing Education Subcommittee of the Committee on Education to develop educational programs for archivists who wish to communicate with and serve diverse communities.

#### *SAA's New Member Development*

- I am asking the Membership Committee, with input from the Diversity Committee, to review introductory membership materials and revise them as necessary to appeal more effectively to underrepresented groups.

#### *SAA Diversity Challenges*

Three areas of the task force recommendations present particular challenges in implementation: mentoring, public awareness, and internships as an avenue to recruitment.

#### *Mentoring*

- The task force recommended the Membership Committee be charged to focus on mentoring efforts for underrepresented groups. At the 2004 annual meeting, former Pinkett Award winners spoke in a session that reinforced the importance of mentoring. The presenters expressed appreciation for the financial support from the award, but presented a mixed assessment of the effectiveness of the award as a recruitment tool and expressed a need for something more as they moved on to the next steps in their careers. That many of them are no longer SAA members speaks to the extent of this problem. Students from the UCLA program echoed these concerns in their feedback to me as I prepared this address. Many want to serve the archival needs of their communities, but find that the low percentage of nonwhites in the profession makes it difficult to find others who understand their approach to their communities. As one UCLA student told me, "Representation acts on a visceral level; there's something very affirmative about just seeing a person of color who has been successful in the profession, and being able to talk with them about their experiences in getting to those points of

achievement.”<sup>53</sup> SAA’s mentoring program is meant to address this issue but has not been entirely successful. The Membership Committee is considering ways to address this problem.

#### *Public Awareness*

- The task force encouraged SAA to conduct public relations on behalf of the profession among the college/pre-employment population, as well as among underdocumented and underrepresented ethnic and racial groups, as a strategy for raising interest in the profession and highlighting the need for documenting these groups. We are trying to address this through work to promote American Archives Month, but much more needs to be undertaken. In her analysis of the A\*CENSUS results, Brenda Banks provides numerous ideas for reaching out to young people to influence their career choices. She talks about casting the net broadly and points out the importance of reaching out to children between the ages of ten and fifteen, when we might be able to make a difference in shaping their career choices.<sup>54</sup> I am asking the Membership Committee and the Diversity Committee to review the ideas in her A\*CENSUS article and to recommend action items to Council. Kathryn Neal’s 1996 *Archival Issues* article on “The Importance of Being Diverse” discusses the impact of archivists’ public image (or lack thereof) on recruitment of people of color to the profession. I’m asking these two committees to review her article.<sup>55</sup>

#### *Internships*

- The task force also recommended internships in archives for high school and college students and for community representatives from underrepresented groups. Several organizations, including the National

<sup>53</sup> Email from Andrew Lau to the author, 3 August 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Brenda Banks, “A\*CENSUS: Report on Diversity,” *American Archivist* 69 (Fall/Winter 2006): 405.

<sup>55</sup> Kathryn M. Neal, “The Importance of Being Diverse: The Archival Profession and Minority Recruitment,” *Archival Issues* 21, no. 2 (1996): 145–58. When giving me feedback in response to a draft of this article, Deborra Richardson provided the following ideas for reaching out to children between the ages of ten and fifteen: “We have made suggestions about reaching this audience through National History Day activities. I see that we have a link to NHD on our website. Perhaps we can somehow formalize this relationship by encouraging teachers to bring archivists into their classrooms or by arranging for local schools to have field trips to local archives at the beginning of each contest each year. Additionally we could work with the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts through the various history badges or insignia such as ‘Heritage Hunt’ or ‘Digging Through the Past’ using genealogy or a favorite historical event as a hook. Badges such as ‘Museum Discovery’ and ‘Understanding Yourself and Others’ could also be used as avenues through which we could reach the Girl Scouts. And the Boy Scouts should have similar insignia. Since we have the link to NHD, perhaps our new website could feature ways that teachers can interact with and get referrals to interested local archivists. A similar page might be set up for the scouting organizations.” Deborra Richardson in an email to the author, 7 August 2007.

Archives and the Smithsonian, offer internships to promote their diversity goals. The Junior Fellows Program of the Library of Congress attracts substantial minority participation. As SAA develops plans for its redesigned website, I am asking the staff to incorporate a section or page providing information on minority internship opportunities. If any organization would like to work with SAA to promote and develop internship opportunities, we would love to hear from you.

Of course, we do not need to limit efforts to those suggested by the task force—and we haven't. The *American Archivist* Editorial Board is actively soliciting articles on diversity to accompany the published version of my address and to appear in future issues of the journal, and the SAA Publications Board is soliciting proposals for a diversity reader to add to SAA's growing catalog of publications. Council, staff, and the Diversity Committee are exploring other ideas, as well.

We can continue to encourage a focus on diversity by recognizing the importance of the SAA staff's commitment to facilitating diversity-related programs. The directors of SAA's major programs (education, membership, and publications) take to heart the commitment to diversity and are working to incorporate diversity initiatives into their annual objectives. SAA Executive Director Nancy Beaumont's warm and welcoming communication style, combined with her commitment to organizational transparency, enable diversity at SAA, as does her commitment to supporting diversity as a strategic priority. We need to ensure that future candidates for the executive director position are questioned closely about their views on enabling and furthering diversity at SAA.

The SAA office staff can also signal a commitment to diversity by seeking out opportunities to use minority contractors and suppliers in day-to-day business. Can we use a minority vendor to help in the creation of SAA projects or products? Can we work with minority-owned food vendors when catering SAA events? Can we stage SAA workshops or events with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, or with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities? The SAA office staff is not the only group that should be asking these questions. All SAA members with budget authority over their archival programs should ask similar questions.

### **Diversity Scholarships**

I mentioned that the task force recommended financial aid to assist minorities with graduate archival education. We should emulate the Spectrum Scholarship initiative of the American Library Association, a model for such an effort in the library community established in 1997 as a tool for recruiting a more racially and ethnically diverse library workforce. Spectrum recruits and awards financial-support scholarships of \$5,000 for Native American/Alaska

Native, Asian, African American, Latino, and Pacific Islander students to attend ALA-accredited library and information studies programs or ALA-recognized National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) School Library Media programs. This year, in honor of the tenth anniversary of the Spectrum program, ALA received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to award more than sixty Spectrum scholarships.

The Spectrum scholarship incorporates not just financial aid, but other benefits, such as networking opportunities and free attendance at the Spectrum Leadership Institute, a three-day event that highlights cross-cultural models of leadership and features national library and community leaders. It's an ambitious program with many "legs" that provide meaningful and ongoing support.<sup>56</sup> A similar program for SAA may even generate the mentoring activity we so desperately need.

I first thought this idea required far more money and infrastructure than we could currently support. But I came to realize that we don't necessarily need to create something as elaborate and well funded as the Spectrum program; we can start modestly and build the program as we go. I'm happy to announce that the Council has just voted to start a minority graduate archival education scholarship program.<sup>57</sup> Many details remain to be worked out regarding how the program will be structured, and the level and nature of the awards. So, a task force will soon be appointed to create a proposed structure for Council consideration. Our highest diversity strategic priority should be to build a scholarship program, but until we can get it up and running, I propose that we leverage ALA's existing program by promoting it on our website and through other SAA communication vehicles. While not every entry-level archivist comes out of a library school, many do. So it makes sense to use this existing initiative to support our own diversity goals.

While we are promoting existing scholarships, we should also point out the Midwest Archives Conference's Archie Motley Memorial Scholarship for Minority Students, established in 2004. This program awards two \$750 scholarships to students of African, Native American, Asian or Pacific Islander, or Latino descent enrolled in a graduate archival education program.<sup>58</sup> While MAC's leadership in spearheading a minority scholarship program is modest compared to ALA's Spectrum Scholarship Initiative, we should recognize it as an example for others. My vision is that SAA's website will act as a portal to

<sup>56</sup> See <http://www.ala.org/ala/diversity/spectrum/scholarshipinfo/scholarshipinformation.htm> for details, accessed 10 October 2007.

<sup>57</sup> While this initiative is being funded out of SAA's operational funds, ultimately it is the kind of activity that should be supported by the SAA Foundation. But to do that, we need a much better level of giving to the foundation.

<sup>58</sup> "Archie Motley Memorial Scholarship for Minority Students" at <http://www.midwestarchives.org/motley.asp>, accessed 10 October 2007.

information regarding a host of minority scholarship opportunities for people interested in a career in archives.

Any work we do with scholarships should build upon existing SAA efforts and perhaps expand them. For example, we should conduct an informal survey of Pinkett Award winners to learn about what did and did not work for them in their educational experiences and in their experiences with SAA. By combining these related activities—support for graduate archival education, real-world mentoring strategies, and opportunities for involvement in SAA, we can create a sustainable infrastructure for improving the diversity of the profession.

### Conclusion

Addressing diversity is not easy. It's hard work. And while it's true that it's the "right thing to do," it's also true that paying attention to diversity will improve the profession and our Society in ways we may not currently envision. Today we would not consider child care, orientation for new members, a single-day registration at the annual meeting, or the Membership Committee as diversity initiatives; they now just seem like good ideas that benefit *all* members.

Also, we must not be afraid to be transparent about our diversity efforts. Change at SAA and in the profession has not and will not happen overnight, and most of our underrepresented groups understand that. With transparency we will tear down the obstacles remaining to making SAA an organization that all feel comfortable joining. Therefore, we must be sure to communicate what we are doing, including our mistakes and false starts, throughout SAA and, to the extent practical, throughout the profession. Only through communication can we make our progress known and receive the feedback we need to make necessary adjustments to our course.

And while a nicely endowed financial support program such as the minority scholarship program will certainly advance our diversity strategic priority, when it's all said and done, diversity starts with a commitment to inclusion. For our profession and our organization to be truly diverse, all interested people must feel equally welcome. A sense of openness and warmth was successfully achieved at the 2004 annual meeting when past SAA president Tim Ericson invited a group of tribal archivists to speak about "Native American Perspectives on the Treatment and Usage of Tribal Materials in Archives"—the first presentation on tribal archives in many years. Briana Bob, archivist of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, shared her impressions of the experience in SAA's *Archival Outlook* newsletter later that year. She said that the presenters felt that they were able to have a real impact upon the audience, primarily because they were allowed to speak candidly about their differences and the uniqueness of their collections. She wrote: "As we walked through the

hotel and around Boston, we were stopped, thanked, and complimented with handshakes and smiles by many Annual Meeting attendees. Panelist Amelia Flores stated what all of us felt: 'I strongly believe that SAA will never be the same again because of our presence and conference presentation.'<sup>59</sup>

Handshakes, smiles, compliments, and conversation—these things cost absolutely nothing and can be offered by every single SAA member at every meeting. That welcoming, respectful attitude must be the foundation upon which we build our path to diversity. With inclusion as our foundation, the actions I suggest here will be important steps along the way. But the journey cannot stop; we must keep moving forward—not just with words, but with action.

<sup>59</sup> Briana L. Bob, "Native Women Panel Makes SAA History," *Archival Outlook* (November/December 2004), 10–11.