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The Archival "Radar Screen"

Strategic Issues Identified by SAA Council

RANDALL JIMERSON, SAA President

What's on SAA's "radar screen"? In February 2005, Council members identified about a dozen threats and challenges that are of critical concern to the archival profession. In order to be considered as a "strategic issue," each had to pass muster as having "greatest impact on the association's membership" and being "within the association's capacity to act upon effectively." Each issue statement was "reduced to single-sentence statements that define an arc of tension between two variables." (See President's column on page 4.)

This strategic process includes four stages: 1) identifying and defining the critical strategic issues; 2) determining the principles that should guide our decisions; 3) targeting the desired outcomes in meeting these challenges; and 4) developing action plans to achieve the desired outcomes.

Council members have initiated the first stage of this process and begun consideration of the next three steps. But before proceeding beyond the issue identification stage, consultation with a broad range of stakeholders is essential. The following three strategic issues are put forward for member comment. Note that these issues are framed as dilemmas, showing the tension between conflicting concerns, not as a problem with a suggested "solution" or response.

- (1) **Technology:** Changing information technology challenges archival principles, practices, and competencies, threatening to diminish the relevance of archivists.
- (2) **Diversity:** The relevance of archivists to society and the completeness of the national record hinge on the profession's success in ensuring that its members and the holdings of American repositories reflect more fully the diversity of society as a whole.
- (3) **Public Awareness:** Although the public values history, it does not connect archives with historical knowledge and therefore does not support archival programs.

In addition to these top priorities, the Council has developed for the "radar screen" a range of issues, from descriptive practices and access, to the looming retirement of a large number of baby boomers, to collaboration with allied professions, to concerns about variations in archival credentials, standards, and practices.

Each of these issues poses challenges or threats to the success of the archival profession and, in some cases, to archivists and repositories. The process emphasizes broad concerns for the profession. At a later stage of development, we will identify

an internal radar screen of strategic issues challenging SAA as an association.

Your Input Requested

We welcome your comments on these issues and how they may affect the profession, individual archivists, and repositories. Contact SAA President Rand Jimerson at rand.jimerson@www.edu or 360/650-3139 or Executive Director Nancy Beaumont at nbeaumont@archivists.org or 312/922-0140. Or if you would like to share your perspectives with the sub-group assigned to deal with each strategic issue, contact:

Technology: **Richard Pearce-Moses** at pearce-moses@cox.net

Diversity: **Kathryn Neal** at kneal@mail.sdsu.edu

Public Awareness: **Peter Gottlieb** at pgottlieb@whs.wisc.edu

Other Issues on Radar Screen: **Peter Wosh** at pw1@nyu.edu

We look forward to hearing from you! ❖

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