

September 10, 2015

Dear Dennis Meissner, Cheryl Stadel-Bevans, SAA Council, and Nancy Beaumont:

We write to you as SAA members and leaders with strong concerns over the current and proposed structure of annual membership dues. The signers of this letter represent archivists at all points on the income and employment spectrum, including graduate students, paraprofessionals, professionals, volunteers, and retirees. We work in all sectors of the archives profession. This letter is intended to seek more information on SAA dues for a more informed membership prior to the referendum, and to encourage SAA's elected leaders and staff to investigate a more equitable model. This letter is not intended as an endorsement of a particular yes or no vote on the referendum.

As of today, if an archivist makes \$20,000, she pays 0.53% of her gross income for SAA dues. If she makes \$40,000, she pays 0.4%. If she makes \$60,000, she pays 0.38%, and if it's over \$75,000, she pays at most 0.33% of her income. According to information distributed at the business meeting and on the SAA website, the percentage of income currently, and over the next 3 years, appear as follows:

Income-Band	Baseline Band	Current Dues	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY17	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY18	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY19	As % of income
<20,000	19999	80	0.40	83	0.42	85	0.43	88	0.44
20,000-29,000	20000	105	0.53	109	0.55	112	0.56	115	0.58
30,000-39,000	30000	130	0.43	135	0.45	139	0.46	143	0.48
40,000-49,000	40000	160	0.40	166	0.42	171	0.43	176	0.44
50,000-59,000	50000	200	0.40	208	0.42	214	0.43	220	0.44
60,000-74,000	60000	225	0.38	234	0.39	241	0.40	248	0.41
>=75,000	75000	250	0.33	260	0.35	267	0.36	275	0.37

Adjusted for those at the mid-points of each income band, a similarly regressive structure remains:

Income-Band	Baseline Band	Current Dues	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY17	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY18	As % of income	Proposed Dues/FY19	As % of income
<20,000	19999	80	0.40	83	0.42	85	0.43	88	0.44
20,000-29,000	25000	105	0.42	109	0.44	112	0.45	115	0.46
30,000-39,000	35000	130	0.37	135	0.39	139	0.40	143	0.41
40,000-49,000	45000	160	0.36	166	0.37	171	0.38	176	0.39
50,000-59,000	55000	200	0.36	208	0.38	214	0.39	220	0.40
60,000-74,000	67000	225	0.34	234	0.35	241	0.36	248	0.37
>=75,000	75000	250	0.33	260	0.35	267	0.36	275	0.37

All of these figures appear on the spreadsheet included with this letter. The proposed dues increase perpetuates the existing pattern of a regressive structure.

If the proposal is approved by SAA's membership, by FY19, those making \$20,000 will pay 0.58% of their income, those making \$40,000 will pay 0.44%, those making \$60,000 will pay 0.41%, and those making over \$75,000 will pay 0.37%.

Both the current and proposed dues structures, while ostensibly (and commendably) created as fairness measures, are in fact regressive. Members at all but the lowest income tier pay more as a proportion of their income than do their higher-income counterparts. Lower-income members are frequently paraprofessionals, new graduates, and project archivists -- archivists who benefit enormously from the networking and educational opportunities offered by SAA, but who are also the least likely to receive institutional support for professional travel, and the most burdened by additional out-of-pocket costs from their already stretched salaries. Additionally, income-based registration rates do not exist for the annual meeting or workshops, meaning that much of the savings from lower dues are negated by professional development costs.

According to the 2012 SAA Membership and Satisfaction Survey, 17% of members make over \$70,000, while 29% make under \$29,000 (Slide 15, <http://files.archivists.org/membership/surveys/saamemberSurvey-2012r2.pdf>). In other words, SAA has a large number of low-income archivists in its ranks. In addition, the same membership survey showed that only 21% of members receive any form of dues reimbursement (Slide 129), and 62% of individual respondents believe dues are somewhat high or high (Slide 127). Given these factors, we are concerned that increasing dues across the board may force some lower-income archivists to choose not to renew at all. We realize that dues constitute a significant form of baseline revenue ([http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/1114-III-A-MemberCatsDues\\_REV.pdf](http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/1114-III-A-MemberCatsDues_REV.pdf)) and recognize that avoiding net losses in dues revenue is critical to maintaining SAA's operational efficiency, as well as supporting expansion of educational offerings, member services, and publications.

We ask for SAA to consider and respond to the following items:

1. **Has SAA considered implementing a progressive dues structure in the past, and if so, why was it not implemented?** Similar to progressive taxation, a progressive dues structure would require lower-income members to pay a smaller proportion relative to their incomes, whereas higher-income members would pay a higher rate.
2. **Prior to the member referendum, is it feasible to revise the current proposed FY17-19 dues schedule that would result in a progressive structure within the next 3 years? If it is not feasible, why not?** We understand that shifting from the current structure is not easy, and requires a look at current and projected membership numbers to ensure adequate income assumptions. We would prefer to see lower-income dues frozen at their current levels or reduced, while higher-income levels are shifted to a higher-rate in order to realize a more progressive structure.
3. **If a revision of the current proposed schedule is not possible before the member referendum, will Council adopt investigation of a progressive dues structure as an item for its next meeting?** If a revision of the current proposal cannot be completed before the member referendum, we ask SAA to immediately prioritize investigating a

more progressive structure, and make an announcement to solicit public comments as soon as possible.

- 4. Has Council investigated increasing the number of tiers at the high end of the income scale?** To maximize the level of fairness and demonstrate commitment to as progressive a dues scale as possible, we also recommend investigating one or more additional membership tiers above the \$75,000 level.

A response to this letter may be directed to Eira Tansey at [eira.tansey@uc.edu](mailto:eira.tansey@uc.edu). In the interest of transparency, this letter is posted at <http://eiratansey.com/updates/> and any subsequent response received will also be posted at the same address.

Sincerely,

1. Hannah Abelbeck
2. Daniel Alonzo
3. Alexis A. Antracoli
4. Rachel Appel, Women's Collections Roundtable Co-Chair
5. Krystal Appiah, Nominating Committee Chair
6. Jerice Barrios
7. Stephanie Bennett
8. Amy Bishop
9. Steven D. Booth, Co-Chair of SAA Awards Committee, 2013-2015
10. Jeremy Brett, Issues & Advocacy Roundtable Steering Committee member and former Co-Chair, Privacy & Confidentiality Roundtable Vice-Chair, Committee on Advocacy and Public Policy member
11. Maureen Callahan, TS-DACS Co-Chair
12. Jeanie Child
13. Rose L. Chou, ARL/SAA Mosaic Program Advisory Group
14. Elena Colón-Marrero, University of Michigan Student Chapter officer
15. Michele Combs, EAD Roundtable member, TS-EAD member
16. Katherine Crowe, Performing Arts Roundtable Chair
17. Steve Duckworth, SAA Diversity Committee member
18. Xaviera Flores
19. Jeremy Floyd, Emerging Leader Award Chair, Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable Steering Committee member, 2012-2013
20. Dorothy Fouche, Government Records Section Steering Committee member
21. Rebecca Goldman, Metadata and Digital Object Roundtable Steering Committee member, College and University Archives Section Steering Committee member, Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable Founder and Chair, 2012-2013, Task Force on Member Affinity Groups, 2013-2014, Appointments Committee, 2014-2015
22. Melissa Gonzales, Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable Chair, 2013-2014, Appointments Committee member, 2014-2015

23. Gloria Gonzalez
24. Sue Hamburger, Awards Committee Senior co-chair
25. Katharina Hering, International Archival Affairs Roundtable Steering Committee member
26. Pam Hopkins, Reference, Access, and Outreach Working Group member (Access to Electronic Records)
27. Brad Houston, Records Management Roundtable Immediate Past Chair, Education Committee member
28. Tara D. Kelley, Issues & Advocacy Roundtable Steering Committee member
29. Marissa Kings
30. Susan Kline, Student and New Professional Roundtable, former Secretary and Social Media Co-coordinator
31. Daniel J. Linke, 2016 Program Committee
32. Annalisa Moretti
33. Elizabeth Nicholson
34. Mary Richardson
35. Walker Sampson
36. Rachel Searcy
37. Arlene Schmuland
38. Jennifer Sharp, Public Library Archives/Special Collections Roundtable Vice-Chair
39. Kelcy Shepherd, SAA Workshop instructor, TS-EAD member
40. April Sparks, Student and New Professional Roundtable Steering Committee member, 2014-2015
41. Jordon Steele, College and University Archives Section Steering Committee member
42. Elizabeth Surles, Performing Arts Roundtable Steering Committee member
43. Eira Tansey, Nominating Committee member, 2014-2015, Records Management Roundtable Steering Committee member
44. Helen Thomas
45. Ruth Kitchin Tillman, EAD Roundtable co-chair
46. Annie Tummino
47. Stacie Williams, SAA/ARL Mosaic Awards Selection Subcommittee member, 2013-2015
48. Sam Winn, Student and New Professional Roundtable Chair
49. Brian Wilson, Museum Archives Section Standards and Best Practices Working Group member
50. Supriya Wronkiewicz, Preservation Section Steering Committee member
51. Lindsay Zaborowski
52. Joshua Zimmerman