

# MARAC

Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference

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## MARAC Steering Committee Meeting Wednesday, October 19, 2022

Attendance: Sara Borden, Jessica Webster, Amy Fitch, Kevin Clair, Lori Hostuttler, Tara Maharjan, Christie Lutz, Vicki Russo, Zachary Hottel, Sheridan Sayles, Taylor Mason, Josette Schlutter, Mary Mannix, Allison Fischbach, Margaret Truman Kidd, Sara Predmore, Diane Bockrath, J. Boyle (proxy for Danielle Glynn), Molly Tighe, Lauren Brown, Matt Testa, Rayna Andrews

**(6:08)** Fitch moved to start the meeting. Called to order.

**(6:09)** Attendance and introductions

**(6:12)** Schlutter moved, Fischbach seconded. Agenda approved.

**(6:13)** Webster moved, Hottel seconded. Minutes approved.

**(6:13)** Officer's reports:

- Chair (Borden): Notes that the Philadelphia Museum of Art strike has ended, new contract was signed. No further additions.
- Administrator (Predmore): 427 registrants for College Park. 130 first-time attendees, 70 new members. No further additions to the report. Encourage any lapsed members you know to renew their membership!
- Chair-Elect (Webster): New to the job, so no report yet, but has been attending meetings, learning, and writing appointment letters.
- Mannix: Go to the MARAC website to see what she's been working on. She just signed the contract for the symposium at the Sonesta Rittenhouse Square, April 2024. Monday. \$189/night for the room rate. Looking for attendance a little over 200. Looking at equity and diversity. MCC working with DEIA (not what it's called) to prepare the program. Also would like a vote for the service awards for Harrisonburg.

(Borden paused here to note who the voting members are, for later voting on the Service Awards.) The names are: Kayla Heslin, Ali Zawoyski, Sheridan Sayles, Tyler Stump.

Mannix called a vote to award these four the Service Awards. Unanimously in favor.

- Clair: No updates to the report.
- Treasurer (Fitch): Our finances are stable as of the end of Q1 2023 (September 30, 2022). Bearing in mind we took a loss of \$8000 last year. She pointed out that page 1 is income + expenses, page 2 is specifics on who did the paying and receiving. Gain of \$74,500, which looks

impressive but only accounts for money received for this conference; Q2 is when we pay the bills. We expect to lose money but not sure how much. Investments are not doing great, as expected, even with our conservative bonds. Fitch looking for alternatives (mainly to diversify from money market accounts).

The second part of the report required a vote. We discussed the spring virtual meeting, April 2023. Budget attached to meeting packet. Finance discussed projections for 350 attendees, 500 attendees, and 750 attendees. Realistically we won't get the same turnout as we did in spring 2021 (800+); it will likely be down at this stage of the pandemic. Vendor turnout/income will likely drop. Expenses are static. Registration rates -- \$25 for members, \$50 for non-members, \$10 for students. This is higher than Fitch originally planned but Finance recommended a slight bump to indicate the value that MARAC places on this programming. Finance did not feel that these rates (part. the \$10 for students) were unduly restrictive.

Maharjan noted that the "sponsor an attendee" option will continue.

Schlutter: Do/will we have an option for scholarships for the virtual conference? Fitch says the DEIA session scholarship will continue (to offset costs for the next in-person conference).

Mannix reiterated that the registration rates, however nominal, will still go toward stabilizing our financial situation. Steering in agreement about the reg rates being reasonable.

There was a motion to vote on the budget for Spring 2023. The budget passed unanimously.

- No parliamentarian report.

**(6:28) Advisory Positions:**

- Historian (Brown): Exhibit on the history of MARAC, near the registration desk. First plenary tomorrow afternoon on MARAC through the years. The Open House at Hornbake went very well today; there is another one tomorrow (Thursday) from 11-1. Items include an exhibit about the MARAC Archives. You can walk or take a van over. We will also do a reprise of the slideshow that appeared at the Harrisonburg meeting for tomorrow night's reception. There will be a cake!

Also noted some outgoing officers who deserve service recognition – former secretary, treasurer, chair. Should we vote on this at this meeting? (Predmore notes that their certificates are ready.) Tara Wink, Amanda May, Paige Newman will receive recognition.

Vote on approving the awarding of Service Awards to these three. Webster moved, Mannix seconded. Motion carries unanimously.

Mannix: For a long time it's been unclear who puts the Service Award (or other award) names forward for outgoing board members. Borden notes that anyone can put forward names for awards and recognition.

Brown: Last point on the Anniversary committee: a tri-chair model could work for the next time we do this. They did good work with articles for MAA, etc., but there were a few hiccups with the merchandise store where having a third point person may have helped. Borden asked where the proceeds from the merchandise store go; it sounds like it may all go to CafePress (the vendor). Borden wants to know how we can communicate to membership that buying merch

from that site doesn't directly benefit MARAC in any way. Fitch confirms that MARAC has not seen any incoming revenue from them.

Webster: Is there another vendor we can work with who will provide sales of our merchandise where MARAC can benefit from the sale thereof? Can CafePress do that or are there other alternatives to consider? Brown volunteered to research the issue and come back to Steering with a definitive report.

Predmore: There used to be a link to CafePress on the website but we took it down. Do we want to put it back?

Fitch: It should say that proceeds do not benefit MARAC.

Predmore: Would anyone here buy merch if the link went back up? Multiple members indicated that if the proceeds benefited scholarships, or if anything besides t-shirts (stickers, etc.) were on offer, they would.

Webster: On the website, is there a way to easily recommend someone for an award?

Tighe: Yes for distinguished service (Fitch notes that this is because money is attached), no for the others. Mannix: There are certainly long-serving and accomplished committee members not on Steering whose service people don't know about, whose names it would be good to get out there. Could put on site and promote it more.

Fitch asked for clarification on if we're going to get billed for anything if there's a merch site on CafePress. Brown says no.

Borden thanked Brown for his and the committee's hard work putting everything together.

- Archivist (Joni Floyd): No additions (not present).
- Development Coordinator (Margaret Turman Kidd): Would like to thank Jessica Johnson for her continuing work assisting with development.
- Web Team (Laura Montgomery/Heather Perez): No additions (not present).
- Regional Archival Association Consortium (Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz): No additions (not present).
- National Coalition for History (Jan Zastrow): No additions (not present).

**(6:48) Old business:**

- Membership Committee & Mentoring Subcommittee (Vicki Russo): Thanks to those who signed up for Member Match. It is always well-received by first-timers.

Discussion of Mentoring (sub-)committee. Vicki wasn't present at the last steering meeting but reviewed the notes. Membership already has little to do with Mentoring because they run their own show very well for the most part. Substantial cohorts, lots of participation. Vicki feels very strongly that they should be recognized as an independent committee, however that needs to happen (changes to bylaws, etc.)

Borden: Over the summer Steering asked for some reports, that due to circumstances are not pulled together yet. Recommends waiting until January to pursue this further; Russo agrees. Russo notes that what Mentoring is working on is very different from what Membership is

working on, and this is likely to continue to diverge; their current work will progress much more effectively if they can stand on their own as a committee.

Borden asked Webster if she would work with Russo on this; Webster agreed.

- Strategic Planning (Sara Borden): Borden sat down with many people over the summer to gather input about what the next strategic plan should be. Thanks everyone for their service. Charging Executive Committee and Members at Large to build this out. The plan will focus on five broad areas:
  - inclusivity and accessibility
  - advocacy
  - continuing education
  - institutional organization and transparency
  - outreach

Webster: What do we mean by “institutional organization and transparency”?

Borden: Lots of confusion about how we operate – who does what, who recommends people for awards and promotes those awards, improving documentation, etc.

Borden has some documents that she will be sending out to membership over the next few weeks (by Nov 1). After this, will convene a strategic planning sub-committee. Will discuss more at the Saturday business meeting.

**(7:00): New Business:**

- Distribution of Operations Packets (Sara Borden): Borden printed out operations manuals for everyone to review – one copy for everyone on Steering. Please take one before you leave. Pass them on to your successors! This is a supplement to, and not a replacement for, the same documentation on Google Drive.

Predmore: The Google Drive used to only belong to the Secretary, to store documentation. During COVID it was shared with all of Steering as a place for people to share documents async. Other committees have set up their own Drives as well. We’re at a stage where it’s unclear if people are working in tandem with one another across all these different working spaces.

How is all this working? Webster: It’s hard because there are so many other e-mails flying in from everywhere. Turman Kidd: Would it be helpful to have just one MARAC Google Drive that you needed to remember? Andrews: No one’s working on anything confidential or top-secret. (Fitch: There are some Treasurer documents that are definitely Treasurer/Admin-only, but that can be controlled.) Hardest part would be remembering to move documents into the Ops Manual/MARAC drive – sometimes things are just shared with people instead of saved to a G. Drive, which can be confusing down the line as people rotate off committees.

- Organizational Chart (Sara Borden): Borden distributed a current org chart. MARAC is a complex organization that can be difficult to follow; this is an attempt to nail it down visually. It will be circulated electronically after the meeting. Comments can happen offline.
- Advocacy Regarding NARA & Trump/Bush Issues (Sara Borden): The GWB Library is in talks to be privatized. Trump’s issues with presidential records are well-documented. Membership has

been vocal about wanting to see more advocacy from MARAC on these points; Borden would like to know more from Steering about how we should proceed.

Schlutter notes (as a personal point of view, not speaking for NARA) that the records remain in NARA's custody, but the private foundations that fund the libraries are responsible for the message that those libraries communicate. So the issues with the GWB Library are not new, and records destruction seems like a less likely scenario than hagiographic interpretation of those records (which is true of many institutions). Some of this follows from funding, as well – NARA can't devote resources to the museum/interpretive aspects of the PLs, so they tend to prefer outsourcing that to the foundations.

Schlutter also notes that the appointment of the next AOTUS remains trapped in committee and cannot be voted on. NARA lacks leadership as a result – this is another point that seems more pressing for MARAC to advocate on.

Brown says the Trump issues are more threatening to the historical record and deserve a response from MARAC. Letters should be directed to the acting AOTUS and the congressional committee.

Russo: People have an expectation that the PLs concern themselves with facts and records without a particular imposed interpretation. Turning over significant operations to the foundations could undermine that expectation and trust. Do we want to write a brief on those points?

Schlutter: The Obama Library has no physical plant, it is focused primarily on virtual education/outreach. The Trump Library exists as a NARA staff team without a location at the moment. The PLs operate very differently from one another. (Discussion ensued about House and Senate records, and the difference between corporate records thereof and the business records of individual congresspeople.)

Tighe: Would it be appropriate at MARAC meetings to have postcards to send to representatives to advocate directly on issues like those we have been discussing at Steering? Schlutter: Could be a good opportunity for continuing education on issues of advocacy.

Webster: When these issues come up in the news, the media never actually talks to archivists about them. Leaving strategies aside, this is an advocacy issue – our profile needs to be raised to the point where when government records questions come up, people think to talk to archivists about them. Something also to consider for strategic planning / advocacy.

Mannix: Make the caucuses aware that their members can raise advocacy issues as well.

Mason: Some members who work in government roles cannot advocate on their own through their job, due to their professional roles. But they can promote advocacy to others. Form letters via e-mail are good for advocacy, but be aware that these are low-engagement (10% read rate).

Russo: Do other regionals do this? (Yes.) Can we coordinate national-level advocacy? A few people pointed out RAAC and NCH as avenues for this.

Brown: Going back to the AOTUS issue, it would be especially impactful in MARAC due to the sheer number of NARA employees who are org members. Standing up for them.

Hottel: Concluding framing: Two issues, advocacy/profile raising generally, and the letters regarding AOTUS and Trump presidential records violations. The latter should happen soon. Borden will draft the letters and send them out in the next couple of weeks.

- Accessibility Accommodations & Costs at Future Meetings (Fitch/Borden): We have brought in a team of ASL interpreters for this conference, upon request. This was quite expensive and on short notice, so we want to plan for future costs of this nature well ahead of time to hopefully mitigate some of those costs.

Fitch: Everyone on Finance understands the necessity of this, and we were able to cover the short notice costs from continuing education, but this is a one-time solution and not sustainable going forward. Need to find creative solutions for the future. Could raise rates, but that might cause drops in attendance. Higher early-bird rates at College Park didn't do so, but it's also a more convenient location, longer conference, etc. -- hard to compare the two.

Testa: If raising rates to cover inclusivity initiatives leads to lower attendance because the conference is less accessible financially, we are at cross-purposes a little bit.

Fitch: There are grants that can help cover expenses such as this. Hard to fundraise for very specific expenses such as this – we want fewer restrictions, not more. Live captioning is a possibility for accessibility in the future – there are costs associated with this as well, but the number of people who may benefit from it could be higher.

Webster: DLF last week had live captioning. There were mistakes, for sure, but it worked very well, and as someone who does not herself need an ASL interpreter it was still helpful for understanding the proceedings. DLF only had it for plenary sessions, though – would it be possible/cost-effective to have it in small meetings?

Mannix: ASL interpretation and live-captioning don't meet precisely the same need. Andrews concurs, and adds that captioning doesn't cover needs for in between sessions (hallway conversations, etc.), which also limits accessibility. Mannix notes that we don't entirely know what we're budgeting for, from meeting to meeting, so substantial research is needed to determine that. Our other expenses are growing, too. These are long-term costs that will always be with us; we need to have a plan for how we can fund it regardless of potential outside funding to offset costs. (Live captioning is already in the budget for spring 2023; because it's virtual, Otter.ai will be providing it for us.)

Tighe: Chatham University has a contract with a company that does live captioning for classes. There is some availability in their contract for additional work, so they have been preparing captions for things in the archives. It could also be a sponsorship opportunity? Could a vendor assist in covering these costs? "Live captioning provided by..."

Andrews also raised the possibility of partnering with other organizations that are doing this work. Working with other organizations of comparable size to share costs and create partnerships.

Hottel: Some other conferences he has attended offer options to augment reg. fees with money to go toward diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Turman Kidd: We have other funds like this, too, so we want to be careful not to fatigue our membership with funds like this (especially because we're an underpaid profession on the average...).

Mannix: We also don't want members who do require these services to feel as though we will only provide them through individual membership donations.

Russo: Do members know that this is a problem? Explain that we're committed to inclusion, and that the costs for providing ASL interpretation (or even live captioning) are substantial – many people don't know how significant the costs of putting on a conference are (this point came up repeatedly in the conversation). Be transparent (among other things) about where reg. fees and organizational budgets go (and where they can't go, at current membership rate levels).

Turman Kidd: Don't just ask for money – membership may have ideas about how to help Steering solve difficult problems such as this. Testa: Proposes, as a next step, an *ad hoc* committee to reach out to people who may benefit from interpretive services to figure out what would help them.

Predmore: It may be time to consider slight raises in membership dues either way. An increase of \$5, individually, adds up to an additional \$5,000 in revenue, which would go a long way toward covering these expenses and others.

Webster: We could think about approaches to conference presentations to make them more accessible – color contrasts in PowerPoint presentations for color blindness, etc. Thinking very broadly about how to increase conference accessibility across the board.

Clair: We should bring all of the ideas for conference accessibility to the ad hoc committee so that if/when we assemble focus groups, we can bring to them the ideas we have already considered/researched, to meet them halfway about what will work and how we can improve the situation.

Borden will charge an ad hoc committee to develop a survey to the membership, asking (in a very open-ended way) what accessibility needs are most pressing for virtual and in-person meetings, as a way to determine the way forward. Membership from Finance, MCC, D&I, ...?. Two goals: Figure out what we need, figure out how to budget it.

Maharjan: Can we put this in the survey that goes out at the end of the conference? It won't catch everyone in MARAC but it will start the conversation. Sara P. can do this easily but will need the exact text desired to set it up.

Steering extends its deepest thanks to everyone who made ASL interpretation possible on such short notice.

**(8:02): Standing & Operational Committees:**

- Awards (Angela Rodgers-Koukoui): Angela absent.
- Communications (Molly Tighe/Michael Martin): Molly reports that there's a new (and beautiful) MAA issue out. New Technical Leaflets issue forthcoming. MARAC merch falls under Communications, and it's been off the agenda for a while, but they're considering it again and will make sure that anything coming out of that is a revenue generator for the organization.

MAA is happy to spread any word Steering would like them to spread regarding what we've talked about at the meeting.

- Distinguished Service (Tara Wink): Tara absent.
- Diversity & Inclusion (Rayna Andrews): No additions to the report.
- Education (Elliot McNally): Elliot absent.
- Membership (Vicki Russo): No additions to the report. Thanks again to Member Matches.
- Nominations and Elections (Sheridan Sayles): We now have 12 volunteers for elected positions. Some still don't have volunteers; caucus chairs will be asked for more promotion after the conference.

**(8:06):** State Caucus New Business & Updates (15 min):

- Delaware (Diane Bockrath): No additions
- District of Columbia (Christopher Anglim): Christopher absent.
- Maryland (Allison Fischbach): No additions
- New Jersey (Tara Maharjan): As part of the 50<sup>th</sup>, NJ Caucus did four oral histories; now available on the YouTube channel. (Brown encourages other state caucuses to follow New Jersey's lead!)
- New York (Danielle Glynn): No additions.
- Pennsylvania (Taylor Mason): No additions.
- Virginia (Zachary Hottel): No additions.
- West Virginia (Lori Hostuttler): No additions.

Borden reminds everyone to pick up their folders for operations manual. Please attend new member orientation / meet and greet tomorrow morning.

Brown moved to adjourn; Fitch seconds. Meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.



KEVIN M. CLAIR

3/28/2023