

# MARAC

Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference

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## MARAC Steering Committee

2025 May 1, 6:30pm

Harrisburg, PA/Zoom

**Attendance:** Ali Zawoyski (Chair), Zachary Hottel (Chair-elect), Mary K. Mannix (Meetings Coordinator), Kevin Clair (Secretary), Amy Fitch (Treasurer/Finance Committee Chair), Carley Altenburger (Member at Large), Dyani Feige (Member at Large; attended virtually), Amanda Koss May (Member at Large), Deb Schiff (Member at Large; attended virtually), Diane Bockrath (Delaware Caucus), Jen Gathings (Maryland Caucus), Diane Biunno (New Jersey Caucus), Melissa McMullen (New York Caucus), Steve Bookman (Virginia Caucus; attended virtually), Grace Musgrave (West Virginia Caucus), Sara Predmore (MARAC Administrator), Arian Ravanbakhsh (Parliamentarian), Lauren Brown (Historian), Kira Dietz (Awards Chair), Liza Zakharova (Membership Co-Chair), Missy Nerino (Communications Co-Chair), Tara Wink (Diversity and Inclusion Chair), Colleen Bradley-Sanders (Education Chair), Tiffany Cole (Nominations and Elections Chair), Jasmine Smith (Web Team Co-Chair), Heather Perez (Web Team Co-Chair), Sharmila Bhatia (invited guest), Sheridan Sayles (incoming Member at Large), Dustin Frohlich (incoming Nominations and Elections Chair), Jessica Webster (incoming Member at Large)

**Regrets:** Jason Speck (District of Columbia Caucus), Isaac Alexander (Pennsylvania Caucus), Joni Floyd (Archivist), Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz (RAAC Representative), Jen Pulsney (Membership Co-Chair)

### I. Call to Order (5 min)

The meeting was called to order at 6:39pm. Introductions. Agenda approved at 6:47pm.

### II. Approval of Steering Committee Minutes (5 min)

Minutes were approved at 6:47pm.

### III. Officer's Reports (15 min)

**Chair's Report (Ali Zawoyski):** Nothing to add.

**Administrator's Report (Sara Predmore):** Nothing to add.

**Chair-Elect (Zach Hottel):** Reminder for those leaving Steering that we're looking for two people for Nominations and Elections.

**Meetings Coordinator (Mary Mannix):** 377 people are here in Harrisburg. In Fall of 2026, do we want to go virtual? The room indicated that was fine. Steering will be getting a survey on event accessibility.

**Secretary (Kevin Clair):** Pursuant to his note about updating the Operations Manual, the Secretary prompts outgoing and incoming chairs to update their entries in that volume.

**Treasurer (Amy Fitch):** We have another net gain for the quarter. Q3 was \$60,860, putting us at \$98,105 for the year. The reasons for this are: we had really good revenue from dues this year. Membership on par with recent years; the dues increase does not appear to have negatively affected membership numbers so far. We have had fantastic conference registration, attendees + vendors + sponsors. Our CDs are also doing well. Our spending during Q2 and Q3 was quite low (although our conference spending is Q4 so we haven't seen that yet). Amy is confident we will have a good ending to the fiscal year.

377 is our highest in-person total registrants for a conference (excluding the 50<sup>th</sup>) since 2018. Believes we'll have a surplus for the conference, and therefore a surplus overall on events for the fiscal year.

Preparations for the FY26 budget will begin soon. Reminder that FY25's financials are not an indicator of how FY26 will go. We don't know what the impacts of the geopolitical and domestic fiscal situations will be on our organizational financial structure. Met with Communications about publication costs; as a result of these conversations we decided to eliminate print subscriptions to MAA starting on July 1. We are also increasing MAA advertising revenue rates. This is to offset higher production costs at Dickinson College.

**Parliamentarian (Arian Ravanbakhsh):** Nothing to add.

#### **IV. Advisory Positions (15 min)**

**Historian (Lauren Brown):** Nothing to add.

**Archivist (Joni Floyd):** Absent.

**Web Team (Heather Perez/Jasmine Smith):** Nothing to add.

**Regional Archival Association Consortium (Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz):** Absent.

#### **V. Old Business (30 min)**

**Disaster Relief Committee Update (Dyani Feige):** In the Treasurer's Report, there are \$21,494 currently available in the disaster relief fund. It's been quite some time since there were requests for funding. The maximum amount that can be requested is \$2,000.

The committee has been preparing a rubric for use in reviewing applications for disaster relief. In the past it sounds like it has been an *ad hoc* review process; the committee hoped to make the review process more systematic, so that we have documented justifications either for or against a particular award. The committee has prepared a rubric and guidelines for review and approval by Steering; the next step is to prepare language around the award for promoting it. Once both are complete, they will present their work to Steering for approval; after everything is approved they/we will begin PR work around it.

#### **VI. Special Business (30 min)**

**Graduate Student Scholarship for People of Color (Sharmila Bhatia):** Proposal to introduce two new scholarships for grad students, with one set aside for a person of color, to be award in memory of Danna

Bell. Becky Collier and Sharmila Bhatia have each promised initial gifts of \$1,000 to help fund these scholarships.

Kira Dietz expressed her personal and the Awards Committee's support for this award. Question: Would the Scholarship Committee be responsible for managing this award? Would it be on the same timeline as the existing graduate student scholarship? Sharmila says it is to expand that scholarship offering, and she and Becky have been discussing it for over a year. That said, Steering can make the final determination on who is responsible for these awards.

How does the current graduate student scholarship work? It is a yearly, \$1,030 award (\$1,000 plus a student membership to MARAC) to a graduate student pursuing archival studies. The award goes to their institution rather than to the student directly, so that it is tax-exempt. There is currently \$9,370 in that fund – nine years' worth, provided it is awarded to a single student. The income for this is entirely from donations – about \$1,500. Much of that is a yearly anonymous gift of \$1,000, so we don't know how sustainable that income is. It is a restricted fund, not to be used for anything else. Without a development coordinator we don't have a dedicated fundraiser for this or other awards.

What would be the method of fundraising? Similar to the Ron Becker award? Deb noted that Tara Maharjan initiated pledge drives for the Becker award, and would be in favor of a similar approach for these awards. Becky Collier would pledge \$1,000 annually in addition to her initial gift.

Could we use the existing graduate student scholarship fund for these new awards, or would we need a new fund? Amy is against creating new funds for each new scholarship – if we can use this one, and draw double from it, that would be ideal.

Steering can decide to award two graduate student scholarships instead of one, with the second as a named Danna Bell Award, and that would be sufficient from a parliamentary perspective. Because of her profile there may be potential for gifts toward this award from a wider audience than the MARAC membership alone.

Opportunity for people who are introducing sessions to talk about this scholarship once Steering decides to vote on it, in order to raise funds and awareness around it. While the wider community may not have \$1,000 to donate to the fund, small donations will go a long way toward promoting this award and increasing the diversity of the organization.

Same qualifications and requirements for the Danna Bell Award as for the existing graduate student scholarship – they would write an article for MAA about their MARAC experience. Identical to the existing award in all respects.

The Mosaic Award (SAA) and Moxley Award (MAC), of similar scope to the Danna Bell Award, don't have obligations to verify someone's status as a person of color. Would we want to do anything similar? In SAA it's always been on the honor system and no reason to think MARAC should do anything similar. Certainly there are high-profile stories of people attempting to pass as a person of color when they aren't, but it doesn't seem to be widespread.

Do we want to subject an award in her name to the risks of the current administration targeting diversity initiatives? Hopefully as a non-profit and NGO we can be above this, as well due to our relative size.

Whose job is it to market this award? Other organizations have had a hard time awarding scholarships meant to increase the diversity of the profession/organization. Will we run into similar obstacles? Kira would like to present this award idea to Scholarship Committee to see if they have the capacity to take on another award (they just learned about it on Tuesday). The other concern is that we don't have the strongest foundation within the scholarship fund to support this, especially without a development coordinator. We have work to do in order to double the spending from this fund in a sustainable way. As an alternative, could we repurpose the existing graduate student scholarship to be specifically for a person of color, at least as a transitional phase while we build up our financial situation?

Mary Mannix proposed that this may be a way to recruit a development coordinator – it would give someone a specific objective to work toward, something that was lacking until now.

Two questions: the logistics of stewarding the award itself, and the process of fundraising for the award. What would we be approving if we vote on the award tonight? If we vote to approve the award tonight, Becky and Sharmila would donate \$1,000 each toward the award itself, along with Becky's further pledge of \$1,000 annually. Suggests that with this initial pledge, we can promote the award with a commitment for two years and potentially receive additional pledges to match those gifts.

Kira suggests that it would be a heavy lift to get the award running in four months, if we approve it tonight. Sharmila says it's not necessary to award it immediately in November 2025; we can announce it now and wait until 2026 to award it for the first time.

For how many funds do we request donations in membership renewal? Five – the four restricted funds and the general operating fund.

Discussion about what, precisely, we should vote on at this meeting.

Steering votes to accept the proposal for the Danna Bell Graduate Student Scholarship award, to be established upon receipt of \$6,000 in gifts toward the scholarship fund, and to be awarded within a year of that threshold being reached. No timeline for when that \$6,000 threshold will/should be reached.

Who is doing the messaging? Scholarship Committee? The Development Coordinator (if/when we have one)? Should we convene a small group to determine next steps for managing the award?

Motion to accept the proposal for the graduate student scholarship for people of color, named in honor of Danna Bell, with the caveats that: 1. \$6,000 is raised to support the award; 2. We form an ad hoc committee to determine the details of management of, and fundraising for, the award.

Discussion: The ad hoc committee plans to report back at the next steering committee meeting.

Motion passed unanimously. Deb volunteers for the ad hoc committee.

## **VII. Old Business (continued)**

**Ad Hoc Advocacy Committee Update (Zach Hottel):** The Advocacy Committee has prepared three recommendations for Steering:

1. Form a permanent Advocacy Committee consisting of not more than three people, with a committee chair, responsible for evaluating any request for advocacy.
  - a. If there are requests for advocacy, make recommendations on how to respond.

2. Recommendations related to the process for requesting advocacy and support. We should have a form on the MARAC website, where anyone with a request for support would submit the form. That submission would be sent to the Advocacy Committee for review. The submission would be anonymous. That submission, and the committee's recommendation, would then be sent to Steering for feedback. Final decisions should be made by MARAC Executive Committee. This is to ensure timely turnaround on submissions, in case there is urgency. (Amy asked to clarify if we're talking about words of support only (i.e. not finances); Zach confirmed.)
3. Make suggestions regarding proactive advocacy and outreach, including but not limited to organizations we want to support, participation in Archives Month, and other opportunities to promote the profession. We have \$1,800 budgeted for advocacy each year, which formerly went toward the NCH. We would recommend allocating some of that to the National Humanities Alliance (although the permanent Advocacy Committee would make that final decision). Because the NHA dues are less than those for NCH, it would leave some discretionary funds available for the committee to use.

Lauren asks if this is a standing committee, requiring a change in bylaws. Arian says only if the advocacy chair is elected. The *ad hoc* committee's recommendation is to have the committee be appointed by Steering.

Dyani asked for elaboration on the relationship with the NHA. The *ad hoc* committee surveyed existing advocacy organizations whose mission mirrors that of the NCH, and the National Humanities Alliance was closest. However, we don't intend to commit to membership at this time; it would wait until a permanent committee is approved.

Zach moves to form an operational committee to handle advocacy, to consist of not more than three individuals (including the chair). Amy seconds. No discussion of the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Zach thanks Diane, Grace, and Dennis for their work on the group over the past year. The form, process, and policy are all set to go for the permanent committee. Volunteers are needed; Zach will put out a call soon.

**Strategic Plan progress spreadsheet (Ali Zawoyski):** Thanks to anyone who has submitted strategic plan progress updates. Anyone can submit updates to their strategic plan items. These notes will help when the next round of strategic planning begins, to determine what's done and what may carry over.

While this spreadsheet is meant to be a behind-the-scenes tool for the benefit of Steering, is there interest or desire to have a public-facing version of this spreadsheet? Something to think about.

#### **VIII. New Business (30 min)**

**Climate Change Working Group (Ali Zawoyski):** IV.C.: MARAC will form a working group on climate change to help its members deal with climate change impacts. No financial impacts are expected. This would be an operational committee (like the advocacy group). Ali would like to charge this group tonight if there are volunteers. Sheridan volunteered (from the train). We'll hear more at the Membership Meeting.

Ali moved to establish a Climate Change Working Group to make recommendations to the MARAC membership on how to deal with climate change impacts. No discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

**June Budget Vote (Amy Fitch):** We have officially finalized our June meeting to approve the budget: Thursday, June 5, 12:00pm.

**Call for interest: MARAC Records Retention Ad Hoc Committee (Ali Zawoyski):** There have been longstanding conversations about how we preserve our records, publications, etc. Are there adjustments to the workflow that need to be made so that we are best preserving our content?

Question: Are we looking for people who are already participating in analogous groups (Web Team, Communication, etc.) to also participate on this group? Ali welcomes their input, not precluded from serving on the group. Many volunteers: Jasmine Smith, Kevin Clair, Missy Nerino, Carolyn Friedrich, Lauren Brown (*ex officio*).

Ali moved to establish an *ad hoc* committee to investigate MARAC's records retention practices. Motion passed unanimously.

**Upcoming Meetings (Mary Mannix):** Everything is in the Meetings Coordinator report.

#### **IX. Standing and Operational Committees (15 min)**

**Awards (Kira Dietz):** Nothing to add.

**Communications (Missy Nerino):** Amy noted in the Treasurer Report that there are changes to how MAA is being distributed. As she noted, we eliminated institutional subscribers. About six years ago we moved to digital-only subscriptions for individual members, but were still printing about a dozen copies of each issue for the benefit of institutional subscribers (who paid \$45 annually for the service). We received a discount from Dickinson College for having print editions. Dickinson removed this discount recently, prompting us to eliminate the institutional subscriptions. Although we'll be losing a little bit of revenue, it will save us time on design hours that we pay to Dickinson. Each issue of MAA is available for free on the website.

Some changes have also happened with *The Practical Archivist*. In recent years we've made strides in making the publication more professional. We recently moved from a provisional to a permanent ISSN. Heidi Abbey Moyer and Renae Rapp have been working on solidifying procedures to set up a more regular publishing schedule. It is a double-blind peer reviewed publication. Hoping to set a lower bar for a high-quality publication. The editorial board has been working on a DEIA statement that they would like to include in each forthcoming issue. Missy advised the board to put this work on the backburner for now, echoing similar moves by the D&I committee.

Communications has also been working on a generative AI policy for *The Practical Archivist*, again echoing policies made by our peers (including SAA). They don't yet have a finalized generative AI policy yet to make available to authors, but will have by the summer. Shouldn't need Steering approval, but wanted to present it to the committee.

Looking to expand authorship of the leaflets. We have sixteen published so far, with one on the way this summer. Looking to expand authorship to contributors outside the MARAC region. If we have multiple potential authors we will prefer those who are MARAC members or from the Mid-Atlantic region. Again, shouldn't need Steering approval, but wanted to present it to the committee.

**Diversity & Inclusion (Tara Wink):** Clarification on the stickers included in the committee report. They are green, yellow, and red, and are meant to indicate members' comfort with being approached by others at the conference. The stickers are available at the registration desk at the conference. Steering appreciates this.

**Education (Colleen Bradley-Sanders):** Nothing to add.

**Membership (Liza Zakharova/Jen Pulsney):** Nothing to add.

**Nominations and Elections (Tiffany Cole):** Touch base with your incoming replacements prior to June 1 if possible, to ensure they are as prepared as possible to take over in their new position(s).

**X. State Caucus New Business and Updates (15 min)**

**Delaware (Diane Bockrath):** Nothing to add.

**District of Columbia (Jason Speck):** Nothing to add.

**Maryland (Jen Gathings):** Nothing to add.

**New Jersey (Diane Biunno):** Nothing to add.

**New York (Melissa McMullen):** Nothing to add.

**Pennsylvania (Isaac Alexander):** Nothing to add.

**Virginia (Lorna Loring/Steve Bookman):** Nothing to add.

**West Virginia (Grace Musgrave):** Nothing to add.

**XI. Comments for the good of the order**

Sara has dates set for future Steering Committee meetings. Information is forthcoming.

Steering Committee presented a gift card to Sara Predmore with appreciation for her work throughout the year.

**XII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm.