

MARAC

Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference

Delaware • District of Columbia • Maryland • New Jersey
New York • Pennsylvania • Virginia • West Virginia

MARAC Steering Committee

2026 July 24, 9:30am

Online (Zoom)

Attendance: Deb Schiff (Chair); Vin Novara (chair-elect); Mary K. Mannix (Meetings Coordinator); Kevin Clair (Secretary); Amy Fitch (Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair); Carley Altenburger (Member-at-large); Sheridan Sayles (Member-at-large); Jessica Webster (Member-at-large); Christopher Hartten (District of Columbia Caucus); Jenny Kinniff (Maryland Caucus); Beth Zak-Cohen (New Jersey Caucus); Amanda Murray (New York Caucus); Ali Zawoyski (Pennsylvania Caucus); Mattie Clear (Virginia Caucus); Grace Musgrave (West Virginia Caucus); Sara Predmore (MARAC Administrator); Lauren Brown (Archives Coordinator/Historian); Elizabeth Surlis (Development Coordinator); Kira Dietz (Awards Chair); Missy Nerino (Communications Co-Chair); Tara Wink (Diversity and Inclusion Chair); Elizabeth Wilkinson (Education Chair); Jen Pulsney (Membership Co-Chair); Morgan Miller Scarborough (Membership Junior Co-Chair); Dana Niemeyer (Nominations and Elections Co-Chair); Diana Dymond Reed (Web Team Chair)

Regrets: Katy Rawdon (Member-at-large); Kery Lawson (Delaware Caucus); Arian Ravanbakhsh (Parliamentarian); Joni Floyd (MARAC Archivist); Andrew Cassidy-Amstutz (RAAC Representative)

Agenda:

1. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30am. There was a round of introductions. Clair moved; Fitch seconded. The agenda was approved at 9:40am.

2. Approval of Steering Committee Minutes

Fitch moved; Mannix seconded. The minutes for the spring Steering Committee minutes were approved at 9:41am.

3. Officer's Reports

- a. **Chair:** Nothing to add. Deb thanks all of those who are participating on Steering this year, whether new or staying on for another year.
- b. **Chair-Elect:** Nothing to add.
- c. **Meetings Coordinator:** Nothing to add.
Amy asked if we're not considering the William Penn or the Omni anymore. Mary said the space wasn't as optimal as the other locations listed in the report, particularly for vendors.
- d. **Secretary:** Nothing to add.
- e. **Treasurer:** Welcome to FY2027. Amy reporting on the final numbers for Q4 2026. Ended with a net loss for the quarter due to paying bills for the spring conference. Overall we ended the year with a net gain of \$35,972. We spent less than budgeted for the year on

advocacy, phone, travel, and honoraria expenses. We also made more money than expected on bank interest. There were also delays in billing from the Dickinson College Print Center that are reflected in the year-end report.

Reminder to caucuses that they each have \$250 in discretionary funds to use. NJ, DE, and VA have put these funds to good use and can be resources for the others.

For the first time, MARAC's total income went over \$200,000. Because of this we have to complete a full tax form (rather than the short form we usually complete), which will cause our accountant fees to go up. Much of that income went to the restricted (scholarship) funds.

The Richmond conference numbers are also included in the final report. The conference made a surplus of \$19,592. Credit goes to the Local Arrangements Committee for this. We did overspend our budget in some areas but thanks to registration and sponsorships we were able to more than offset this.

Action Item: When we have a conference surplus for the year (\$19,551), Finance makes a recommendation on how to use it. Finance recommends allocating the entire amount to the Operations budget to strengthen the cushion for the year and help offset the costs of various new initiatives that MARAC may be undertaking in FY2027 that are not included in the budget. Allocating this money to the Operating budget will give us greater flexibility in supporting these initiatives. Steering voted unanimously to pass this motion (9:54am).

4. Standing and Operational Committees

- a. **Awards and Scholarships (Dietz):** Nothing to add.
- b. **Communications (Nerino):** [Volunteer to staff the MARAC table](#) if attending SAA next month. Missy also talked about the Communications survey, to be distributed to membership next month. The survey is included in the combined report; the hope is to determine how MARAC membership prefers to receive communications to set up future committees for success. Deb asked if we wanted to ask for any demographic information. Communications considered that asking by age might be instructive, to determine if younger members look for professional information through different media than older members. There were also concerns about survey length and asking questions that might deter people from completing it. The membership survey (to be discussed later in the meeting) may also cover some of those demographic questions.
- c. **Diversity and Inclusion (Wink):** Nothing to add.
- d. **Education (Wilkinson):** Nothing to add.
- e. **Membership (Pulsney):** Jen and Morgan are taking the lead on the membership survey, which will inform the upcoming strategic planning round. The goal is to have a draft finalized by the end of August to distribute in October. Trying to find a window after the Communications survey but before the virtual conference. Basing this survey on the 2019-20 survey that was distributed with some new ideas that have come in from other committees and working groups (e.g. climate change). Still time to submit ideas for

additional questions; that deadline is August 7. Membership will be proactively reaching out to other committees to get feedback on existing questions or background we can provide to membership to communicate why certain information is being requested.

(Off topic, but Jen is reporting from the NAGARA conference, where she is representing MARAC. Amy Fitch thanks her for representing us. We used some advocacy funding to support Jen's attendance on our behalf. Jen reports that it has been a good experience. Next year the meeting will be in Denver so coordinating the table will be trickier.)

- f. **Nominations and Elections (Niemeyer):** Nothing to add. We have a lot of positions that will be opening next year; keep an eye out for potential volunteers.
- g. **Web Team (Reed):** Accessibility audit on the website was recently completed. The team will do checks every two months. The committee rosters on the website have all been recently updated as well; if there are any mistakes to correct, please reach out to Diana.

5. State Caucus Reports

- a. **Delaware (Altenburger):** Nothing to add.
- b. **District of Columbia (Hartten):** Nothing to add.
- c. **Maryland (Kinniff):** Caucus is planning a virtual tour in September of the current exhibit at Hornbake Library at UMD.
- d. **New Jersey (Zak-Cohen):** Nothing to add.
- e. **New York (Murray):** Nothing to add.
- f. **Pennsylvania (Zawoyski):** Nothing to add.
- g. **Virginia (Clear):** Nothing to add.
- h. **West Virginia (Musgrave):** Please attend WV's Caucus Conversation next Tuesday on West Virginia's push for an abandoned property bill.

(Here we took a five-minute break and reconvened at 10:15am.)

6. Advisory Positions

- a. **Administrator (Predmore):** As of this morning we have 514 renewed members. This is a good number for this time of year; it will likely increase around when registration for the virtual conference opens. Please remind your committee members to renew their membership if they haven't already; if they haven't done so by August 30 they will be unsubscribed from e-lists and will miss out on communications.

Sara e-mailed Steering about this earlier in the week but also reminds Steering members to check their spam filters, as e-mail clients have updated their settings and some MARAC communications may be trapped behind them.

- b. **Archivist (Floyd):** Absent.
- c. **Development Coordinator (Surles):** Nothing to add.
- d. **Historian (Brown):** Lauren plans to speak with Joni on Monday, regarding budget shortfalls at University of Maryland that may be causing some backlogs of MAA ingests to the MARAC Archives.
- e. **Parliamentarian (Ravanbakhsh):** Absent.
- f. **Partner Liaison (Cassidy-Amstutz):** Absent. The website has been updated with information about the MARAC/NAGARA partnership.

7. Old Business

- a. **Danna Bell Scholarship (Dietz):** Kira caught up new members on the background of the Danna Bell scholarship. We have received many donations for the Bell scholarship, both independently and through the silent auction at Richmond. We are aiming to launch the scholarship in two months (!). Since this scholarship is similar in scope to the existing graduate student scholarships, Scholarship Committee will be taking on leadership for awarding this.

Kira presented a couple of options for logistics. Option 1 is to award it alongside the graduate student scholarships, working from the same pool of candidates. Candidates would self-identify as being eligible for the Bell, and they could be considered for one or both awards. Scholarship Committee has indicated that many students already self-identify as being part of a BIPOC committee in their applications for the graduate student scholarship. There may be a learning curve for Scholarship Committee to administer the scholarships this way.

Option 2 would be to award each scholarship separately. They would have distinct application forms and students would need to apply for one or the other. This would make the process clearer for applicants, but may result in one or the other scholarship having low application numbers in a given year (if the committee doesn't have discretion to consider candidates for both scholarships from a single pool).

Awards Committee's primary question for Steering is: *Will the Bell award be open to all, but preference be given to BIPOC students? Or is it only being offered to BIPOC students?* Fitch: The gift language was specific that the Bell scholarship is for BIPOC students only. Fitch also recommends that we make it clear (especially if both scholarships draw upon a single pool of applicants) that awardees cannot receive an award again, once they have received one scholarship or the other. There was further discussion about this, in which Amy clarified her stance that it's better for MARAC to spread scholarship funding out to as many student as possible rather than have one person get multiple awards. Ali proposed the language of "priority will be given to people who have not previously been awarded" (already in place for the existing Graduate Student Scholarship) to solve this problem.

Jenny Kinniff expressed that it seems like the easiest approach for Scholarship Committee is to have a single pool of applicants from which to draw, both to have a single application form and to give them more flexibility in considering applications. Clair noted that applicants already self-identify/opt-in for the Bell award even before there was a Bell award, which also helps make Scholarship Committee's work easier.

A few people asked how many applicants we get for the graduate student scholarships. Kira said the numbers are increasing; last year we had 17, up from 13 in 2024 (and up from 8 in 2023).

Awards Committee's other concern has to do with language about the Bell scholarship on the website. Concern is about awards that are specifically designated for BIPOC students, and if such restrictions will attract unwanted attention. We would follow the lead of SAA's Mosaic Scholarship (which has similar restrictions) in our language for this award, which has likely been vetted for approval. Sara Predmore also linked to the [Archie Motley Scholarship](#) offered by Midwest Archives Conference. Wink (and Sayles) noted that we are a smaller private organization and the scholarship is privately funded, so we are not as exposed to those risks as if we were federally or publicly funded.

The conversation leaned toward Option 1 with the modifications discussed above. Dietz asked if there were any concerns with this approach or recommendations leaning toward Option 2 (having separate applicant forms and pools). Wink said we can try the approach we've discussed today for a year or two and revisit once we've administered it a few times. Additional questions or concerns can be directed to Kira Dietz (kadietz at vt dot edu).

- b. **Climate Change Working Group (Hoffman/Wickner):** Both absent, no discussion.
- c. **Records Retention Ad-Hoc Committee (Webster):** The Members-at-large met with Amy Poe and separately to talk about the Records Management proposal that Amy shared in Richmond. The committee proposed the beginnings of a records management plan, recommending that a Member-at-large lead that work going forward. Amy also encouraged the committee to discuss with University of Maryland the arrangement for hosting our records. Currently we pay them \$1,000 to host our records; this fee doesn't privilege our records or pay for a particular archivist's time to manage our records.

The Members-at-large felt that the job is too large for any one of them to take the lead on it. There is still preparatory work that needs to be done before MARAC can fully implement Amy's recommendations. The Members-at-large recommended bringing in a consultant who could help us flesh out the details of the proposal. Of particular concern are MARAC's digital records, which are primarily on Google Drive in an unarranged format that varies by each committee's recordkeeping practices. We also may wish to consider being more proactive about how the \$1,000 is spent – perhaps to cover the costs of a Maryland LIS student to be the processing archivist for the MARAC Archives? Given the budget problems Lauren Brown mentioned earlier in the meeting, we may also want to consider other potential homes for the MARAC archives.

Novara said that the \$1,000 is supposed to be meant for a student to process the MARAC archives already. Also had concerns about the potential cost of a consultant; as an alternative we may want to charge another task force to implement the recommendations of the ad-hoc committee. Maryland has been facing budget and staffing shortfalls for a long time and Joni Floyd (as MARAC Archivist) isn't able to devote as much of her time to the task as she once could. Brown added that in the past the expectation is that the MARAC Archives require 70 hours of maintenance work per year, but these estimates are based on older frameworks for how archival work is done (accruing/filing paper records into an existing archive; updating print finding aids, etc.)

Brown also said deaccessioning materials from Maryland would cause problems because University of Maryland archives are technically state property, and would need to be considered by the library dean and ultimately the provost.

Webster: If the \$1,000 was always meant to fund a student's work, how did we end up drifting away from that? Novara: Largely this is due to resource allocation and changes in alignment at UMD Special Collections. Curatorial and technical services/processing work happen in different portfolios within the library; as Joni is in a curatorial role, her work doesn't govern processing and arrangement/description work anymore. Brown: There is a staff member at UMD who coordinates the digitization and digital repository ingest work. However, many of the support positions in her purview are in hiring freezes right now. Also, the rate at which Maryland uses the \$1,000 allocation isn't consistent from year to year; some years little work is necessary, other years they spend multiple years' worth of processing funding at once (as with the 50th anniversary conference at College Park).

Webster: How would the task force differ from what Amy Poe's ad hoc committee did? Novara: A task force, in MARAC context, carries out its work over a longer time and extends the work of the RM ad-hoc committee in a way that the committee did not have the time to do.

Sayles: A concern among the Members-at-large is that the volume of digital records backlog and the need to establish new processing workflows to deal with it is likely beyond the capability of a student processing assistant, hence the call for a consultant (or a further task force). Nerino: "Is there anyway MARAC members could have like a metadata equivalent of a Hackathon? Set aside 3 hours where we all just perform labor for the org and hand everything to UMD?" There was some openness to this proposal, although specific records management knowledge to appraise (especially the digital) files is still considered essential.

Schiff and Novara were inclined to support a consultant to look at our records and advise on next steps. Fitch: We would need to get estimates for services from a number of vendors before Finance Committee can make a recommendation. Nerino: reach out to New England Archivists as a first step to get advice on how they established [their records management program](#)? Predmore noted that there are many digital records that we may need to keep in the archives that aren't on Google Drive, but are on the website instead. They could also be in Google Drive, but that isn't a long-term preservation solution.

Discussion of what happens *after* the consultant. Reconfigure the liaison role with Maryland so that it more accurately reflects the workflow and how Maryland itself processes our records. The relationship between Maryland and MARAC, not only with the archives, is important to preserve and the maintenance of the records should stay with them long-term after the short-term consultancy work.

Consensus was to begin drafting a project plan to present to consultants. Lauren and Joni's conversation on Monday will begin that work; Brown will report back to Executive and the Members-at-large. The latter will take this feedback and begin a draft with outcomes, timelines, etc. To be completed by the next Steering Committee meeting (October 23).

8. New Business

- a. Handbook review (Schiff):** Documentation of everyone's committees and positions. Before October 23 steering, all committees and positions should review documentation and propose necessary changes for position scope, workflow updates, etc. This information will go into the manual.
- b. Membership survey (Schiff):** Primarily covered in the Membership Committee report above. This survey will be a primary driver of the strategic planning process.
- c. Strategic planning (Schiff):** The strategic planning process for the next several years will involve all Steering Committee. Schiff believes we can accomplish this in a gradual and iterative way with much more participating among the entire committee. Deb is going to schedule monthly meetings for whoever among Steering Committee is able to attend. Meetings scheduled before the membership survey has concluded will review the existing/closing strategic plan: consider what is complete, what can be dropped, what is incomplete and should be carried forward into the next several years.

Survey will be sent out in early October. Brown asked if it would be helpful to see previous surveys; many of these are already available on the Google Drive.

9. Adjournment

Novara moved to adjourn the meeting; Wink seconded. The meeting adjourned at 11:29am.