The Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee was established by a vote of the membership in October 1976 at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to honor the memory of Arline Custer, former MARAC member and editor of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, who died in 1975.

**Mission and Goals**

The Committee awards prizes honoring books, exhibition catalogues, and articles by an individual, individuals, or an institution in the states comprising MARAC. The awards winners are announced annually at a MARAC meeting.

**Operations**

The Committee consists of six members who serve for a term of three years. Two are elected each year by the MARAC membership. The elected member receiving the most votes becomes the Junior Co-chair of the Arline Custer Committee in their second year of service. The Junior Co-chair shall become the Senior Co-chair in their third year of service. The MARAC Chair shall fill any vacancies on the Committee.

The Committee accepts submissions or nominations of books, exhibition catalogues, and articles for the Arline Custer Memorial Award. Multiple submissions are accepted. Publications submitted for the award must have appeared between July 1 and the June 30 deadline for submissions.

Each Committee member reviews entries independently and the results are sent to the Committee Senior Co-Chair. The Committee usually conducts its work by email or telephone although the Committee Chair may convene a meeting should it be necessary to reach agreement on the awards. The awards are decided by a majority vote of the Committee members. Committee members affiliated with an institution that submits entries for the awards should abstain from voting on the submission.

Entries for both awards are judged on a variety of criteria, including scholarship, relevancy, innovativeness, quality of writing, and presentation and layout.

**Committee Recordkeeping**

The bulk of the Committee’s records come in the form of correspondence among members and with nominators.

[To be added: discussion of how correspondence is to be archived, as well as committee reports, etc. Contact the MARAC archivist regarding the retention of annual score sheets, etc.]
Submission Guidelines for the Arline Custer Memorial Award

Presented by the MARAC Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee, this award honors the memory of Arline Custer (1909-1975), MARAC member and editor of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.

Eligibility

The Arline Custer Memorial Award recognizes the best books and articles written or compiled by individuals and institutions in the MARAC region – the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

Works under consideration include, but are not limited to, monographs, popular narratives, reference works and exhibition catalogs using archival sources.

Individuals or institutions may submit up to two works published between July 1 and June 30 of the calendar year.

Evaluation

Works must be relevant to the general public as well as the archival community. They also should be original and well-researched using available sources. In addition, they should be clearly presented, well-written and organized. Visual materials, if used, should be appropriate to the text.

Preference will be given to works by archivists.

Awards

Up to two awards may be given in each category, with a maximum value of $200.00 for books, and $100.00 for articles. Awards are to be announced annually at the Fall Conference.

Submission of entries

Two copies of each entry with a letter of nomination should be sent to the Senior Co-Chair of the Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee.
Responsibilities of the Chairs

The oversight of the Committee is the responsibility of the Senior Co-Chair with the assistance of the Junior Co-Chair. The bulk of the administrative work for the Committee falls to the Senior Co-Chair, including attendance at Steering Committee meetings. The role of Senior Co-Chair includes the following tasks:

1. Leading the activities of the Custer Committee such as communicating with all members of the Committee and submitting calls for submissions. This also includes establishing and maintaining firm deadlines for the actions of the Committee.

2. Serving as the point of contact for inquiries from MARAC members and the general public, and receiving submissions for each award.¹

3. Compiling a list of entries in the Microsoft Excel workbook for each award and preparing a master copy for final tabulation as well as working copies for each committee member. See the section on Review and Evaluation for additional instructions.

4. Arranging for the circulation of the two sets of submissions among committee members for the purposes of review and evaluation. Whenever possible the Chair should endeavor to devise a shipping scheme that takes advantage of geographical proximity between members in order to reduce travel time and postage costs.

5. Tabulating all scores from committee members, and declaring winners for each award. The Chair is also responsible for informing the Steering Committee of the winners, and for making the award announcements at the Fall Conference.

Additional responsibilities of the Senior Co-Chair include:

1. Attending meetings of the Steering Committee as non-voting representative of the Custer Committee. The Steering Committee meets four times a year: at the beginning of the calendar year, at the Spring Conference, in the middle of summer, and at the Fall Conference.

2. Reporting to Steering Committee the ongoing actions and business of Custer Committee. This reporting will consist of a brief report for each Steering Committee meeting, as well as email correspondence as needed. The Steering Committee will often conduct informal business over email in which the Custer Committee Chair may be asked to provide his/her opinion as a non-voting member. See Appendix A for examples of Committee reports to Steering Committee.

3. Guiding the Custer Committee in updating and revising as needed the mission and operations statements of the Committee and submission guidelines for both awards.

¹ In the event that the Senior Co-Chair is unable to receive packages due to security issues or extreme remoteness (as in a MARAC member who may reside out of the region), he/she may designate a different point of contact, most probably the Junior Co-Chair. Such a designation may need to be approved by the Steering Committee.
The Junior Co-Chair’s primary responsibility is to work with the Senior Co-Chair to ensure that all of the aforementioned tasks are performed in a timely and efficient manner. The Senior Co-Chair is strongly encouraged to consult with the Junior Co-Chair on as many issues as is practical, and to assign him/her duties whenever possible. For example, if the Senior Co-Chair is unable to attend a meeting of the Steering Committee, the Junior Co-Chair may attend as an alternate and report on committee business as appropriate. The Junior Co-Chair may provide feedback on committee reports, send out calls for submissions on any listserv or social media that he/she may participate, and assist the Senior Co-Chair in establishing deadlines.

The Junior Co-Chair may act as a sounding board or may offer editorial advice for the Senior Co-Chair. However, the primary role of the Junior Co-Chair is to observe in preparation for his/her tenure as Senior Co-Chair.

**Responsibilities of the Committee Members**

Non-ranking members of the Committee are expected to assist the Senior Co-Chair et al. by engaging in discussions on any proposed revisions to the operational statements and submission guidelines. They are encouraged to offer ideas for improving and streamlining the award-granting process, or other tasks that are the responsibility of the Committee. This extends particularly to the evaluation and scoring of submissions. In addition, the committee members are responsible for ensuring that deadlines are met through the timely review of submissions, the transfer of materials to other committee members, and the submission of final scores to the Senior Co-Chair.

The most important responsibility of the committee members is to thoroughly engage in the evaluation process. Committee members are expected to review each and every submission with an eye to the appropriate evaluation criteria, and to engage in discussion with his/her fellow members.
**The Awards Process**

The following is a brief description of some of the tasks required to make the entire awards process move smoothly. Please note that these are just guidelines intended to assist committee members in the conducting of business, and are not in any way a definitive plan for every cycle.

**First Quarter – January to March**

The first quarter of the calendar year is very light for the Custer Committee. The main responsibility of the Committee during this period is the submission of a report to the Steering Committee for its winter meeting, which is normally held after the first of the year to avoid the chaos of the holiday season. The Senior Co-Chair should attend the Steering Committee meeting. Since the Committee will have reported the winners of the Custer Award in its fall report, the winter meeting report usually conveys whatever other actions the Committee may be undertaking in advance of the submission process, such as revising the guidelines, etc. Any such revisions should be submitted to Steering Committee as soon as possible to ensure approval before the beginning of the awards cycle.

Also in the first quarter of even-numbered years, the Nominations and Elections Committee will be finalizing the ballot for replacing the two committee members whose terms expired. The successful candidates will be added to the Committee at the spring conference.

**Second Quarter – April to June**

The new committee members will be added at the Spring Business Meeting. The Senior Co-Chair should coordinate with the new members and MARAC’s Webmaster to ensure that the Custer Committee web pages are updated with the correct information. The Senior Co-Chair should also ensure that his/her correct contact information is listed on the web page containing submission guidelines for Custer to avoid misdirected submissions.

The spring Steering Committee meeting is held on the Thursday night of the Spring Conference. Again, the Senior Co-Chair is required to submit a report and attend the meeting. The report should include the names of the two new members and should, as a courtesy, thank the two succeeded members for their service. In addition, the Chair will need to submit a request for the year’s budget. The Treasurer will provide a spreadsheet with the previous year’s budget; the Chair will complete the current year’s budget request based on those numbers and any perceived increase in postage costs, etc. The spreadsheet should remain separate from the report to the Steering Committee and should instead be submitted directly to the Treasurer.

The report to Steering Committee should also include any submissions received as of the Spring Conference. In previous years the call for submissions usually went out to listservs and other media after the Spring Conference, but it is highly recommended that the calls go out prior to the Conference in order to allow more time for submissions to be received before the July 31 deadline. Any such calls before the Conference should be noted in the Committee report, although a complete listing of media outlets contacted is not necessary – a handful will suffice. Initial calls for submissions should be sent out no later than May 15 to allow sufficient time.

The Senior Co-Chair is responsible for the calls for submission, although he/she may designate any member of the Committee to submit calls through various media outlets as needed. The
calls for submission should follow closely the examples found in Appendix A, with the appropriate changes to the dates and the contact information for the Senior Co-Chair. A list of media outlets is also to be found in Appendix A.

Once the calls are sent, the Senior Co-Chair is responsible for logging and acknowledging each submission. When a submission is received, the Senior Co-Chair should first determine that each item is eligible for entry, based on region, date published, etc. The Senior Co-Chair should then send an acknowledgment to the submitter. Language for acknowledgment communications can be found in Appendix A.

The Senior Co-Chair then adds the title of the publication (printed or online) to the Excel Workbook on the Scores worksheet and adds a worksheet in the appropriate format. The order of the submissions in the workbook is entirely at the discretion of the Senior Co-Chair. Any accompanying documentation such as letters of reference, press materials, etc., should be photocopied or scanned to create separate copies for shipping.

Should any questions of eligibility arise that would merit discussion, the Senior Co-Chair should communicate the issue to the Committee for debate. The Senior Co-Chair may turn the discussion over to the MARAC Chair or Steering Committee if he/she feels it is appropriate to do so. In such cases a review of the submission guidelines may be necessary to address future issues of a similar nature.

Third Quarter – July to September

Reminder notices about the call for submissions should be sent no later than July 1. By mid-July, the Senior Co-Chair should develop a shipping scheme that takes advantage of geographical proximity between members in order to reduce travel time and postage costs. For example, personal transfer of physical items should be employed whenever possible to eliminate unnecessary shipping costs. The Senior Co-Chair should determine which committee members will attend the Fall Conference and attempt to divide them into two groups accordingly. The final recipient of each group of materials should be someone who will be responsible for bringing the items to the Conference; preferably these would be the Senior Co-Chair and the Junior Co-Chair. The Committee should make every attempt to keep shipping costs down while ensuring the condition of the materials during transport. Each committee member shipping items will be reimbursed by MARAC from the Committee’s budget, provided that he/she submit such a request to the Treasurer and include sufficient documentation (i.e. receipts). Therefore, tracking should be used to ensure timely delivery of materials.

THE DEADLINE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES IS JULY 31. At his/her discretion the Senior Co-Chair may wish to wait for a day or two to accept any items postmarked by the deadline, but this is not mandatory. Within a week all entries should be logged and the materials prepared for shipping by the Senior Co-Chair. The two sets of printed materials should be shipped to the first recipients and the compiled score sheets should be sent to each committee member. The Senior Co-Chair is then responsible for ensuring that committee members remain on schedule for shipping / transferring materials amongst themselves.

The Steering Committee summer meeting is normally held near the end of July, and again the Senior Co-Chair will need to submit a report and attend the meeting. This report states any additional committee business, but most particularly provides a count of submissions received up to the date of the report. Any entries of note may be shared at the Senior Co-Chair's
discretion, but the Senior Co-Chair should be aware that a nominator might be privy to the report if he/she is a member of the Steering Committee.

The Senior Co-Chair and Junior Co-Chair should coordinate to enforce the deadline by which the committee members should turn in their final scores for each entry. In general, the deadline should be approximately one month prior to the Fall Conference to allow time for discussion, if necessary. As such this portion of the cycle may occur during the fourth quarter of the year, but usually it falls within the third.

All scores must be received from each committee member before the winners are declared. Therefore it is imperative that scores are received in sufficient time before the Fall Conference. The Senior Co-Chair will use the workbook to tabulate the scores, and will in turn inform the Committee of the winners. Discussion may follow as needed. Once the winners are settled, they should be informed by the Senior Co-Chair; sample language is provided in Appendix A. Arrangements should be made for the winner or a representative to be present at the award ceremony, held at the Business Meeting on the Saturday morning of the Fall Conference. Details regarding to whom the check should be addressed should also be determined.

The Senior Co-Chair, in conjunction with the Junior Co-Chair (and other committee members, if desired) will draft a statement citing specific qualities that marked the winning entry as being the best. This citation should be sent to the winner and be included in the Committee’s final report in the fall, and will also be read by the Senior Co-Chair during the award presentation at the Fall Conference. A sample citation is included in Appendix D.

The Senior Co-Chair should notify those nominators whose submissions did not win and arrangements should be made for the return of their materials. When possible items such as books or other substantial printed materials should be returned to the nominator at the Conference, but they can be shipped as needed (the shipper will be reimbursed accordingly). In some cases non-winning nominators may provide useful feedback regarding the criteria or the process: the Senior Co-Chair should share this information with the Committee if appropriate.

**Fourth Quarter – October to December**

If the Senior Co-Chair has not already done so, the Treasurer should be notified as to the addressing of the prize checks. The MARAC Archivist should also be notified of the winners so that he may print the award certificates. In general the Archivist needs 2-3 weeks before the Conference to prepare the certificates.

The Senior Co-Chair will need to prepare a final report to the Steering Committee in which he/she announces the winners of the Custer Award, using the citations described above. Any difficulties or issues experienced during the awards process should also be brought to the Committee’s attention, preferably accompanied by a statement of how the Custer Committee intends to address them. The Senior Co-Chair will then attend the final Steering Committee meeting of his/her tenure on the Thursday evening of the Conference. At this time he/she will need to sign the certificates.

During the course of the Conference, the committee members should make every attempt to connect with submitters to return printed materials. In some cases nominators do not wish to reclaim their items: these can be donated at the Committee’s discretion. The Senior Co-Chair
should discuss with the MARAC Archivist whether winning submissions should be sent to the MARAC Archives. This past practice may be placing undue pressure on the Archives in terms of volume.

The final task of the awards process is the actual awarding of the prizes. At the Saturday morning Business Meeting the Senior Co-Chair will announce the winners, reading each citation and presenting the winner or a representative with a certificate and a check.

Past Senior Co-Chairs have simply read an excerpt from the description of the Arline Custer Memorial Award in introducing the winners, but this is at the Senior Co-Chair’s discretion. In the past the Senior Co-Chair has also taken the opportunity to acknowledge the Committee members; if they are in attendance, they should stand and be recognized for their hard work.

After the awards ceremony, the business of the Custer Committee is generally finished until the beginning of the following year, unless a pressing matter—such as a major revision in the guidelines, mission statement, etc.—requires ample time for discussion and writing.
Appendix

Examples of Custer Committee Senior Co-Chair Reports

The Custer Committee Senior Co-Chair is required to submit a report prior to each Steering Committee meeting (quarterly). The following are examples of the various reports.

First quarter report (Winter meeting)

REPORT OF THE CUSTER COMMITTEE
Submitted by [Committee Senior Co-Chair]
January XX, 20XX

The majority of the Arline Custer Memorial Committee’s work takes place after the Spring meeting and a full report of activities will be submitted at the Fall meeting. The committee plans to meet briefly at the meeting.

[Detail any current work of the Committee, or business that needs to be addressed. For example: In its report of last fall, the committee proposed changes to the submission guidelines for both awards to streamline the nomination process and increase eligibility. The committee hopes that clearer instructions for submitting entries will better inform applicants about the number of books required for submission and their return. Application guidelines are sent to a wide range of electronic and print venues and the committee will explore all possible outlets in its continued effort to encourage submissions.]

The committee wishes to thank the previous Co-Chair [name] for [his/her] service and work on improving the guidelines and awards documentation.
Appendix

Second quarter report (Spring conference)

REPORT OF THE CUSTER COMMITTEE
Submitted by [Committee Senior Co-Chair]
April XX, 20XX

The majority of the Arline Custer Memorial Committee’s work takes place after the Spring meeting and a full report of activities will be submitted at the Fall meeting. The committee plans to meet briefly at the meeting.

[Detail any current work of the Committee, or business that needs to be addressed. For example: In its report of last fall, the committee proposed changes to the submission guidelines for both awards to streamline the nomination process and increase eligibility. The committee hopes that clearer instructions for submitting entries will better inform applicants about the number of books required for submission and their return. Application guidelines are sent to a wide range of electronic and print venues and the committee will explore all possible outlets in its continued effort to encourage submissions.]

Third quarter report (Summer meeting)

REPORT OF THE CUSTER COMMITTEE
Submitted by [Committee Senior Co-Chair]
July XX, 20XX

At the spring Steering Committee meeting [discuss any business that was conducted during the Spring conference – if no business relevant to the Committee was conducted, there is no need to include anything here.]

To date, the committee has received [#] submissions for the Custer award. Reminder notices are being sent in an attempt to garner more nominations before the July 31 deadline.

[Include any additional work being done by the Committee to be brought up at future Steering Committee meetings. For example: The committee continues to review the guidelines as written and will make recommendations in the fall for improving the clarity of the submission guidelines and procedures. We are also working on a handbook to assist future committee members in the process.]
Appendix

Fourth quarter/Final report (Fall conference)

REPORT OF THE CUSTER COMMITTEE
Submitted by [Committee Senior Co-Chair]
October XX, 20XX

The Custer Awards Committee is pleased to announce the 20XX award recipients.

The Arline Custer Memorial Award for Books goes to [author] for [his/her/their] book, [title of book].

Published by [publisher] in [date of publication], [include a description of the winning entry, utilizing phrasing from the criteria. For example: this book chronicles the history of the College from its founding through the present day. Drawing heavily from the school’s archival resources and community, the volume combines historical narrative and vignettes from faculty and alumni with hundreds of images to illustrate nearly two hundred years of this institution.]

The Custer Award for Articles goes to [author] for [his/her/their] book, [title of the article] published in [journal or publication title and date].

The article [description]

The Committee received [#] nominations for the Custer Award. The committee will continue to research publicity venues for the award announcements.

[Detail any additional work for the committee.]
Examples of Custer Call for Submissions

The Custer Committee Senior Co-Chair is required to make a call for award submissions. The following is an example of a previous call for submissions.

Arline Custer Memorial Award
given by the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC)

DEADLINE: July 31, 20XX

Arline Custer Memorial Award

Presented by the MARAC Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee, this award honors the memory of Arline Custer (1909-1975), MARAC member and editor of the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.

Eligibility

The Arline Custer Memorial Award recognizes the best books and articles written or compiled by individuals and institutions in the MARAC region – the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia.

Works under consideration include, but are not limited to, monographs, popular narratives, reference works and exhibition catalogs using archival sources.

Individuals or institutions may submit up to two works published between July 1, [2001] and June 30, [2002].

Evaluation

Works must be relevant to the general public as well as the archival community. They also should be original and well researched using available sources. In addition, they should be clearly presented, well written and organized. Visual materials, if used, should be appropriate to the text.

Preference will be given to works by archivists.

Award

Up to two awards may be given, with a maximum value of $200.00 for books and $100.00 for articles. The 2013 awards will be announced at the Fall 20XX Conference in [location].

How to submit an entry

Please send two copies of each submission with a letter of nomination to the Senior Co-Chair of the Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee:

[Senior Co-Chair Address]

Entries must be received by July 31, 20XX

For additional information about this award and a list of previous award winners, see the Arline Custer Memorial Award site:

http://www.marac.info/arline-custer-memorial-award
Appendix

Media Outlet for Publicity

The following are outlets utilized for previous calls for submissions.

A & A listserv (archives@forums.archivists.org)
Records Management listserv (RECMGMT-L@lists.ufl.edu)
Visual Resources Association listerv (VRA-L@listserv.uark.edu)
MARAC Blog
MARAC Member List
MARAC Newsletter
MARAC Facebook
H-Net (http://www.h-net.org/announce/submit1.cgi.)
New England Archivists (http://www.newenglandarchivists.org/)
Midwest Archives Conference (http://www.midwestarchives.org/)
American Library Association
Appendix

Acknowledgment / Award / Consolation Letters

To Submitters

Dear [name]:

Your entry for the Custer Award has been received. Thank you for the submission, and we look forward to reviewing the material.

Sincerely,

[Name]
Senior Co-Chair, Custer Award Committee

To awardees

Dear [Name],

On behalf of the Arline Custer Memorial Award Committee, I am pleased to announce that your submission, [Book Title] has been awarded the Arline Custer Memorial Award for 20XX. The committee felt that the book did an excellent job of blending historical narratives and perspectives with images drawn from the institute’s archives.²

Please inform me as to whether you or a representative will be able to accept this award on Saturday at the Fall MARAC Conference in [City, ST]. Please also let me know to whom the check should be written.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Also, if you would, please respond to this message to confirm its receipt.

Congratulations again!

Sincerely,

[Name]
Senior Co-Chair, Custer Award Committee

__________________________

² This phrasing should be adapted to each entry’s particular strengths and qualities.
Appendix

To Other Entrants

On behalf of MARAC’s Custer Award committee, I would like to thank you for your submission to this year’s award. We received several excellent nominations this year and enjoyed reviewing all of them.

After careful consideration, the committee has selected the award winners. I must inform you that your entry was not selected for this year’s award. However, the committee was very impressed with … [insert a statement about a good quality of the title].

If you or an associate will be at the conference this weekend, I will be happy to return the two volumes you were good enough to send us. Otherwise I will ship them to you as soon as possible.

Thank you again for participating, and we encourage you to continue to send nominations for this award. Keep up the excellent work!

Sincerely,

[Name]
Senior Co-Chair, Custer Award Committee