

Kudos for a successful—and important—week

The major archival organizations—the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the Council of State Archivists (CoSA), and the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA)—held their first trilateral meeting in Washington in early August.

NARA was honored to assist in hosting the meetings, and we offered numerous tours of our facilities to conference attendees. I greeted personally nearly all of the 700 people who attended a special evening tour of the National Archives. Throughout the week, conferees commented on the remarkable presence of the National Archives at the meetings and the quality of our participation.

It was an opportunity for NARA to shine, and shine it did. The credit belongs to all the NARA staff members who worked in partnership with the three organizations to make the week a success. (You'll find a full report on the week's activities elsewhere in this *Staff Bulletin*.)

But our work in cooperation with these organizations is far more important than just helping to host annual conferences. As Archivist, I have been committed to furthering these important partnerships, which involve stakeholder and customer groups including historians, archivists, genealogists, veterans, records managers, and many others.

One of my first acts as Archivist was to elevate the importance of these relationships by creating a new position within the Congressional Affairs and Communications Staff—External Affairs Liaison, its incumbent to act as our “ambassador extraordinaire” to these organizations. The new liaison, **David McMillen**, oversees a continuous development of partnerships with these organizations, ensuring that NARA’s mission, goals, services, and policies are clearly communicated and that we forge numerous new and useful alliances.

Strengthening the ties to SAA, CoSA, NAGARA, and other interested organizations is critical in this time of extraordinary challenges, among them managing, preserving, and making accessible for all time electronic records; preparing for and responding to disasters so that vital records can be accessed and used as quickly as possible; and improving civic literacy—making the public aware that the documents



we house contain the lessons of the past and the guideposts for the future.

These organizations help us face our challenges and meet our goals in many ways.

They provide expert advice from the front lines on archival and recordkeeping matters that we face every day, such as preservation of records. And CoSA is working to produce 50 state plans for records recovery after natural disasters. We are working with the National Coalition for History to identify documents for sale on the Internet that should be held in the National Archives. During the upcoming year we will be recruiting sponsors to extend this search to documents that belong in state or local government archives.

These groups also help us learn more about preserving electronic records and improving civic literacy throughout the country. For example, we work with National History Day nationwide to promote the use of original documents in the classroom to make history a more exciting and meaningful subject for teachers and students.

These groups also provide incubators for innovation and experimentation on new ways to do our jobs while meeting our goals. For example, over the summer, the National Archives and SAA held a workshop to define new skills needed by archivists to face the preservation and access challenges of the 21st century. Presentations on university research, state and local government initiatives, and private sector development were reviewed for an intensive three days. The results from that workshop will be published by the SAA this fall.

In addition, these organizations support NARA in seeking the financial resources we need to meet the challenges and achieve the goals that we share with them: preserving the vital records of our government at all levels and the nation’s public and private institutions—a major challenge in these fiscally austere times.

Even as we strengthen our ties to SAA, CoSA, and NAGARA, we have been

working to deepen our relationship with other stakeholders and customers. Over the past year, I have accepted invitations to speak to many important related archival, library, and museum groups, including the Association of Research Libraries, the American Association of Law Libraries, and, later this month, the American Society of Access Professionals.

This summer, I was also honored to be invited to address major organizations representing our most frequent users and strongest supporters—genealogists. Those organizations include the National Genealogical Society, the Federation of Genealogical Societies, the National Institute of Genealogical Research, the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, and the African American Genealogy Symposium.

On our main subject this month, a closing word. The presence in Washington of SAA, CoSA, and NAGARA allowed us to demonstrate our close ties with them at an important time for NARA and for their “trilateral” relationship. Once again, my sincere thanks to all of you who made possible this successful and important occasion.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Allen Weinstein".

ALLEN WEINSTEIN
Archivist of the United States

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