

## **2020 VIRTUAL IAG MEETING**

**Friday, November 20**

**Attending:** Specialty Group, Network, and Committee Chairs; *JAI*C, *AIC News*, and Web Editors, AIC Board Members, AIC and FAIC Staff

### **Call to Order & Introductions**

Margaret Holben Ellis, AIC President, called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. ET. She thanked attendees for joining virtually and giving their time to the organization. Attendees were then invited to share their geographic location and were encouraged to review the electronic roll call, which shared images of participants and their goals for AIC.

Goals included:

- Increasing diversity and inclusion within AIC, particularly within volunteer leadership, and focusing on diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts
- Supporting members through economic and social uncertainty
- Making processes, elections, appointments, and financial information accessible, understandable, and transparent
- Building community and engagement between AIC members and groups, networks, and committees, as well as strengthening external partnerships and projects
- Creating innovative resources, programming, and publications for members
- Focusing on communications throughout the organization

### **Membership Designations Working Group (MDWG) Update**

Nancy Pollak and Deborah Trupin, co-chairs of the MDWG, discussed the MDWG's objectives: that the new designation system be fair, accessible, accountable, and marketable. Trupin noted that the process was moving forward more slowly than initially anticipated, but that the group was dedicated to creating the best system possible and encouraging participation throughout. The MDWG is currently focused on four aspects: refining the Essential Competencies, establishing rubrics for evaluation of applications and for continuing professional development, and finalizing a second draft of the new member designation proposal.

Trupin discussed the Essential Competencies, noting the variety of opinions regarding whether it was necessary to have three subcategories within the Professional Member designation. She suggested that as the broader field becomes more interdisciplinary it would be important to acknowledge that there are related but distinct disciplines under the Professional Member designation.

The rubric, which is based on the Essential Competencies, is now completed and will be shared with attendees, as well as the draft proposal of the continuing professional development program. These documents have been reviewed by the Membership Committee, Education and Training Committee (ETC), and the Equity and Inclusion Committee (EIC). There will be another series of reviews prior to all of the documents being shared with members.

Trupin and Pollak noted the primary changes from the existing system, such as the shift from Professional Associate to Professional Member, and that Professional Members would apply

under one of three categories: conservation, preservation, or scientific analysis. The categories would not be listed along with the designation when referring to a member, reinforcing that the categories are not hierarchical, but will be listed in members' profiles and in the Find a Conservator search tool. Existing Professional Associates would automatically become Professional Members but would need to select which category they would want to be considered under. The MDWG is still developing a policy on members potentially holding their designation under more than one category.

The attendees had an opportunity to discuss the new membership designation proposal in breakout sessions. Some of the topics discussed included:

- How a Professional Member's category might impact their continuing professional development requirements, especially if they were designated under multiple categories
- Reducing the requirements for work experience prior to application or allowing pre-program or other relevant career experience to be counted toward work experience requirements
- Increasing needs for emerging professionals to receive designations to be listed in Find a Conservator as more recent graduates are entering private practice
- Concerns that establishing a points-based system to measure continuing professional development requirements may lead to entrenching toxic ideas of professional merit
- How to reinforce a non-hierarchical perception of the different categories for professional membership, including considering the categories merely as an application or rubric device
- Marketing the new membership system to better inform the public and employers
- Addressing different paths to conservation and how to transparently evaluate differing applications
- Specifically looking at the requirements from a DEIA perspective and identifying possible barriers to participation

Trupin and Pollak encouraged all members to continue to engage with and provide comment on all documents, especially the upcoming revised draft of the proposal.

### **FAIC Programs and Trivia**

Between presentations, FAIC staff polled attendees on trivia regarding program milestones and statistics. Some of the statistics included that:

- more than 2,000 people participated in FAIC professional development activities this year
- the CAP program has assisted 310 institutions
- there have been 37 Alliance for Response kick off events in cities around the United States
- the average size of a donation to FAIC in 2020 is \$350.00
- FAIC will submit 18 grant reports to funders in 2020
- 2,424 people attended live C2C Care programs in 2019

FAIC staff also thanked all that give their time and expertise to supporting FAIC programming.

## **COVID-19 Impact Survey Results**

Sarah Reidell, lead author of the COVID-19 impacts surveys that took place throughout the year, presented on early impressions from the survey results. Reidell noted that this was a new format for AIC to pursue in gathering information from members and it was impacted by competing asks for attention from other surveys, as well as the layers of stress and anxiety created by the pandemic. She also thanked all participants for sharing their experiences.

Reidell emphasized that the impacts of the pandemic are still being evaluated, and likewise this data will continue to need to be analyzed and can serve as a future point of reference. With a total of 2,336 responses over the survey and the three following “pulse” surveys, there are more than 338,000 data points to consider. Participation was distributed throughout the membership, with notable response from members who identified as members of ECPN, CIPP, and OSG.

She explored survey questions pertaining to AIC’s value to members, noting that respondents cited the positive impacts of the virtual conference, which allowed them to focus and draw solace from using their expertise. She encouraged increased online engagement, programming opportunities, and outreach. Reidell also shared reflections from personal comments, which expressed clear personal and professional impacts. Overwhelmingly, she noted that members are stressed, afraid, and feeling insecure about their jobs, finances, and how to support their colleagues. She also observed that many responses discussed the need to dismantle racist institutional cultures, as well as responses that touched on concerns about imposter syndrome and personal and external competition, which can be isolating during difficult times. Reidell highlighted that a third of respondents were in tenuous positions, facing lost jobs, furloughs, and contracts not being renewed or placed on hold.

In addressing personal concerns, many noted that their personal challenges are growing throughout the pandemic, and expressed worry about juggling career and dependent care, managing bureaucracy, and getting loans.

Reidell will continue to analyze the data and prepare a report for the AIC Board, as well as an executive summary for members. She acknowledged that it will be essential to anonymize data and keep data private but will balance this with the need to make the information provided a meaningful return on the investment of time given by the respondents.

## **Remote Internship Guidelines Update**

Susanna Donovan, ETC chair, spoke about how ETC has prioritized increasing DEIA through their projects in the last few months, including closely collaborating with EIC and ECPN. ETC is building a new page for the AIC Wiki about remote internship tips and resources to gather information from mentors and interns. Some of the information on the page is the result of feedback shared with ETC from summer placements, and they will continue to call for additional feedback. The page will also link to other ETC-created resources, such as the pre-program internship guidelines, and will have an option to directly email the committee with feedback. The page is expected to be published in January as part of AIC Wiki month.

To additionally support professionals seeking remote mentorships or remote internships, ETC has been working with Communications and Membership Director Bonnie Naugle to integrate searchable fields on member profiles to allow mentees to find interested mentors. ETC will

continue to receive feedback from ECPN and EIC to maximize effectivity and best serve student populations, including discussing additional membership models.

## **Financial Summary**

Elmer Eusman, AIC and FAIC Treasurer, began by thanking staff for their assistance and noting that all financial records and processes are regularly audited by a professional accounting third party. Additionally, each quarter the board compares financial information to previous years and against the budget.

Looking at the 2021 AIC budget, Eusman highlighted that the anticipated primary sources of income came from membership dues and meeting registrations. He also noted the flow of money between AIC and FAIC, reflecting rent, staff time, and other shared overhead costs. Income sources are reflected in expenses, with member benefits and meeting expenses constituting the majority of expenses. He spoke briefly about looking at long-term development of trends and being sure to evaluate net assets over time.

The 2021 FAIC budget is complicated by the number of grants received and how they are administered. Eusman noted that investments were higher on the FAIC side, which would create income from the principal. He also acknowledged that there is an anticipated decrease in donations in 2021, including in-kind donations, which are impacted by the number of in-person events and activities, like workshops. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) also impact evaluating at FAIC's financial activities and budget, as grant income must be booked in the year it is received, even if activities take place over multiple years. Additionally, many grants are reimbursable, meaning FAIC must spend before being reimbursed by grant making agencies. The large variances seen in the FAIC net assets are also a result of GAAP.

Costs and income for the Virtual Annual Meeting were specifically addressed, and Eusman noted that staff did an excellent job projecting costs and budgeting accordingly. While there are significant variances between budgeted income and expenses, such as not incurring costs for food and beverage, or adding on platforms and services, the overall outcome did result in the lowered expenses offsetting the lowered income, compared to prior years.

## **Remarks from the President**

Ellis acknowledged her role encouraging and facilitating member projects and seeking ways to meet member needs. She thanked the board for their assistance in this and noted their role creating processes and involving membership in board activities. Using the recent revised [Position Statement on Contested Commemorative and Confederate Monuments](#) as an example, Ellis described how Director, Professional Education Molly Gleeson and Director, Specialty Groups Sarah Melching led a working group of members in revising the 2017 statement, also acknowledging the work of the EIC in reviewing the position statement. She noted that there had not been much response to the position statement and expressed her hope that more members would provide their feedback. She noted that prior position papers and statements issued by the board had also been greatly assisted by collaboration with interested and engaged members and looked to this as a model for future position statements and papers.

Ellis brought the group's attention to several other topics, including:

- The American Alliance of Museums' research into the impact of the pandemic on museums and how it might be used in conjunction with AIC's research
- Opportunities for conservators to be engaged in projects such as the Mellon Foundation's Monuments Project
- Recent discussions about a move to virtual couriers for collections, noting the November *AIC News* article by Sarah Scaturro, to be further explored by Director, Committees & Networks, Tom Braun in conjunction with CCN
- The need to increase readership of *AIC News*
- FAIC institutional advancement efforts, including the Cultural Heritage Fund
- The Held in Trust cooperative agreement with the National Endowment for the Humanities, led by Project Coordinator Pamela Hatchfield

## Communications Update

Director, Communications, Brenda Bernier and Naugle spoke about communications initiatives. Bernier discussed the new [Communications Committee](#), which has replaced the Publications Committee. The committee has four subcommittees: Conference Proceedings, Publications, Outreach, and Website. The subcommittees work closely with each other and staff to explore and meet the breadth of communications needs for the organization. Additionally, the committee is focused on identifying and creating structures to increase equity and inclusion across communications platforms. She noted that the committee seeks to balance the size of the group with opportunities for participation, and consequently will encourage high turnover on the committee.

Naugle provided brief updates on communications topics including:

- Encouraging submissions to JAIC, including submissions of Annual Meeting postprints, with increased collaboration between the JAIC editorial board and SG and Network leadership
- Calling for candidates for the [Membership Engagement Subcommittee](#) and [Community Guidelines and Conduct Working Group](#)
- Wiki content is being consolidated and there have been many new resources added. Additionally, the Wiki will be moved to a new hosting platform soon, which should improve editing and navigability functions
- CoOL has been transferred to the new server and structures for editing are being created. A possible editorial or advisory committee may be made for CoOL and any with interest should reach out
- Edits have been made to the Find a Conservator tool and a testing group is evaluating them. Additional changes may be made, but the group also recommends incremental edits to allow for periods of comment and feedback. Additional instructions will be provided to assist members in editing profiles and to provide the public with instructions on using the tool
- Using the Learning platform to provide an area for member resources to be collected and shared, including member volunteer orientation materials, tips sessions, and other member-driven content

Bernier and Naugle concluded by thanking attendees and acknowledging the responsibilities they assume on behalf of the organization.

## **2021 and 2022 Annual Meetings**

Meetings and Advocacy Director Ruth Seyler began with the reminder that the 2021 joint meeting with the Society for Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) will be virtual, but the planned meeting in 2022 in Los Angeles is assumed to be in-person. The meeting contract for Jacksonville has been renegotiated for 2023, preceding the rescheduled meeting in Salt Lake City in 2024. The renegotiation has allowed AIC to avoid all penalties, although there has been a slight raise in sleeping room rates to \$147 per night.

Being able to transition the 2021 virtual meeting this early in the meeting process has allowed for much greater ease in creating a meeting schedule and proactively establishing procedures and platforms. The 2021 meeting will take place on Zoom, with Elevate serving only as a gateway platform that members will log into as a way of confirming registration for the meeting. Weighing feedback on the 2020 meeting, there will still be a significant amount of programming but with a more compact structure over a shorter period of time. Attendees will be able to construct a meeting experience that works best for them, with the overall meeting dates being May 10-June 24. The [program schedule](#) will also be hosted in Firebird to allow attendees to better track session dates.

Using the 2020 pricing as a basis, AIC will keep member pricing as low as possible, and extend early registration rates for longer. There will be options for attendees who rolled over registration from 2020, and AIC is seeking member support to fund complimentary registrations for members and students in need of financial assistance. There will also be a virtual exhibit booth option, helping exhibitors who are rolling over their attendance.

Questions were raised about potentially sharing specific presentations to non-members for a limited duration and about concerns for professional development and travel funding through 2022. Seyler offered to explore these concepts and noted that it may be possible to not raise rates beyond early registration rate or increase SG contributions to meeting costs to keep rates affordable for members. The board will also consider how best to support members experiencing financial difficulty.

## **2022 Annual Meeting Themes**

Suzanne Davis, AIC Vice President, discussed the 2022 meeting, acknowledging that as the 2021 and 2022 meetings are being developed, the focus is on making the meeting affordable, sustainable for the organization, and best meeting member needs. She also called for suggestions for potential partnering organizations, which may also help with any concerns about attendance and help commemorate the meeting as AIC's 50<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting.

Possible partners included the [California Association of Museums](#), [CAC-ACCR](#), [AAAM](#), [ATALM](#), the [African American Cultural Action Fund](#), [APOYO](#), and [IIC](#). Themes ranged from improving DEIA in conservation, climate change and climate justice, imagining the next 50 years of conservation, sustainability, preparing cultural heritage for a new world, a "culture of care," and connecting and healing through conservation and cultural heritage. Members will be asked to weigh in on possible themes and provide input.

## **Discussion**

Gleeson provided a brief recap and reflection on a session that was made available to attendees that focused on organizational change with Dr. Brea Heidelberg. She also noted that Dr. Heidelberg had helped facilitate the EIC strategic planning session, which had strongly shaped the strategic plan created by the committee. Building on the update provided by Gupta, Gleeson described how the topics addressed by Dr. Heidelberg also influenced her work on the board, including pursuing a DEIA-focused review of the AIC Bylaws. She emphasized that the takeaways about identifying, changing, and establishing organizational culture are applicable both as a volunteer leader but also at her own organization. Participants shared feedback that they felt that it gave them terms to use, helped identify previously abstract concepts, and inspired ideas about how to pursue real change. Additionally, having the perspective of someone experienced in the field of DEIA and organizational culture, but who was not part of the conservation field, allowed for better examination of accepted or unchallenged aspects of the field.

Gleeson also expanded on the information provided by Ellis regarding how the working group had been established to revise the Contested Commemorative and Confederate Monuments Position Statement. She acknowledged the work performed by the ten-person working group and thanked them for their expertise and collaboration. She did note that while this process led to a sensitive, thoughtful statement, it was not timely and that it can be a challenge to involve membership, board, and stakeholders to create statements that address concerns quickly. Attendees provided feedback about both this process, noting that it is important to recognize the full extent of the work and number of people engaged in the process, and that the position statement has already been useful and impactful at institutions.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:01 p.m. ET.