

**SAA ANNUAL MEETING 2007**  
**ARCHIVES OF RELIGIOUS COLLECTIONS SECTION**  
**Report on the Section Website**  
**<http://www.saa-arcs.org>**

---

The past year was an active one for changes to the Religious Archives Section website. The Section's website is one of the more "up to date" publications within the Society, and with the addition of new and current data, it may continue to become a place that our members think to turn when in need for a quick reference. While other Sections allowed their newsletters to disappear after paper copies were abandoned, and are now trying to rekindle them, our Section made a smooth transition to electronic publication and has continued to publish an unbroken run.

Maintaining the site takes a certain amount of time and can be burdensome for one person when regular updates to the directory or the newsletter are supplemented by projects and major revisions as occurred this year. A call for help was answered, however, and we look forward to bringing other hands to the preparation process. All text is hand coded to make it eminently readable to future web coordinators. The overall design of the site has been kept purposely low-key – to a fault perhaps – in order to avoid idiosyncratic personal style statements, but also to maintain a coding structure that is easy to read and easy to edit. We look to the members to give us feedback, however, and suggest changes or even pronounce their opinion in ways that could move us in new directions.

A transaction analysis report for calendar year 2006 on the website revealed that there were a total of 31,120 successful requests (total hits); and 18,618 successful requests for pages other than the home page. The website was viewed by 3,781 distinct hosts (URLs). Content changes for the reporting period 2006-2007 related to the newsletter and to the work of two committees.

**Member Directory.** An ad hoc committee of Roberta Doelling, Liz Scott, and Loretta Green surveyed the Section and gathered data that resulted in changes to over 50% of the existing directory entries. The Chair reported that several members renewed their membership in SAA as a result of this project. The Committee considered adding descriptive data on repositories, but the idea was abandoned in favor of providing website links to members' repositories, which (if kept current) are a manageable set of data to control in the future. The web coordinator updated all entries. The total list count rose to 291 entries. Links were made inactive so that contact information could not be easily harvested by search devices. While the Directory is not meant to replace or even be as up to date as the SAA member directory, it is easier to use and includes links that help the Section have a greater sense of its actively interested members.

**Resources.** We published the work of the Models and Resources Committee as a compact and useful set of links to standard guides and Internet resources that support archives and archivists especially in our field of work. The ARCS Website was reorganized to accommodate four new pages of annotated references:

- Manuals and Guides for Religious Archives
- Training Opportunities
- General Resources
- Other Religious Archives Organizations

The “Resources” pages are intended to evolve into a body of ready-reference information for religious archivists. Members should not hesitate to suggest additions to the Committee or the Section Listserv that are appropriate to the Section membership.

**Newsletter.** The newsletter editor and web coordinator worked out a new system for the publication of *The Archival Spirit*. The “Current Issue” is now posted as an in-progress document that grows to completion as articles are submitted and edited. With the Chair’s traditional letter, the issue is sealed and a new issue is generated. The process means that (1) those who submit articles see the results of their contributions right away, (2) announcements are posted almost immediately for a timely delivery of news, and (3) the workflow is spread out for the volunteers. Two regular Web issues were produced in 2006-2007 and a third “special edition” was posted relating to events surrounding the annual meeting. The quick posting time associated with a Web newsletter suggests that members may wish in the future to post shorter announcements on new staff, accessions, or projects that do not involve full length articles.

*Note on Future Developments.*

SAA Council recently adopted a number of Task Force recommendations relating to the governance of Sections and Roundtables. Among these are the requirement that Sections maintain on the SAA’s main website a minimum amount of critical data on their current leadership (list of officers), activity (annual reports) and governance (bylaws). The main SAA website is not meant to replace individual Section websites, but is as a way to maintain transitional information for each generation of Section leaders in the event the ball gets dropped a long the way. This core data will need to be prepared and posted in the reporting year 2007-2008 on SAA’s central web server.

SAA will also host (but cannot support) Section websites beyond these basic requirements, although certain design compromises might be necessary. This option may be worth pursuing in the years ahead as SAA’s information systems and administration are able to absorb the capacity, systems management issues, and design independence of the various units.. For the present, the religious archives section is one of several that maintains its own website. The Section url is registered and the website is maintained as a courtesy of The Archives of the Episcopal Church. All data is maintained with the understanding that it belongs to and is transferable at any time to the Section as directed by the Steering Committee.

*Submitted by*

Mark J. Duffy  
Section Web Coordinator  
May 30, 2007