

Report of CIMA Sub-Committee formed to investigate Peter Gottlieb's proposal for a federation of professional archivists

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Purpose of Committee: To gauge membership/regional interest in the idea of a federation of archives groups. We judged this to be the first step needed before making any other plans that would affect the CIMA membership.

Data Collection: We created a survey with fourteen questions which was presented on Survey Monkey. Responses were collected through November 2010. We invited members of SSA, SRMA, SCA and NWA to respond as well. The survey was a bit flawed, and there were some problems with the construction of the questions which apparently left some respondents confused. We had a total of 22 complete surveys out of our 97 respondents. Despite the small number of respondents, we did obtain some useful data that can be summarized as follows:

Summary of Results: (See attached PDF for breakdown).

- Most respondents don't think this initiative was very important and feel that SAA should take the lead.
- CIMA membership believes that CIMA could contribute by sending representatives to governing or planning committees should SAA proceed to explore federation, but that in such an event, sending representatives should be decided by a member vote.
- CIMA members would support such a federation by paying up to \$5.00 more in dues.
- The comments, while few, ranged from cautious and/or confused to outright hostile and suspicious. It is possible that the wording of the questions caused this confusion and we will be aware of this in future survey design.

Conclusions/Recommendations: With this response in mind, we have also started a level of dialogue with other regional organizations, and thus recommend that the officers of these regional organizations watch for any further developments from SAA on the question. We encourage SAA to keep considering further actions, and in particular to offer sustained education and opportunities for discussion of this matter to its membership. There appears to be a level of suspicion and lack of understanding regarding the SAA structure and federation purpose/benefits that would have to be overcome before western regions would approve joining a federation as things stand now. The matter of unification or federation was discussed at the SAA Council meeting of January 28, 2011. No action was taken, and we don't know when any might be taken. One of our initial ideas was that a regional planning commission from the West may be an effective leader in moving towards forming a federation, but based on the response we got, there are not enough people in the region willing to form such a commission without SAA's lead. It should also be noted that Gottlieb's speech on federation was published in the most recent issue of the *American Archivist* (Fall /Winter 2010); as it is now available to a wider audience, there may be a greater understanding of the federation idea and this may bode well for future discussion.

One regional development that deserves some attention is the IMLS grant that the University of Utah is applying for to provide a single access point for EAD finding aids in the western U.S. This will help the region move towards a unification of standards and practices in EAD production, and may open the way for closer work in other things as well. Other ways in which we are already working together as a region include participation in large joint meetings such as the Western Roundup and the jointly-sponsored *Journal of Western Archives*.