

LA as Subject Archives Forum

CHARTER

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I. MISSION STATEMENT

The LA as Subject Archives Forum is an association of archivists, artists, librarians, local leaders, and researchers dedicated to improving the visibility, access, and preservation of archives and collections documenting the rich history of the Los Angeles region. The Archives Forum seeks to articulate the challenges posed by the large and complex subject of "Los Angeles," broadly defined, with its diverse languages, peoples, neighborhoods, geography, institutions, environments, cultures, and histories. The Forum provides opportunities for networking among all our members and with the larger public, on the major issues affecting archives and collections pertaining to Los Angeles.

The LA as Subject Archives Forum pursues the following goals:

- (1) Improve visibility of and access to archives with Los Angeles-focused collections through such activities as publishing collection information via its LA as Subject Database and website;
- (2) Promote services to archives with LA-focused collections on such issues as preservation, documentation, exhibition, fund-raising, and public outreach;
- (3) Advocate for the interests of archives with LA-focused collections through outreach to professional and educational organizations whose activities affect the well being of member archives;
- (4) Expand research on Los Angeles by encouraging researchers of all backgrounds to use member archives, and by helping to develop new collections.

The LA as Subject Archives Forum maintains an on-line directory of archives and collections that preserve historical materials related to the Los Angeles region. The directory provides a cross-section of the varied cultural materials held by local institutions and community groups, large and small. It is intended not only to provide a key to specific archives and collections, but also to serve as a map for locating people, places, and the contributions of organizations, individuals and communities to the region's diverse and unique cultural heritage.

II. MEMBERSHIP: PARTICIPATION AND BENEFITS

Membership is open to any archivist, artist, librarian, researcher, community representative, or local leader interested in the mission of the LA as Subject Archives Forum and who uses the LA as Subject archives and collections. To join the Forum, contact the Membership and Communication Standing Committee. Representatives of all archives and collections in the LA as Subject Online Directory are automatically assumed to be members.

Members are not required but are strongly encouraged to participate actively in the association by attending meetings, and helping to plan the organization's programs workshops, and events.

Members may vote on proposals, list their collections in the LA as Subject Online Directory of archives, receive news through the LA as Subject "listserv," promote their home institution's upcoming events, attend regular meetings, and take advantage of the many opportunities to network among the region's archival community. All members are encouraged to become active in the leadership of the Forum, by serving on, or chairing committees and/or by serving on the Executive Committee.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The LA as Subject Archives Forum is a self-governing body that operates on the basic principle of majority vote by its general membership. It is comprised of the general membership and an Executive Committee.

A. General Membership and Majority Decision Making

The Forum shall hold regular meetings that shall be run by the LA as Subject Archives Forum Chairperson. The purpose of the meetings is to advance the interests of the membership through presentations, networking, institutional tours, workshops, and planning the programming of these activities. All members are encouraged to attend these meetings to contribute to the evolution of the Forum and Online Directory.

All decisions and actions by the Forum shall be reached by majority vote of attending participants. Actions taken by or presented to the Executive Committee can be taken in person or via e-mail. Decisions made by the general membership are taken only during meetings and reached by a simple majority of those present, provided there are more general members present than members of the Executive Committee.

All meetings, including those of the Executive Committee, are open to attendance by any member of the Forum.

Any member may propose Forum goals or actions to any representative serving on the Executive Committee, either through regular meetings or individually.

The LA as Subject Archives Forum has no authority to alter the mission or activity of any member archive. No decision shall be considered binding on any member archive or collection.

B. Forum Chairperson

The LA as Subject Forum Chairperson is an elected position. The LA as Subject Forum Chairperson also serves as the Chair of the Executive Committee. S/he shall: set forum agendas with input from members of the Executive Committee and/or general membership; manage the process of filling vacancies among the elected positions through interim appointments; and ensure ongoing communication during the periods between the general membership meetings, and Executive Committee meetings. In the best interest of assuring broad community representation, the Forum Chairperson must not be an employee of the hosting institution.

If for any reason the Forum Chairperson vacates her/his office prior to the end of the their term, the Vice Chairperson (Managing Director) shall expedite the process of nominating and electing a new Chairperson.

C. Managing Director

The Managing Director is employed by the Hosting Institution and serves as the Forum Vice Chairperson and if necessary, as Alternate Chairperson. Primary duties are:

- Coordinate communications between the LA as Subject Archives Forum, the Hosting Institution, and the general membership;
- Coordinate all Archives Forum projects, events, and meetings;
- Serve on Ad Hoc committees as needed;
- Assist in the updating and maintenance of the Online Directory with Hosting Institution administrators.
- Is responsible for taking minutes and coordinating communications of Executive Committee business.
- Moderate and manage the "listserv," and use the "listserv" in a timely manner to post notices, activities, and events of the Archives Forum throughout the year.

In the selection and hiring of the Managing Director, the Forum Chairperson shall serve on the Search Committee of the Hosting Institution.

D. Executive Committee

The LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be governed and administered by an Executive Committee, which shall be composed of at least three (3) and not more than seven (7) persons. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Forum Chairperson, Managing Director (Vice-Chairperson), plus from one (1) to five (5) additional members.

In case of his/her absence, the Vice Chairperson/Managing Director shall convene and run Executive Committee meetings. If neither the Chairperson nor the Vice Chairperson

can be present, then the attending members of the Executive Committee may conduct business by common consent, provided that a quorum is present. A quorum shall be a simple majority of the total membership of the Executive Committee. If necessary, absent members may vote via e-mail.

In case of tie votes taken by the Executive Committee, the Forum Chairperson shall decide the issue with an additional vote.

The positions on the Executive Committee are to be held by separate people. The total size of the Executive Committee may vary between 3 and 7 depending upon availability and willingness to serve, among the general membership. The size of the Committee is deliberately variable to provide for flexibility in the future. No more than a minority of the Executive Committee may be employees of the Hosting Institution.

The primary responsibility of the Executive Committee is to plan the activities of the Forum for the coming year, based upon suggestions, interests, and concerns of the General Membership, and guided by the Mission Statement.

The Executive Committee will also serve as an Appeals Board open to any member of the Forum to assure that all members' interests are taken into account and that no single institution or constituency shall dominate the proceedings of the Forum.

Members of the Forum at large are encouraged to recommend Agenda items to any member of the Executive Committee. Items shall be included at the discretion of the Forum Chairperson, who shall make every effort to give full consideration to the concerns of all members member of the Forum.

E. Executive Committee Responsibilities and Ad Hoc and Permanent Committees

Collectively, the Executive Committee shall promote growing and active membership and participation in Forum events and activities, through the most effective available means of communication (mail, e-mail, "listserv", website links, etc.), oversees the update and maintenance the Online Directory.

Activities to be advanced by the Executive Committee and Ad Hoc Committees are grouped into several functional themes below, but it is recognized that not all of these activities can be practically addressed at all times, and that future activities may be added. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee to ensure that the most vital and timely activities are always attended to.

The Executive Committee may, at its discretion, establish any number of Ad Hoc or Permanent Committees to achieve the objectives that fall within its responsibilities. Membership in these committees may be drawn from Executive Committee or volunteers from the General Membership of the Forum.

- **Membership**

This is perhaps the most important activity, because the Forum can only be a thriving organization if its membership is active, growing, and in regular communication with the Executive Committee. Retention of members is just as important as the addition of new members. Promotes growing and active membership and participation in Forum events and activities, through the most effective available means of communication (mail, e-mail, newsletters, website links, etc.) Supervises updates to the membership database. *The Executive Committee may find it advisable to select from among their number, a Membership Coordinator to assure that these functions are carried out effectively.*

- **Visibility and Access**

To improve visibility and access to archives with Los Angeles-focused collections through such activities as editing and publishing collection information via its LA as Subject Database and website, hosting events that bring together archives administrators with the research public, and arranging tours of archives and exhibition facilities.

- **Services to Archives**

Promote services such as training workshops to archives with LA-focused collections on such issues as preservation, documentation, exhibition, fund-raising, and public outreach. Where such services are provided by other organizations, this committee shall seek to co-sponsor and coordinate and make those services known to the members and avoid duplication.

- **Research, Scholarship, and Collection Usage and Development**

Expand the research and scholarship on Los Angeles through the use and dissemination of member collections through research publication, tours, workshops, and lectures about the content of the collections. Help to discover and develop new collections.

- **Advocacy**

Advocate for the interests of archives with LA-focused collections through professional and educational organizations whose activities affect the well being of member archives. Support member or other institutions, public or private, whose archives are at risk for any reason. Collaborate with other organizations doing similar work. Engage in public policy debates and activism wherever the interests of archives and collections are at stake.

IV. TERMS OF OFFICE, ELECTION PROCEDURES, ATTENDANCE, AND VOTING

Officers of the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall serve for two-year, staggered renewable terms, except for the Managing Director, who is not an elected officer and

shall be recruited and employed under the standard title of “Managing Director” by the hosting institution, [See “Managing Director” under Section III].

A. Terms of Office

Terms of office for all elected officers of the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be two years, beginning on the first day of January, with the first term under this Charter to begin 1 January 2007. Officers elected under the previous charter shall continue to serve until 31 December 2007. Elections for their seats shall be held at the November General Meeting. Elections will then be held every November, to renew or replace officers whose two-year terms will expire that December.

The number of offices open for election in any given year shall be all those whose terms have reached their two-year limit, plus any vacancies (computed as 6 minus the current number of elected office-holders)

One-time exception: Because of the timing of this new charter, it will be impractical both to approve the new Charter and to hold elections for new officers in November 2006. The election for the first officers under the new charter shall be held no later than July 31st 2007, for terms that will begin immediately and run until 31 December 2008. The Executive Committee will use its judgment to determine the best schedule for soliciting nominations and holding that election, in accordance with the relevant sections of this Charter.

B. Election Procedures

Elections shall be held annually at the General Meeting of November prior to the start of the next two-year term (eg, November 2006 for the 2007-8 term, and November 2008 for the 2009-10 term, etc.)

During the three to six months preceding each annual Forum election, the Executive Committee shall serve as the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee, drawn from the General Membership to identify persons willing to serve as Forum Chairperson and as members of the Executive Committee posts. All officers shall be elected by the full membership at the Annual General Meeting in November of each year. The complete slate must be publicized to the full membership at least two weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

Any Forum member in good standing shall be eligible for any office, excepting that the Forum Chairperson cannot be an employee of the Hosting Institution.

Recommendations for nominees to the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee may be made by any member in good standing, and must be made not later than three weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

The Ad Hoc Nominating Committee shall make an effort to assure that not more than a minority of the candidates for the Executive Committee are employees of the Hosting Institution. If for any reason the elected officers have a majority from the Hosting Institutions, the Executive Committee seek to fill vacancies or make some arrangement to maintain a majority of officers from outside of the Hosting Institution.

The total number of nominees for membership on the Executive Committee shall be no less than one (1).

Each nominee must confirm in writing (by e-mail or otherwise) to the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee that s/he is willing to serve [on the Executive Committee]. Each nominee must also prepare a brief (no more than 100-word) statement of his/her primary organizational affiliation (including "independent"), interests and ideas about performing in that office as a Forum officer, and transmit this to the Nominating Committee upon confirming his/her willingness to serve. The Nominating Committee shall then have these statements included in the Slate that is distributed to the full membership two weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting, during which the annual election shall be held. A ballot shall then be prepared by the Managing Director and distributed to all members present at the bi-annual election.

Balloting shall be conducted by a simple secret ballot procedure. The ballots shall be printed on regular 8.5x11 inch office paper, of any uniform color, and voters shall be asked to fold these in half upon submitting them to the Managing Director for counting. Counting shall be performed by the Managing Director in full view of the entire attending membership immediately upon collection of all marked ballots. The Managing Director shall call out the totals for each candidate and the Forum Chairperson shall record these and announce the results to the full membership immediately upon completion of the count. In case of ties, then an immediate run-off election shall be held, unless one of the tied candidates voluntarily concedes by withdrawing his/her candidacy.

V. RECORDS

Minutes of each Forum and Executive Committee meetings shall be taken by the Managing Director/Vice Chairperson. In case of that officer's absence, minutes shall be taken by a volunteer from among those present. Minutes of the general Forum meetings shall be approved at the next general Forum meeting; those of the Executive and Subcommittee meetings shall be approved at the next meeting of the Executive Committee. After discussion and approval, all of these minutes shall be transmitted to the Managing Director for archiving, in electronic form only, on the LA as Subject Archives Forum website, and for distribution to the General Membership via the "listserv."

VI. CALENDAR of Meetings: Executive Committee, General, and Annual

Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be held at least four (4) times per year, but more often if the Committee members agree that more meetings are necessary for any

reason. The precise day shall be up to the Executive Committee to decide, but these meetings shall be spaced evenly across the calendar year, with at least one meeting held during each quarter.

General meetings of the Forum shall be held not less than four times per year, and not more than six. Every effort shall be made to rotate the location of these General Meetings among the member archives, depending on availability and capacity. Co-sponsored workshops or any other special event may be scheduled either as a General Meeting or apart from the General Meeting schedule.

At least one General Forum meeting shall be held during each quarter, and as often as every other month, inclusive of the Annual General Meeting. The precise dates for these General Meetings shall be set by the Executive Committee by the end of January of each year, and publicized to the general membership by the end of that January.

The Archives Forum shall hold one three-hour plenary Annual General Meeting in November of each year. The purpose of this Annual General Meeting is to provide an occasion for the full membership to participate in the reports and governance of the Forum. This meeting will be the occasion for the annual election of officers in staggered two-year terms.

VII. Implementation of this Charter

This Charter shall become effective immediately if approved by a vote of the General Membership at the November 2006 Annual General Meeting, and its full text shall be posted by 31 December on the LA as Subject Website.

The original proposed draft of this revised Charter shall be distributed to the General membership via the "listserve" and upon request via the regular mail, for examination and proposed revisions by the Executive Committee prior to its October 2006 meeting. At that meeting, the Executive Committee shall make final revisions and either approve or disapprove the final draft. If approved, the final draft shall be circulated to the General Membership with an explanation of the need for this proposed new Charter. If approved by the General Membership at the November Annual General Meeting, the document called the "LA as Subject Archives Forum Mission, By-Laws and Strategic Plan" approved by the general membership in November 2004 shall no longer be in effect.

VIII. Procedures for Amending this Charter

This document shall be considered a durable charter for the future and for the consistent operation of the LA as Subject Archives Forum. If and when amendments are considered necessary by a majority of the Forum membership, then such amendments may be submitted to the Executive Committee for consideration. If the Executive Committee concludes that the proposed amendment(s) are consistent with the Forum's mission statement and also beneficial to the health of the Forum, then such

shall be submitted to the full membership at least one month prior to the November Annual General Meeting, and shall be adopted when approved by a majority vote of those present at that meeting. The approved amendments shall take effect on 1 January following that Annual General Meeting, and the newly revised Charter shall be posted on the LA as Subject Website.

APPENDIX: CONTACT INFORMATION

The primary contact person for the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be the Managing Director/Vice Chairperson. As of January 2007 that person is Susan Anderson:
archives@usc.edu