

LA as Subject Archives Forum

Mission, Bylaws, and Strategic Plan

DRAFT 2004.06.07

DRAFTED BY LA as Subject Steering Committee and revised by LA as Subject membership through Archives Forum meetings, October 2003 through June 2004

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 through 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 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.

Members are not required but are strongly encouraged to participate actively in the association by attending monthly meetings, serving on one of the five standing committees, hosting a meeting, planning cooperative exhibitions or workshops.

All members are expected to attend at least one meeting per year, and to verify and update their database record at least once per year. They shall be asked to verify their continued participation (via email or letter), at least once per year.

Members may vote on proposals, list their collections in the LA as Subject Database, receive the monthly "Forum e-News," have access to the Forum's current mailing list of Database contributors, promote their home institution's upcoming events, attend the Monthly and Annual Meetings, and take advantage of the many opportunities to network among the region's archiving community.

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 general membership, five (5) Standing Committees, and an Executive Committee.

General Membership

The Forum shall hold regular Monthly and Annual meetings that shall be run by the LA as Subject Archives Forum Chairperson. The purpose of the meetings is to discuss proposed goals and actions, to decide which priority issues will be presented to a Standing Committee, and to vote on strategic plans presented by the Executive Committee. All members are encouraged to attend these meetings to contribute to the evolution of the Forum and Database.

All decisions and actions by the Forum shall be reached by majority vote of attending participants. At least one representative of each Standing Committee must be present (plus the Chairperson or her/his alternate). In case of insufficient attendance to form a quorum, decisions shall be bound over until the next meeting, or approved by e-mail votes based on the official minutes of the meeting in question.

Any member may propose Forum goals or actions to any of the five Standing Committees either through the monthly 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.

Forum Chairperson

The LA as Subject Forum Chairperson is an elected position. 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; meetings of Standing Committees, 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 term, then the Vice Chairperson shall expedite the process of nominating and electing a new Chairperson.

Project Manager

The Project Manager is employed by the hosting institution and serves as the Forum Vice Chairperson and if necessary, as Alternate Chairperson. Primary duties are:

- Coordinate communication between the LA as Subject Archives Forum, the Hosting Institution, and the general membership;
- Coordinate all Archives Forum projects, events, and meetings;
- Serve on committees and subcommittees, as needed;
- Assist in the maintenance of the Database with Hosting Institution administrators.

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

Communications Officer

A Communications Officer shall be appointed by the Executive Committee, who is responsible for taking minutes and coordinating communications of Executive Committee Business. In case of the Communications Officer's absence, the Project Manager or a volunteer member of the Executive Committee shall temporarily serve this function. The Communications Officer is also responsible for drafting and transmitting the Forum e-News, collated from information supplied by the Services to Archives Standing Committee, and from any member of the Archives Forum. The Forum e-News shall be transmitted to all Forum members on the 1st day of each month. Notices of upcoming elections or actions involving membership approval by vote shall be included

in the Forum e-News at least one month prior to the meeting at which a vote is to be taken.

Executive Committee

The LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be governed and administered by an Executive Committee, which is composed of seven members. The Executive Committee shall consist of the Forum Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Chairpersons of each of the five (5) Standing Committees. The Executive Committee shall meet during the regular Monthly Meetings. Executive Committee meetings shall be convened and run by the Forum Chairperson. In case of his/her absence, the Vice Chairperson shall convene and run Executive Committee meetings. If neither the Chairperson nor the Vice Chairperson can be present, the meeting will be rescheduled. The Forum Chairperson or Vice Chairperson shall begin each Executive Committee meeting by confirming that a quorum is present (at least one representative of each Standing Committee, plus either the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson or both). Each Committee Chairperson must send a representative if s/he is unable to attend. If there is no quorum, discussion of issues may proceed but decisions shall be bound over until the next meeting, or until they are approved by e-mail votes based on the official minutes of the meeting in question.

The Executive Committee executes plans and decisions that have first been considered and approved by the general membership. No more than three employees of the hosting institution shall serve as voting members on the Executive Committee. The seven positions of the Executive Committee are to be held by seven separate people.

The Executive Committee is responsible for implementing the LA as Subject Archives Forum mission and coordinating the work of the Standing Committees on specific objectives. The Executive Committee will establish a Three-Year Strategic Plan and develop Annual Plans based on the Three-Year Strategic Plan. The plans shall be based on the recommendations by each of the five Standing Committees and structured around each of their five functional areas. The Three-Year Strategic Plan shall remain in effect until its expiration, but is subject to revision, given approval by the Executive Committee for minor matters and the full membership for major revisions. New Three-Year plans shall be created and approved by the full membership before the end of the previous plan. The Executive Committee will present the Annual and Three-Year plans to the full Forum membership by December 31st of each year for approval.

The Executive Committee will also serve as an Appeal Board 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.

The Forum Chairperson will also serve as the Chairperson of the Executive Committee. S/he shall oversee the Executive Committee's approval of the minutes of the previous Executive Committee meeting. S/he shall establish the Agenda for the current meeting. Matters may be placed on the Agenda by the Forum Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, or

any member of the Standing Committees. 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 any member of the Forum.

The Forum Chairperson or Vice Chairperson shall next call upon the Chairpersons of each Standing Committee to deliver reports on the activities and recommendations made by their Standing Committees. The Executive Committee may elect to require only quarterly reports from the Standing Committees, depending upon volume of business and other circumstances.

Following the Standing Committee reports, business shall proceed to matters that have been approved for the Agenda.

Standing Committees

Five Standing Committees are responsible for developing and suggesting objectives and actions that support the goals of the LA as Subject Archives Forum for consideration by the Executive Committee. Each Committee shall have a Chairperson who shall bring those suggested objectives and activities to the Executive Committee for proposed inclusion in the Annual and Three-Year Strategic Plan. Each Standing Committee shall have a minimum of three (3) members including the Standing Committee Chairperson. It is the responsibility of the Standing Committee Chairperson to recruit members of her/his Committee.

Standing Committee Chairs are responsible for appointing an Acting Chairperson (drawn from that Standing Committee's membership), in case he or she cannot attend any Executive Committee Meeting.

Each Standing Committee shall select a Communications Liaison to take minutes and distribute those minutes to the Communications Officer. These minutes shall include a special section marked "For Inclusion in the Forum e-News." These minutes shall be transmitted to the Communications Officer within 48 hours of each Monthly Meeting.

The five Standing Committees are:

- **Membership**
Responsibilities: Promote 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.) In coordination with the Visibility and Access Committee, maintains the membership database.
- **Visibility and Access**
Responsibilities: 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. Activities might also include promoting networks of researchers. Coordinates with Membership Committee.

- **Services to Archives**

Responsibilities: 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 coordinate and make those services known to the members and avoid duplication. This Standing Committee is also responsible for collecting news to be distributed in the "Monthly e-News."

- **Advocacy**

Responsibilities: 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.

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

Responsibilities: 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.

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

Officers of the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall serve for two-year, renewable terms, except for the Vice-Chairperson, who is not an elected officer and shall be recruited and employed under the standard title of "Project Manager" by the hosting institution, [See "Project Manager" in section III] .

There shall be six (6) Elected Officers: Forum Chairperson, and five (5) Standing Committee Chairs.

The Executive Committee shall appoint a group of three persons to serve as the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee, drawn from the General Membership (not to include members of the Executive Committee) to identify persons willing to serve in the Executive Committee posts. All officers shall be elected by the full membership at the November Annual Meeting, publicized by the first of November. Terms of office shall begin on 1 January of each year. The calendar for the first year of implementation shall vary from

this schedule depending upon the date of adopting this Mission, Strategic Plan, and Bylaws document.

All elected officers shall be elected during the November Annual Meeting immediately preceding the start of the next two-year term cycle. 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 to the Nominating Committee must be made prior to or during, but not later than, the October Monthly Meeting. Each nominee must confirm in writing (by e-mail or otherwise) to the Nominating Committee that s/he is willing to serve. Each nominee must also prepare a brief (100-word) statement of his/her interests and ideas about performing in that office, and transmit this to the Nominating Committee upon confirming his/her willingness to serve. The Nominating Committee shall then transmit these nominees' names, affiliations, and statements to the Communications Officer. A ballot shall then be prepared by the Communications Officer and included in the Forum e-News for the 1 October issue.

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

Voting in committee meetings is restricted to committee members. Votes of the full Forum membership on any issue requiring full membership approval shall be carried by a simple majority of those present at that general Forum meeting.

V. RECORDS

Minutes of each Forum and Executive Committee meetings shall be taken by the Project Manager/Vice Chairperson. Minutes of the Standing Committee Meetings shall be taken by each Standing Committee according to their own procedures. These minutes shall be approved at the next Forum, Executive Committee, and Standing Committee meetings, and then, after discussion and approval, transmitted to the Communications Officer, for distribution in the Forum e-News, and also to be posted and archived on the LA as Subject Archives Forum Website, by the first of the month following approval.

Reports from each Standing Committee shall be given at every Monthly Meeting. These Standing Committee Reports shall be transmitted to the Communications Officer to be posted and archived on the LA as Subject Archives Forum Website.

VI. CALENDAR

A. First year after adoption of "Mission, By-Laws, and Strategic Plan"

To implement the plan of this document, the currently standing Chairperson of the "LA as Subject Advisory Forum" (the former name until the adoption of this document) shall

appoint a Nominating Committee from among the Steering Committee, who shall identify candidates for all of the elected officer positions and follow the procedures outlined above, to create a ballot for the June 2004 meeting of the Forum. This ballot shall be transmitted to all members of the "LA as Subject Advisory Forum", and also to the contact persons of all institutions listed in the *LA as Subject Database*, inviting those contact persons to vote on the candidates for the officers.

This election shall constitute the officers of the LA as Subject Archives Forum for the first two-year term, to begin immediately upon certification of the results in the July 2004 meeting and ending on 31 December 2005.

The Steering Committee will continue to serve at the pleasure of the new Archives Forum Chairperson and Executive Committee, depending on need.

At the first meeting of the full Archives Forum under the new Strategic Plan in 2004, members will volunteer to serve on one of the five Standing Committees. These committees shall have as their primary charge the development of specific goals and objectives for two time-frames: The remainder of Calendar year 2004 and for the first Three-Year Plan period 1/2005 to 12/2007.

By 15 October 2004, the Standing Committees shall have reported their goals and objectives to the Executive Committee, which shall present to the full membership for approval at the first November Annual Meeting, a draft Three-Year Plan. This Three Year Plan shall cover the period 1/2005 to 12/2007.

B. All Years

1. Annual Meetings

The Archives Forum shall hold one three-hour plenary "Annual Meeting" in November of each year. The purpose of this Annual Meeting is to provide an occasion for the full membership to participate in the reports and governance of the Forum. The Chairperson introduce members of the Executive Committee and shall present for the general membership's review an "Annual Report," which will report on progress made toward accomplishment of the goals set-out in the current Three-Year and One-Year Plans. This meeting will be the occasion for election of officers at the appropriate intervals in their two-year terms, and also to fill vacancies. The Annual Meeting will also be the occasion for approval by general vote on the proposed One-Year Plan for the following calendar year.

2. Monthly Meetings

The Archives Forum shall hold Monthly Meetings for the regular conduct of business related to the achievement of the goals set-out in the current One-Year and Three-Year Plans. (The November Annual Meeting shall be counted as one of the twelve Monthly Meetings). These meetings shall provide a flexible occasion for the members of the Standing Committees to meet and confer with one another and with the other officers of the Forum, as well as to receive the participation of any Forum member who wishes to attend. It is hoped that as many of these Monthly meetings as possible shall be hosted by member institutions, to provide opportunities for the Forum members to familiarize themselves with the various resources represented by the Forum.

3. Additional Meetings and Performance of Standing Committees

Standing Committee may hold as many additional meetings as they please, to be determined by the Chairpersons and members of those Standing Committees, depending upon their scope of work and goals. The performance of each Standing Committee will be visible in the Standing Committee Reports and subject to review by the Executive Committee. So long as each Standing Committee remains active and productive, they may conduct their business in person or by e-mail and telephone.

VII. Procedures for Amending this Document

A. Amendment Procedures

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, 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 Meeting, and shall be adopted if approved by a majority vote of those present at that meeting. The approved amendments shall take effect on 1 January following that meeting.

APPENDIX 1: CONTACT INFORMATION

The primary contact person for the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be the Project Manager/Vice Chairperson. Currently that is Mario Ontiveros
archives@usc.edu

LA as Subject Archives Forum Chairperson

- Robert Marshall, Head Archivist, Urban Archives Center, California State University, Northridge.

Standing Committee Chairpersons

- **Membership Committee**
Kenneth W. McGuire, Archivist, Historical Conservancy at St. Vincent Medical Center
- **Visibility and Access**
Karen L. Stokes, Project Specialist/Manager Research and Education at the Getty Research Institute
- **Services to Archives**
Claude B. Zachary, Archivist, University Archives & Manuscripts, Archival Research Center, University of Southern California
- **Advocacy**
Matt Roth, Archivist at the Historical Archives, Automobile Club of Southern California
- **Research Scholarship, and Collection Usage and Development**
Phillip J. Ethington, Professor of History and the North American Editor, *Urban History* at the University of Southern California

Officers

- **LA as Subject Database Manager**
Barbara Shepard, Information Development & Management, University of Southern California
- **LA as Subject Project Manager/Vice Chairperson and Communications Officer**
Mario Ontiveros, University of Southern California