

Founding Mothers: Women in the Society of American Archivists, 1936–1972

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Abstract: Women have been members of the Society of American Archivists since its inception in 1936. Of the 226 founding members, 28 percent were women. In the following decades their numbers increased to 33 percent of the membership and that percentage held through the 1970s. Yet women's participation in the formal activities of the Society was well below the percentage of women members in the Society. Furthermore, until the 1970s little thought was given by the Society to the interests of women. This article examines and analyzes the status and role of women in the Society of American Archivists from its inception to the establishment in 1972 of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession. Included are a discussion of the inequities and obstacles to participation present in the Society, and descriptions of the women who participated and their contributions.

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This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the fiftieth annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, 29 August 1986, Chicago, Illinois. The author thanks the people who spent time discussing their past SAA experiences and commenting on the paper, especially Mabel Deutrich, Mary Jane Dowd, and Dolores Renze. The author also thanks Virginia Purdy for lending her collection of SAA annual meeting programs, and Bruce Ambacher, Greg Bradsher, J. Frank Cook, and Connie Potter for their comments. The article reflects the author's own views and not necessarily those of the Society of American Archivists or the National Archives.

AS PART OF THE Society of American Archivists' fiftieth anniversary, the Society's Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession planned to celebrate the accomplishments of SAA's women members. Little, however, was known about the status and role of women in the Society or their contributions. It had always been presumed that, as in other professions, women were not represented in proportion to their membership in the SAA, that the societal trend of inequality crossed over to participation in the Society. At the same time, it was well known that women were an integral part of the archival profession and the SAA. The fiftieth anniversary of the Society of American Archivists afforded an opportunity to reflect on the historical status of the Society's women members.

The only previous works concerning the role of women in the profession were a series of papers presented at the 1972 annual meeting. Later published in the *American Archivist*, these papers were partially responsible for the establishment of an Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession. Mabel E. Deutrich, chair of the newly organized committee, offered the first analysis of women archivists in her article titled "Women in Archives: Ms. Versus Mr. Archivist." Deutrich reviewed information in the *American Archivist* and a sampling of replies to the "SAA Membership Directory and Profile Questionnaire" distributed to members in 1970. In her article she analyzed and summarized information on archivists' education, employment positions, type of work performed, publications, and awards received. Deutrich concluded that the significance of the role of women in

the SAA in 1970 was not in proportion to their membership; however, she provided only a cursory look at the historical status of female archivists.¹ After fifty years as a profession it seemed necessary and appropriate to take a closer look at the role of women in the SAA.

The historical status and role of women in the SAA from its inception in 1936 to the establishment, in 1972, of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession will be discussed in this article. The relationship of status to professional involvement is explored by examining information on Society responsibilities at several levels: as elected officers or council members, as chairs or members of program and local arrangement committees, as annual meeting program participants, as contributors to the *American Archivist*, and as fellows. From the start women participated in the Society at each of these levels. These categories of participation will be examined, the role of women members as participants will be discussed, and the inequities present in the Society and the contributions of its women from 1936 to 1972 will be outlined.

The records of the Society, particularly the *American Archivist*, were used to determine those women who were leaders in the SAA. The *American Archivist* contained officer reports, council minutes, committee reports, and annual program reports, and reported on those members active in the SAA. Many of the facts concerning these activities, in addition to information on authors and book reviewers, were gleaned from the journal. Unfortunately, the documentation of committee participation was erratic during the early years, so accurate information on the

¹Mabel E. Deutrich, "Women in Archives: Ms. Versus Mr. Archivist," *American Archivist* 36 (April 1973): 171-81. The other articles were Elsie Freeman Freivogel, "Women in Archives: The Status of Women in the Academic Professions," 182-202; Joanna Schneider Zangrando, "Women in Archives: An Historian's View on the Liberation of Clio," 203-14; Eva Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America," 215-22; Miriam I. Crawford, "Women in Archives: A Program for Action," *American Archivist* 36 (April 1973): 223-32.

women who participated was hard to determine. Apparently many committees were inactive.² Rather than make deductions from ambiguous information, this study concentrated on the role of women on the program and local arrangement committees. Information on these two committees was gleaned from the annual meeting programs as well as the *American Archivist*.

The first task was to determine the number of women who participated in the SAA in each category: elected officers and council, program and local arrangements committees, program participants, journal contributors, and fellows.³ These statistics are exhibited in Tables 1-6. Identification of women participants was based on names; the few persons whose first names could be either male or female and whose gender could not be identified from other available sources were not counted.

After obtaining a numerical picture, the major—and most difficult—task was identifying the women, their contributions to the SAA, and their status and role in the Society. While the *American Archivist* offered the most details, other sources were crucial in filling out the story. Records of the Society and the personal papers of a few of SAA's early leaders were particularly helpful in providing information on SAA's inception and some of the founding mothers. Also very useful were J. Frank Cook's history of the Society, published in the *American Archivist* in 1983, and William F. Bird-

sall's dissertation on the history of the archival profession prior to 1936. The most inspirational and helpful sources in understanding the mind-set of the SAA's founding mothers, however, were three telephone interviews and three personal interviews formally conducted in 1986 with women who had either directly participated in SAA or had known founding mothers. Informal conversations were also held with SAA members who knew SAA women leaders and SAA's history.⁴ Unfortunately, deficiencies in the records prevented the examination of certain aspects of women's participation in SAA. The records and the interviews do not answer all the questions regarding the inequities in the Society and the role of women members. It is hoped that this article will prompt further study and analysis of the Society of American Archivists and its members.

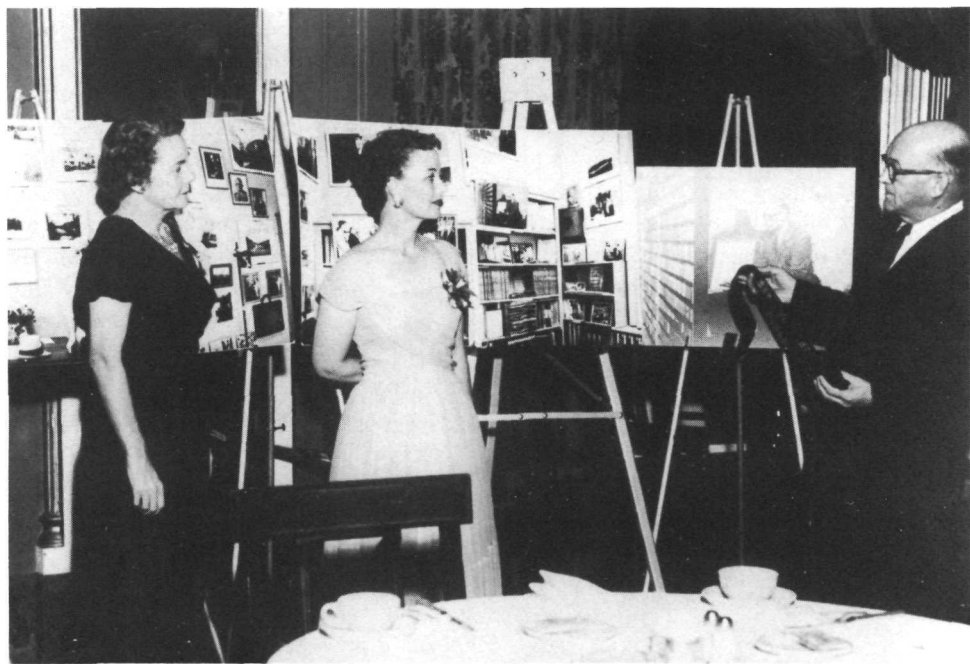
On 28 December 1935, at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association (AHA), Dr. Albert R. Newsome, chairman of the Conference of Archives, appointed a Committee of Ten on the Organization of Archivists to consider the establishment of a national organization of archivists. Margaret Cross Norton, superintendent of the Archives Division at the Illinois State Library, and Ruth Blair, state archivist of Georgia, were appointed to the committee. Both had been active participants in the AHA Conference of Archives and were interested in developing a separate professional organization for archivists.⁵

²J. Frank Cook, "The Blessings of Providence on an Association of Archivists," *American Archivist* 46 (Fall 1983): 376.

³Elected officers of the SAA were the president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary.

⁴Cook, "Blessings of Providence"; William G. Birdsall, "The American Archivists' Search for Professional Identity, 1909-1936" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973); telephone interviews with Mabel Deutrich, 26 July 1986, Mary Walton Livingston, 18 February 1986, and Dolores C. Renze, 29 July 1986; personal interviews with Mary Jane Dowd, 17 July 1986, Mary Lethbridge, 26 June 1986, and Kathryn M. Murphy, 17 June 1986; and informal conversations with SAA members, including Leonard Rapport, Frank Cook, and Virginia Purdy. These personal sources will not be specifically identified in the text of the study to protect and maintain the confidentiality of the interviews.

⁵Birdsall, "Search for Professional Identity," 174; Albert R. Newsome to Solon J. Buck, 12 December 1935, Solon J. Buck Papers, Box 7, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as LC).



Mary Givens Bryan, Dolores C. Renze, and William S. Jenkins at the Committee on State Records Exhibit, twenty-first annual meeting, Columbus, Ohio, October 1957.

cellaneous” (e.g., research agencies, foundations, and professional associations), were female. The 1970 analyses of salaries and education levels were not delineated by gender.¹⁰

In what capacities did the Society’s women members serve and who participated? Between 1936 and 1972, three of the twenty-seven presidents were women. Each of the three—Margaret Cross Norton; Mary Givens Bryan, state archivist of Georgia; and Dolores C. Renze, state archivist of Colorado—had previously served on committees, programs, and Council before their election as vice president/president. Renze also had served as Society secretary. Of the sixty Council members during these thirty-six years, thirteen were women. All thirteen were active in all aspects of the Society, and three became SAA officers. Only

Helen L. Chatfield, archivist at the Department of the Treasury and the SAA treasurer from 1943 to 1952, did not serve on Council before becoming an officer. As shown in Table 1, women held 15.9 percent of the total officer slots and 17.6 percent of the total Council seats from 1936 to 1972. In fact, however, there were only fourteen female elected leaders during the 36-year period.

Those fourteen women who served the SAA as elected representatives were Ruth Blair (Georgia State Archives), Mary Givens Bryan (Georgia State Archives), Agnes C. Conrad (State Archives of Hawaii), Elizabeth B. Drewry (National Archives, Roosevelt Library), Barbara G. Fisher (University of Oregon), Virginia Leddy Gambrell (Dallas Historical Society), Lucile M. Kane (Minnesota Historical Society), Elizabeth E. Hamer Kegan

¹⁰Frank B. Evans and Robert M. Warner, “American Archivists and their Society: A Composite View,” *American Archivist* 34 (April 1971): 161 and passim.

As early as 1929 Norton had encouraged archivists to detach themselves from historians. She was vocal in her belief that archivists relied too heavily on historians for direction and leadership, and she urged that they become independent, although she like others had reservations about a small group successfully supporting a professional association. Norton rationalized that archivists needed a separate organization because there was “‘somewhat of a conflict of interest between what historians want and archivists need.’”⁶

Many agreed with Norton. In December 1936, an organizational meeting was held in Providence, Rhode Island, and the Society of American Archivists was established. Individual membership was restricted “‘to those who are or have been engaged in the custody or administration of archives or historical manuscripts or who, because of special experience or other qualifications, are recognized as competent in archival economy.’” Prospective members were required to apply for membership to the five-member Council of the SAA, which included Norton and Blair. On 30 December 1936, the Council elected 125 members, twenty-nine women (23.2 percent) and ninety-six men (76.8 percent).⁷

By the first annual meeting in June 1937, 101 more archivists had been elected to the Society. Of these 226 founding members, 28 percent were women. Five years later women comprised 26 percent of the total membership: 63 women members of a total of 239. During the next two decades women's membership increased to 33 percent, the level maintained into the 1970s.⁸

There is no comprehensive breakdown of the professional positions or repository affiliations of these women. In 1956, Ernst Posner analyzed the replies to a SAA membership questionnaire to determine the type of work and educational backgrounds of members. The 417 total respondents, approximately 80 percent of the SAA membership, included 104 women. Forty-four women (10.6 percent) and 139 men (33.3 percent) were principally engaged in archival work; 31 women (7.4 percent) and 81 men (19.4 percent) in record work; 13 women (7.4 percent) and 23 men (5.5 percent) in manuscript work; and 16 women (3.8 percent) and 70 men (16.8 percent) in other work.⁹

Fifteen years later the Society again surveyed the membership, although only about 40 percent of the mailed questionnaires were returned. Frank B. Evans and Robert M. Warner analyzed the results on behalf of the SAA Committee on Education and Training. Through projections, they concluded that 28 percent of the Society's members were women. Evans and Warner noted that the apparent decline in female membership since the last survey was “offset by the regrettable facts that women too frequently are unable to advance beyond the lower and median-range positions in many agencies, and that many of these women either do not belong to the Society or else did not return their questionnaires.” Of the seven categories of archival institutions identified by Evans and Warner, “colleges and universities employed the largest number of women—33 percent of the 141 respondents in this category—and churches the least—8 percent of the 25 respondents.” Thirty-six percent of the respondents in the eighth category, “mis-

⁶Birdsall, “Search for a Professional Identity,” 150. Also *Ibid.*, 148–52, 224.

⁷Cook, “Blessings of Providence,” 377. Also, *Ibid.*, 376; List of “Founding Members,” SAA Archives, Series 200/3/1, box 2, folder 7, University of Wisconsin-Madison (hereafter cited as WM).

⁸Deutrich, “Women in Archives,” 174; List of Members, 1942, Solon J. Buck Papers, Box 20, LC.

⁹Ernst Posner, “What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?” *American Archivist* 20 (January 1957): 4–5.

Table 1

SAA Officers and Council Members				
Year	Officers		Council	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
1937	3	1	4	1
1938	4	0	3	2
1939	4	0	4	1
1940	4	0	4	1
1941	4	0	4	1
1942	4	0	4	1
1943	4	0	5	0
1944	2	2	5	0
1945	2	2	5	0
1946	3	1	4	1
1947	3	1	4	1
1948	3	1	4	1
1949	3	1	4	1
1950	3	1	4	1
1951	3	1	4	1
1952	3	1	3	2
1953	4	0	3	2
1954	4	0	4	1
1955	4	0	3	2
1956	4	0	3	2
1957	3	1	3	2
1958	3	1	4	1
1959	2	2	4	1
1960	2	2	4	1
1961	3	1	4	1
1962	3	1	5	0
1963	3	1	8	0
1964	4	0	7	1
1965	3	1	7	1
1966	3	1	7	1
1967	4	0	7	1
1968	4	0	8	0
1969	4	0	7	1
1970	4	0	7	1
1971	4	0	7	1
1972	4	0	6	2
TOTAL	121	23	173	37
Percentage	84.0	15.9	82.3	17.6
Source: Mabel E. Deutrich, "Women in Archives: Ms. versus Mr. Archivist," <i>American Archivist</i> 36 (April 1973): 173.				

(Library of Congress), Mary Lynn McCree (University of Illinois), Margaret Cross Norton (Illinois State Library), Dolores C. Renze (Colorado State Archives), Alice E. Smith (Wisconsin Historical Society), and Dorothy K. Taylor (Denver and Rio Grande Railroad). These women, founding mothers of the SAA, contributed greatly to the success of the organization, and their names appear over and over in programs, the *American Archivist*, and committee reports. Other women also were integral parts of the archival profession and the Society, because they gave their time to committees and to writing for the journal, but they were not elected to the ruling bodies of the Society.

Comparison with the Society's membership in this 36-year period indicates the proportionately low number of women who were elected leaders. Twenty-nine of the first 125 members were women (23.9 percent). Women made up approximately one-third of the 409 members in 1945, of the 860 members in 1955, of the 1,468 members in 1965, and of the 2,393 members in 1972.¹¹ Why were so few of these women elected leaders of the Society?

One explanation is that until the 1970s the nominating committee selected only one candidate for each open officer position. Pro forma elections were held at the business meeting for the selected nominees, and there were few instances when the nominations were contested.¹² The 1951 nominating committee was the first on record to claim consideration of the women membership. Chairman Ernst Posner reported that the 1951 nominating

committee "felt obliged to pay some attention to geographical distribution of the membership, to the types of activity represented, and to the large and increasing number of women members." Posner's committee nominated Helen L. Chatfield for treasurer and Alice E. Smith for Council. Usually, however, the main concern in SAA nominating committees seemed to be balancing the power between archivists from the National Archives, state repositories, and college, university, and business archives. Women and fair gender representation were generally not given special consideration until the Committee for the 1970s directed SAA nominating committees to consider such qualifications and factors as archival interest, age, sex, geography, nationality, and race in the selection of candidates. Accordingly, the SAA constitution was changed, and the dual slate went into effect in 1973.¹³

From 1936 to 1972, women held 15 percent of the total program committee positions. Until 1972, no more than two women ever served together on program committees, which had memberships ranging from five to sixteen persons (see Table 2). Eight program committees had no women. In thirty-six years only three women were program committee chairs: Bertha Josephson of the Ohio State Historical Society in 1945; Lola M. Homsher, director of the Wyoming State Archives, in 1957; and Alice E. Smith in 1960. All had been active members of SAA.

From 1936 to 1972, women held 18.4 percent of the positions on the local arrangements committees. Women's participation on the local arrangements commit-

¹¹SAA *Thirty-sixth Annual Meeting Program*, 1972, p. 14.

¹²In 1949 the nominating committee's selection of Philip Brooks for president was contested by Council member Leon de Valinger, who nominated William D. McCain for president. A secret vote was taken by the Council and committee, and Brooks won. "Minutes of the Business Meeting," 20 September 1949, *American Archivist* 13 (January 1950): 52.

¹³"Minutes of the Business Meeting," 15 October 1951, *American Archivist* 15 (January 1952): 84-85; Philip P. Mason, "Report of the Committee for the 1970s," *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 193-217; Cook, "Blessings of Providence," 384.

Table 2

SAA Annual Meetings – Program Committees

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Men</u>	<u>No. of Women</u>	<u>Percentage of Women</u>
1937	3	0	0.0
1938	3	2	40.0
1939	6	1	14.2
1940	7	0	0.0
1941	6	0	0.0
1942	5	1	16.6
1943	5	1	16.6
1944*	6	0	0.0
1945*	8	2	20.0
1946*	6	2	25.0
1947*	6	1	14.2
1948*	3	2	40.0
1949	na	na	na
1950	4	1	20.0
1951	3	2	40.0
1952	4	0	0.0
1953#	13	2	13.3
1954	6	0	0.0
1955	8	1	11.1
1956	7	1	12.5
1957*	5	1	16.6
1958*	na	na	na
1959*	5	1	16.6
1960	na	na	na
1961	7	0	0.0
1962	4	1	20.0
1963*	5	1	16.6
1964	7	2	22.2
1965†#	8	1	11.1
1966*‡	14	2	12.5
1967	na	na	na
1968	7	2	22.2
1969	8	0	0.0
1970	6	1	14.2
1971	6	2	25.0
1972	8	3	27.2
TOTAL	199	36	15.3

Source: SAA annual meeting programs and *American Archivist*, 1938–1972.

na Incomplete information for 1949, 1958, 1960, and 1967.

* Joint meeting with American Association of State and Local History (AASLH).

‡ Joint SAA-AASLH Program Committee.

† Joint meeting with Association of Record Executives and Administrators (AREA).

Joint SAA Program and Local Arrangements Committee.

tees was slightly better than participation on the program committees; three, four, or sometimes five women served simultaneously on a local arrangements committee (see Table 3). Though one might assume that men thought women to be better at local arrangement details, there were four annual meetings when no women served on the local arrangements committees. Women chaired the committee only three times in thirty-five years (1940, 1947, and 1952).

Women made an even poorer showing as program participants at SAA's annual meetings (see Table 4).¹⁴ From 1937 to 1972 only 10.9 percent of the participants were women. A close examination shows that year after year the same women were asked to present papers, chair sessions, or teach workshops. For example, Norton appeared on nine programs between 1937 and 1954, often several times at an individual meeting. Women participated in the same numbers in the ten annual meetings held jointly with the American Association of State and Local History. Women's best representation on the program between 1937 and 1972 occurred in 1951 at the fifteenth annual meeting in Annapolis, Maryland. Five of the twenty-four participants (20.8 percent) were women. Wayne C. Grover, archivist of the United States, presided at a session titled "The Educational Value of Archival Display." The speakers were Dorothy C. Barck, librarian at the New York Historical Society; Elizabeth E. Hamer, publications officer at Library of Congress; and Lucile Kane, curator of manuscripts at Minnesota Historical Society. Margaret Norton and Mary Givens Bryan were the two other female program participants. All five of these women were recognized archival leaders and later were elected as

fellows of the Society; all but Barck served as an officer or on Council. Kane served with Virginia Leddy Gambrell on the 1951 program committee and may have been responsible for the three female speakers on archival display; however, it must also be noted that there were other years (1938, 1948, 1953, and 1968) when two women served on the program committee but less than 10 percent of the program participants were women.

There were five other meetings in which women comprised over 15 percent of the program participants (1945, 1957, 1965, 1971, and 1972); however, there were six years in which no women appeared on the program (1939, 1941, 1949, 1953, 1955, and 1956). It is perhaps fitting that 1956 was also the year Ernst Posner entitled his presidential address, "What Then Is the American Archivist, This New Man?" To be fair, Posner was paraphrasing Michel-Guillaume de Crèvecoeur in his title and noted in his speech that 33 percent of the Society was female.¹⁵ In fact, Posner was one of the few SAA members to give evidence that he considered female participation before the 1970s.

There are several possible reasons why only 11 percent of the annual meeting participants were women. One might be that in the early years, particularly before the 1960s, programs did not have a variety of topics. Program committees aimed for general programs and sought well-known archival leaders to present papers. Speakers were not sought from the general membership unless they were considered experts. A review of the programs and lists of women participants indicates that only a few women were considered authorities on the chosen topics. Furthermore, with fewer women than men in high-level positions, fewer were granted

¹⁴Program participant numbers were compiled from the annual meeting programs and do not reflect last-minute corrections to the program. All participants were counted, including those who presented papers, chaired or commented on sessions, and conducted workshops and special sessions. Each individual participant was counted once.

¹⁵Posner, "This New Man," 5.

Table 3

SAA Annual Meetings — Local Arrangements Committees

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Men</u>	<u>No. of Women</u>	<u>Percentage of Women</u>
1937	3	2	40.0
1938	31	2	6.1
1939	9	1	10.0
1940	26	5	16.1
1941	19	0	0.0
1942	4	1	20.0
1943	4	1	20.0
1944*	3	5	62.5
1945*‡	2	5	71.4
1946*‡	13	4	23.5
1947*‡	3	3	50.0
1948*‡	7	4	36.3
1949	na	na	na
1950	16	5	23.8
1951	9	0	0.0
1952	7	6	46.1
1953#	13	3	18.7
1954	3	3	50.0
1955	6	1	14.2
1956	7	1	12.5
1957*	11	0	0.0
1958*‡	14	2	12.5
1959*‡	21	3	12.5
1960	na	na	na
1961	8	2	20.0
1962	13	3	18.7
1963*‡	12	2	14.2
1964	6	3	33.3
1965†#	8	1	11.1
1966*‡	11	4	26.6
1967	na	na	na
1968	14	2	12.5
1969	10	1	9.1
1970	11	1	8.3
1971	11	0	0.0
1972	na	na	na
TOTAL	335	76	18.4

Source: SAA annual meeting programs and *American Archivist*, 1938–1972.

na Incomplete information for 1949, 1960, 1967, and 1972.

* Joint meeting with American Association of State and Local History (AASLH).

‡ Joint SAA-AASLH Local Arrangements Committee.

† Joint meeting with Association of Record Executives and Administrators (AREA).

Joint SAA Program and Local Arrangements Committee.



Dolores C. Renze presenting the certificate of election as Fellow to Dorothy Hill Gersack at the thirty-first annual meeting, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 19 October 1967.

the time and money to write and travel to meetings.¹⁶

In addition to the 1951 program previously mentioned, it is interesting to note some of the other subjects addressed by SAA women. Margaret Norton, the only woman to present a paper at the first SAA meeting in 1937 in Washington, D.C., spoke on a subject she knew well, "The Scope and Functions of State Archives." Helen Chatfield also participated in this meeting as a session chair. In 1952, Edith M. Fox delivered a paper on her work with the Cornell University Regional Collection, as part of a panel on regional and local collections. At the thir-

tieth annual meeting in 1966 there were sixteen women participants (12.8 percent), speaking on a wide variety of topics, including the application of automation to the control of archives and manuscripts, business archives, church archives, appraisal, and historical society publications. It was at the 1966 meeting that Dorothy H. Gersack of the National Archives, the first "toastmistress" at an annual dinner, introduced President Dolores C. Renze, the Society's third woman president.

Publication of articles in the *American Archivist* was another area in which women were under-represented, although

¹⁶Telephone and personal interview by author, 1986.

Table 4

SAA Annual Meetings — Program Participants

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Men</u>	<u>No. of Women</u>	<u>Percentage of Women</u>
1937	13	2	13.3
1938	36	4	10.0
1939	26	0	0.0
1940	26	3	10.3
1941	28	0	0.0
1942	22	1	4.3
1943	24	2	7.6
1944*	30	3	9.1
1945*	20	4	16.6
1946*	35	4	10.2
1947*	40	4	9.1
1948*	30	2	6.2
1949	8	0	0.0
1950	26	3	10.5
1951	19	5	20.8
1952	23	1	4.1
1953	12	0	0.0
1954	25	1	3.8
1955	20	0	0.0
1956	19	0	0.0
1957*	20	4	16.6
1958*	35	4	10.0
1959*	65	7	9.7
1960	40	7	14.8
1961	40	3	6.9
1962	21	2	8.6
1963*	68	8	10.5
1964	67	9	11.8
1965#	76	15	16.4
1966*	109	16	12.8
1967	76	9	10.5
1968	71	5	6.5
1969	49	5	9.2
1970	63	11	14.8
1971	69	15	17.8
1972	108	21	16.2
TOTAL	1,459	180	10.9

Source: SAA annual meeting programs.

* Joint meeting with American Association of State and Local History (AASLH).

Joint meeting with Association of Record Executives and Administrators (AREA).

not to the same extent as participation at the annual meetings (see Table 5).¹⁷ Of a total of 844 authors from 1938 to 1972, 118 were women (13.9 percent). This includes, however, presidential addresses by Norton, Bryan, and Renze; and six articles by Norton, five by Bryan, and three by Renze. Other repeat contributors to the *American Archivist* included Helen Chatfield; Lucile Kane; Bertha Josephson; Dorothy Taylor; and Elizabeth Buck, Mabel Deutrich, and Bess Glenn of the National Archives. All were active Society members who gave papers and served on committees. But there were no women writers in the *American Archivist* in 1943 and 1966. And in ten other years there were only one or two women—and usually the same ones—contributing to the journal. Apparently women would have had no trouble publishing more articles if they had so desired, because throughout the 1940s and 1950s editors Theodore Pease, Margaret Norton, and Karl Trever begged members for articles. It became so serious that the Committee of Archival Research was appointed in 1943 to solicit articles. By its termination in 1948 the all-male committee had produced at least ten articles from their search, five of which were written by women.¹⁸

The lack of articles by women in the *American Archivist* may have been related to the lack of papers given by women at annual meetings, but not to the extent previously assumed. In the 1973 study of the Society's membership, Mabel Deutrich assumed that the majority of articles published in the *American Archivist*

were papers delivered at annual meetings. Others, including members of the SAA's Status of Women Committee, also have believed that most articles began as papers.¹⁹ A count of the articles published between 1938 and 1972, however, shows that approximately 20 percent of the 118 articles written by women for the *American Archivist* had been delivered at SAA meetings. Thus women produced 94 original articles. Yet, like the SAA leadership, it was a small group of women that published, usually the same women who also presented papers and served on committees. Like SAA program participation, only leaders in the profession were publishing articles, and few were women.

The number of book reviews in the *American Archivist* by women was somewhat higher, with 213 of the 1,235 reviews (17.2 percent) written by women (see Table 6). Again, however, the same women either were asked or volunteered to review the books. Chatfield, Josephson, Taylor, Kane, Deutrich, and Glenn served as reviewers again and again, along with Grace Lee Nute (Minnesota Historical Society), Elizabeth Kieffer (Franklin and Marshall College), Marie C. Stark (International Monetary Fund), and Josephine Cobb, Mary Jane Dowd, and Sara Jackson (National Archives).

Women did not receive any special SAA awards from 1936 to 1972, but they were honored as Fellows of the Society. In 1958 the Society instituted the special class of membership called fellows. Elected by a majority vote of all past presidents, members in good standing

¹⁷All full-length articles and annual presidential addresses in the *American Archivist* were counted. This figure does not include departments such as Summary of Annual Meetings, News Notes, Book Reviews, Abstracts, and special features such as Archivist Book Shelf, Microphotographer's Mail, and presidents' reports.

¹⁸Deutrich, "Women in Archives," 178; "Committees of the Society," *American Archivist* 6 (April 1943): 130; "Minutes of Council Meeting," *American Archivist* 8 (July 1945): 217; "Committees of the Society," *American Archivist* 9 (April 1946): 168; "Report of the Committee on Archival Research," *American Archivist* 12 (January 1949): 67-68; Karl L. Trever, "The *American Archivist*: The Voice of a Profession," *American Archivist* 15 (April 1952): 149-53.

¹⁹Deutrich, "Women in Archives," 178-80; Mary E. Jansen, "The Participation of Women in the Society of American Archivists, 1972-1986" (Paper delivered at the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Chicago, Ill., 28 August 1986), 8.

Table 5

Authors of Articles Published in the *American Archivist*

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Men</u>	<u>No. of Women</u>	<u>Percentage of Women</u>
1938	9	2	18.0
1939	11	3	21.4
1940	11	2	15.3
1941	15	2	11.7
1942	14	2	12.5
1943	15	0	0.0
1944	16	2	11.1
1945	15	4	21.1
1946	14	3	17.6
1947	20	4	16.6
1948	19	1	5.0
1949	21	1	4.5
1950	19	3	13.6
1951	18	4	18.2
1952	19	5	20.8
1953	20	4	16.6
1954	28	1	3.4
1955	21	3	12.5
1956	23	4	14.8
1957	22	4	15.3
1958	16	4	20.0
1959	20	3	13.0
1960	25	3	10.7
1961	38	6	13.6
1962	33	7	17.5
1963	35	6	14.6
1964	37	3	7.5
1965	25	8	24.2
1966	31	0	0.0
1967	24	10	29.4
1968	22	3	12.0
1969	24	4	14.2
1970	14	4	22.2
1971	18	2	10.0
1972	14	1	6.7
TOTAL	726	118	13.9

Source: *American Archivist*, 1938-1972.

were chosen to be fellows if they exhibited advanced education, professional experience, and superior writing skills. The first group of fellows elected in 1958 consisted of thirty-eight men and eight women. The women were Norton, Bryan, Chatfield, Kane, Renze, Taylor, Smith, and Marguerite J. Pease of the University of Illinois. Twenty-seven (19 percent) of the fellows selected from 1958 to 1972 were women.²⁰

The preceding statistics clearly indicate the disproportionately small role of women in the formal activities of the Society from 1936 to 1972. Relative to their numbers, women held fewer offices, served on fewer committees, delivered fewer papers, published fewer articles, and received fewer awards than their male counterparts. In 1972 Deutrich had no doubt that women were discriminated against.²¹ This was true in most professions. Answers to several questions will help explain the role of women in the Society: What was the attitude of SAA leaders toward women's participation? Why did so few women participate? Who were some of the founding mothers of SAA, and what did they contribute?

Until 1955 a person had to apply to Council to be elected a member of the SAA. Some on the 1935 Committee of Ten expected that the membership restriction would not "be exercised too seriously." On the other hand, the restriction did make clear that the leaders of the Society wanted the organization to have "a definitely professional character." There is no evidence that any applicants were rejected, yet the restriction promoted an elitist atmosphere and perhaps discouraged people from applying for membership. Many archivists believed that an in-

itation or sponsor was needed to join the SAA, and that a certain amount of prestige was necessary to participate actively. In a number of institutions, particularly state and local archives, the top administrators perpetuated this belief by not sponsoring or encouraging lower level staff to join SAA.²²

Unfortunately this image of the Society as a "closed circle" does not appear to have been corrected by the 1955 change in the constitution which eliminated Council approval of membership. Many men and women continued to believe that SAA was run by a clique, with the same people serving on committees, delivering papers, and writing articles. Far fewer women than men were allowed into the circle, or the "gentlemen's club" as some women called it. Resentful of this perceived elitism, it seems that some women either postponed joining SAA or, if members, did not actively participate.

Some SAA women have suggested that women were discriminated against in SAA because of their employment status, not necessarily because of their sex. Many of the SAA's leaders, including most of the women, held high administrative positions in their own institutions. Since more men held such posts, it is logical that they would hold more leadership positions in the SAA. It is not known whether this was a product of outright discrimination or personal volunteerism. The Society depended exclusively on the volunteer support of its members and their institutions. High-level archivists could more easily enlist and guarantee both their time and their institution's support to the SAA.²³

Many of the women members of SAA lacked adequate institutional support.

²⁰Fellow information was compiled from lists published in the *American Archivist*, 1958 to 1972.

²¹Deutrich, "Women in Archives," 180-81.

²²Birdsall, "Search For Professional Identity," 181; Solon J. Buck to Wayne C. Grover, 26 February 1954, Buck Papers, Box 35, LC; Cook, "Blessings of Providence," 377; telephone and personal interviews by author, 1986.

²³Telephone and personal interviews by author, 1986.

Table 6

Authors of Book Reviews in *The American Archivist*

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Men</u>	<u>No. of Women</u>	<u>Percentage of Women</u>
1938	5	0	0.0
1939	4	0	0.0
1940	7	0	0.0
1941	20	5	20.0
1942	16	0	0.0
1943	12	2	14.2
1944	21	3	12.5
1945	24	4	14.2
1946	25	7	21.8
1947	38	10	20.8
1948	31	10	24.3
1949	38	11	22.4
1950	31	8	20.5
1951	27	12	30.7
1952	35	11	23.9
1953	38	12	24.0
1954	31	16	34.0
1955	37	14	27.4
1956	44	10	18.5
1957	36	4	10.0
1958	60	4	6.2
1959	40	5	11.1
1960	37	7	15.9
1961	32	2	5.8
1962	24	3	11.1
1963	31	3	8.8
1964	30	5	14.2
1965	34	4	10.5
1966	32	8	20.0
1967	35	5	12.5
1968	34	10	22.7
1969	24	1	4.0
1970	40	10	20.0
1971	26	2	7.1
<u>1972</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>17.8</u>
TOTAL	1,022	213	17.2

Source: *American Archivist*, 1938-1972.

They worked in small repositories that did not support financially their involvement in professional organizations, and did not consider SAA participation when awarding promotions. Salaries were low, and travel was limited. Time to write and attend annual meetings was only granted to the top administrators, who were usually men. Studies completed in the 1970s described salary and situational inequities throughout the archival profession: female archivists made less money than their male colleagues; they usually served in curatorial and service positions while men served as administrators; women archivists received fewer promotions than their male counterparts, even with comparable education or experience. Women too often were unable to advance beyond the low- and medium-level positions in their institutions and either did not join the SAA or were unable to participate.²⁴

Some of the women interviewed have charged that the SAA women leaders who could have helped promote other women chose to maintain the established elitism, ignoring women who were not leaders at their own archival institutions. Although this cannot be verified or disproven, SAA records do not show any instance in which women leaders in the SAA pressed for increased involvement. Individualism and antifeminism were the norm during the 1940s and 1950s; women had to survive in a man's world. Successful women exercised self-discipline and ingenuity. They had to work harder and

better than men, but not show too much competitiveness; they did not aggressively promote themselves or their work.²⁵ It would have been out of character for those women who were SAA leaders to have challenged the system, and it is unfair to criticize them for not being ahead of their times. While there appears to have been little sense of sorority among SAA women in the formative years and little concern about their unequal representation, such was not expected from women of this generation.

Compared to other related professions, however, women in the Society of American Archivists made significant inroads. For example, a smaller percentage of women historians in the Southern Historical Association were invited to be program participants at annual meetings and contributed to the organization's journal. The American Historical Association (AHA), the oldest American professional organization for historians, had only one female president—Nellie Neilson (1943)—during this time period, and it had taken almost ten years of lobbying by women historians and a few liberal men to elect her. AHA women members were not proportionately represented on conference programs or in the *American Historical Review*. This underrepresentation continued despite the fact that since the 1930s the Berkshire Conference has exerted pressure to improve the representation and participation of women in the AHA.²⁶ A similar sense of sorority among women archivists as exhibited by

²⁴Mabel E. Deutrich, "Women in Archives: A Summary Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 43–46; Freivogel, "Women in Archives," 185–86, 198.

²⁵Joan W. Scott, "Politics and Professionalism: Women Historians in the 1980s," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 9 (Fall 1981): 30.

²⁶Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women in the SHA, "A Statistical Report on the Participation of Women in the Southern Historical Association, 1935–1985" (Unpublished, 1985); Joan W. Scott, "The Way Things Were: Women in the Historical Profession" (Paper delivered at the Ninety-ninth Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Chicago, Ill., 29 December 1984), 15; Jacqueline Goggin, "Challenging the Historical Establishment and Sexual Discrimination: Women in the Historical Profession, 1890–1940" (Paper delivered at the Seventh Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, June 1987), 2–3, 17–18, 26–27, 43.

the Berkshire Conference was not present in the SAA until 1972, when members established the Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession.

Women also were not fully represented as officers in the American Library Association (ALA). From 1876 to 1972 only fifteen women served as president of the predominantly-female ALA. Between 1879 and 1958, when the ALA secretary handled much of the detail work now managed by the executive director, only one woman served as secretary; ironically, she was the only person to share the post with another member, a man. Thus from the beginning of the twentieth century until 1972, women comprised the majority of librarians and ALA members, yet they held relatively few offices in the association.²⁷

This brief comparison to the AHA and ALA indicates that women archivists participated at higher levels in their national association than their female counterparts in history and librarianship. This higher level of participation in part may have been because of the relative newness and small size of the archival profession. And, unlike their librarian counterparts who had regional, state, and local organizations in which to take on leadership roles, during most of these years women archivists had only the SAA and probably made extra efforts to become involved.

While there was a disparity between men and women in terms of their levels of achievement in the SAA, women made notable contributions to the SAA. They

focused on building the prestige of the archival profession and the national association. Three women leaders—Margaret Cross Norton, Mary Givens Bryan, and Delores Renze—merit particular recognition for their contributions.

Most notable was Margaret Cross Norton. A proponent of the development of archival science, archival education, and of a recognized archival profession, Norton encouraged the formation of the SAA and then supported it wholeheartedly. Among her most noteworthy contributions was editorship of the *American Archivist*. Although she reluctantly agreed to serve as the journal's second editor because she felt her expertise was limited, Norton produced both theoretical and technical articles when they were not easily forthcoming. She initiated the publication of committee reports in the journal in order to inform members of committee activities and to encourage colleagues to contribute. As the Society's fourth president, second *American Archivist* editor, and a fellow, Norton remained committed to SAA until her death. From the proceeds of her estate the Society has created the Margaret Cross Norton Education Fund.²⁸

Mary Givens Bryan, State Archivist of Georgia, served as the fifteenth president of SAA and was concerned with the professionalization of archivists. A leading state archivist, Bryan served on SAA's Committee on State Archives and chaired it from 1955 to 1957. Under her leadership the committee conducted two salary surveys and a survey of the microfilm ca-

²⁷ALA *Handbook of Organizations*, 1985–1986, 256–57; Kathleen Weibel and Kathleen M. Heim, eds., *The Role of Women in Librarianship, 1876–1976: The Entry, Advancement, and Struggle for Equalization in One Profession* (Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1979), xiv; Leigh S. Estabrook and Kathleen M. Heim, *Career Profiles and Sex Discrimination in the Library Profession* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1983), 16, 32; Leigh S. Estabrook and Kathleen M. Heim, "A Profile of ALA Personal Members," *American Libraries* 11 (December 1980): 654–59.

²⁸Margaret Cross Norton to Solon J. Buck, 1 February 1946, Buck Papers, Box 20, LC; Lester Cappon to Ernst Posner, 18 December 1943, SAA Archives, series 200/3/2, box 5, folder 23, WM; Phillip C. Brooks to James A. Robertson, ca. November 1938, James A. Robertson Papers, Box 44, LC; Paul Powell, "Margaret Cross Norton, Archivist Emerita," *American Archivist* 29 (October 1966) 489–92; *SAA Newsletter*, July 1986, 2. See Thornton W. Mitchell, ed., *Norton on Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1975).

pabilities of state archives and court records microfilm projects. In 1956 she presented the first thorough survey of the status of state archives in the handbook, "Comparative Study of State and U.S. Territorial Law Governing Archives." Bryan was elected to Council in 1956 to fill the unexpired term of Dolores Renze, who had been nominated secretary. She was elected vice president in 1958 and succeeded to president the next year. Her presidential address, "Changing Times," called on archivists to meet the new challenges facing the profession.²⁹

Dolores C. Renze, twenty-first president of the SAA, was active in the Society from the day she joined and was a guiding force during the 1950s, the period that J. Frank Cook characterized as the "professionalization of the association." Concerned with developing standards for archivists, Renze was a proponent of certification and the Society's fellows program. She broadened SAA's educational role by initiating workshops or "early bird sessions" at annual meetings. As secretary from 1956 to 1960, Renze systematized Society records. When she became secretary the membership files consisted of a shoebox filled with over five hundred names on slips of paper. By 1960, Renze had computerized the updated membership files and had produced the first SAA membership directory. She was SAA's first archivist, helped the Society become incorporated, and devised an organization manual for SAA officers and committees.³⁰

The individual careers of Norton, Bryan, and Renze were exceptional. For the most part the same forces which limited women in society also frustrated their achievement of equality in the archival profession and in the Society of American Archivists. General societal discrimination coupled with the perceived or real elitism of the SAA resulted in disparate levels of participation by men and women. As in other professions at that time, the interests of women were rarely considered, although women were an integral part of the archival profession and the Society between 1936 and 1972.

Since the early 1970s the SAA has taken positive steps to ensure that the interests of all its members, including women, are promoted. In 1970 the president of the Society appointed a special committee to analyze the SAA's structure, programs, and organization, and to find ways to make the Society more democratic and responsive to its members. As noted above, among the recommendations of the final report of the Committee for the 1970s, submitted in 1972, were the opening up of committee representation, presentation of dual slates of nominees, and expansion of membership development and services. In 1971, a group known as ACT or Archivists for Action, was organized around some of the democratizing changes being discussed by the SAA Committee for the 1970s. Composed of several SAA women, ACT set out to work for reforms in the SAA and to encourage the Society to take positions

²⁹Jeraldine Cloud, "Mary Givens Bryan" (Paper delivered at the Forty-seventh Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Minneapolis, Minn., 7 October 1983); Mary Givens Bryan, "Trends of Organization in State Archives," *American Archivist* 21 (January 1958): 31; "In Memoriam—Mary Givens Bryan," *American Archivist* 27 (October 1964): 505–07; Mary Givens Bryan, "Changing Times," *American Archivist* 24 (January 1961): 3–10.

³⁰Telephone and personal interviews by author, 1986; Cook, "Blessings of Providence," 389; Dolores C. Renze, "The Archivist's Challenge: To Lead—or Not To Lead," *American Archivist* 30 (January 1967): 5–16; Dolores C. Renze to Wayne Grover, 30 September 1953, Buck Papers, box 35, LC; Dolores C. Renze to Waldo G. Leland, 13 November 1963, Waldo G. Leland Papers, box 106, LC; reports of the Secretary, 1956–1960, *American Archivist* 2 (January 1958): 101; 22 (January 1959): 123–24; 23 (January 1960): 94–96; 24 (April 1961): 209–11; 25 (January 1962): 120–22.

on societal issues. One of its first actions was to organize the 1972 annual meeting session on women archivists.

As a result of the Committee for the 1970s' recommendations and ACT's lobbying efforts, the SAA appointed the Ad Hoc Committee on the Status of Women in the Archival Profession in 1972. It subsequently became an official standing committee with the stated purpose "to monitor the status of women in the profession" and to "strive for equitable participation." The Women's Caucus, also organized at this time to serve as a companion to the Status of Women Committee, convenes at SAA's annual meetings as an issue-raising group and watchdog of the SAA and publishes the *SAA Women's Caucus Newsletter*.³¹

Between 1972 and 1987 the female membership of the Society increased

from approximately 33 percent to 54 percent. At the same time women have steadily increased their participation in the Society's activities. In 1985 and 1986, for the first time, the SAA had two consecutive women presidents, Andrea Hinding and Shonnie Finnegan. Six of nine Council members are women. More SAA women than ever are running for office, joining committees, writing articles, and giving professional papers. At the 1987 meeting in New York approximately 45 percent of the program participants were women. Nevertheless, women are still not completely represented in proportion to their membership in the SAA. The Committee on the Status of Women and the Women's Caucus continue to work together to ensure equal participation in the Society of American Archivists.

³¹Mason, "Committee for the 1970s," 193-212; *SAA Women's Caucus Newsletter* 9 (Fall 1986): 1, 5-7; Janzen, "The Participation of Women in the SAA," 1-11.