



Communications Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define and provide a broad framework in which the Association of Canadian Archivists will undertake its internal and external communications, with the ultimate goal of providing well-coordinated and effectively managed practices that are responsive to the Association's diverse information requirements.

DEFINITIONS AND SCOPE OF POLICY

For the purposes of this policy, communication is defined as the means by which information is disseminated by the Association's Board and Committees, its Secretariat, and its membership both internally amongst itself and externally to others, which may include levels of government, other associations, non-members and other stakeholders in the Canadian archival community. This policy relates to all communications undertaken in a formal capacity on behalf of the organization, whether in textual or electronic formats. This policy may encompass the work undertaken by several Association committees but is intended to provide an overarching framework rather than direction to specific committees regarding issues within their mandates.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Association will actively communicate to express and seek a range of views, information, feedback, and advice across a variety of media. The Association will provide effective communication that provides timely, proactive and appropriate information for and about the Canadian archival community.

The Association is committed to:

- Providing timely, accurate, consistent and clear information about its decisions, services, and programs, and initiatives while using plain language;
- Supporting and disseminating research into archival theory and related topics through a scholarly journal and other publications;
- Advocating on behalf of archivists and archival institutions;
- Encouraging opportunities for consultation and engagement of members to improve the Association;
- Promoting transparency and accountability in its decision making processes and governance; and
- Employing a variety of ways and means to communicate, and providing information in multiple formats to accommodate diverse needs where necessary.



POLICY REQUIREMENTS

In order to achieve the goals of this policy, the Association will:

- Create opportunities to encourage interactions between Board members, committees, special interest sections (SISes), and other members through face-to-face meetings such as the annual meeting, planning and priorities meetings, and member input sessions; teleconferences; virtual environments such as the Association website, which will include a members-only component; emails; and social media opportunities, including such options as Facebook and Twitter;
- Support a publications program, including a scholarly journal, Association bulletin, and other publications to provide opportunities to disseminate research and summarize Association business;
- Designate the President as the official spokesperson of the Association; and
- Enforce a policy regarding the Associations' branding to promote consistency in messaging and style.

ACCOUNTABILITIES

General Principles

In all communications, Association members are bound by the Volunteer Code of Conduct when participating in Association business, declaring conflicts of interest, and maintaining confidentiality of information. Employees and contractors of the Association are bound by the terms of their job descriptions or contracts regarding the handling of communications duties; in the absence of any specific terms, this policy and the Volunteer Code of Conduct will apply as best practices documents.

Board of Directors

The President of the Association is the official spokesperson of the Board and the Association for all Association business. In this role, the President may liaise with Board members, committees and Association members in promoting the Association as well as receiving feedback for official consideration by the Board. The President may contact the Secretariat, Association committees, student chapters, or special interest sections, members or non-members to obtain information necessary for official communications. The President is responsible for advocacy and its resulting communications. The President is the official liaison with the Executive Director, who submits regular reports to the President on the Association's operations and office. To promote accountability and transparency in the Board's governance of the Association, the President writes a regular column for the ACA Bulletin and reports on the state of the Association at each annual meeting.



In matters related to the Association's day-to-day operations, some Presidential duties as spokesperson may be delegated to the Executive Director. In matters related to specific advocacy issues, some Presidential duties as spokesperson may be delegated, with the agreement of the Board, to specific subject matter experts representing the Association under the direction of the Board. In all cases, the appearance of official communications will be consistent with the Association's branding.

Other members of the Board will be assigned specific communications responsibilities by virtue of either their position descriptions as approved by the Board or assignments made from time to time.

As part of their leadership responsibilities, Board members are required to maintain regular contact with their designated liaison relationships in order to promote openness, networking and dialogue within the community. Board members must report on their liaison relationships at each Board meeting. Board members must attend the regular planning and priorities meetings to remain informed regarding ongoing Association initiatives. For ongoing continuity, Board members are expected to use methods of communication provided by the ACA (i.e., official publications, office, website members-only site, Facebook page, etc.) to streamline records creation and storage and to consolidate communication activities.

Secretariat

To promote accountability and transparency, the Executive Director reports to the President on activities and matters related to Association operations and office, the day-to-day delivery of services to members and subscribers, and issues related to support provided to the Board and committees relating to the operational, financial and strategic activities of the Association. All other staff members and contractors report to the Executive Director. The Executive Director's report to the President must include a summary of the communications activities undertaken by the Secretariat.

The Secretariat is responsible for facilitating the flow of information to the Board, the committees, the membership, and non-members. It plays a central role in preparing minutes and other documents for consideration of the Board at its meetings, managing the Association's publications from inception to final distribution, providing consistency in communications, coordinating selected activities of committees, student chapters and special interest sections, and providing a public face to the Association. The Secretariat offices act as a central point for official Association records, in either electronic or hardcopy formats. For ongoing continuity, the Secretariat is expected to use methods of communication provided by the Association (i.e., official publications, office, website, members-only site, Facebook page, etc.) to streamline records creation and storage and to consolidate communication activities.



Committees / Student Chapters / SIS

Chairs of Association committees, student chapters, and special interest sections are responsible for managing the flow of communication about their activities to the members of these groups as well as to their liaison on the Association Board. As part of their leadership responsibilities, Chairs are required to maintain regular contact with their designated Board liaison as well as the members of their group in order to promote openness, networking and dialogue within the community. While an annual report is the minimum documentation required from these groups, additional communications between the Board liaison and members is expected between annual reports in order to communicate goals and initiatives on a more frequent basis and provide more transparent governance. Chairs are also expected to review the Association's website and other online content about their groups and ensure its accuracy.

Selected chairs and members of these groups (or designates) may attend the planning and priorities meetings held by the Association to orient new members, plan strategic initiatives, and facilitate the flow of information across the Association. The selection of which groups attend is at the discretion of the Board, and groups attending the planning and priorities meetings will vary from meeting to meeting and year to year depending on the need for that group to meet.

Where communications are a large component of the mandate of a committee (such as the Archivaria Editorial Board), student chapter, or special interest section, these groups must address these practices in its operations guide.

While the Board liaison is the primary contact of these groups regarding any questions, the work of these groups necessarily involves the Secretariat, the Board of Directors, and other committees, and communication between these groups is encouraged to further the goals of the Association. Any external communications that these groups want to initiate must be approved and led by the President.

Members

As the primary stakeholders of the Association, members must have a variety of ways and means to communicate with the Association, the Board, its committees, student chapters, special interest sections, and other members. The Association must facilitate member communication through face-to-face events (annual meeting, member input sessions), online opportunities (Association website, members-only site, social media outlets) as well as disseminated communications to members (publications, listserv postings, and direct regular mail and emails). Communication to members is a shared responsibility between the Board, the Secretariat, committees, student chapters, the special interest sections and the members themselves, as each component has specific information to share at specific times.



While the Association and its internal structures have responsibilities to communicate with members and to provide opportunities for input, members also bear a responsibility to seek out information, ask questions, and participate in the business of the Association in an informed manner. To promote transparency and good governance, the Association must respond to a member with the information requested whenever the release of that information is allowable by legislation and existing Association policies and procedures.

Association members may choose a variety of methods to communicate with the Association that may or may not follow the lines of communication outlined above. In general, for questions related to Association policy or advocacy, members should contact the President or a member of the Board of Directors. For matters pertaining to membership, conference, subscriptions, publications or similar day-to-day operational interactions, members should contact the Executive Director or a designated member of the Secretariat.

In the event that a member with a specific question contacts an incorrect party, that party will forward the question to the correct party within the Association. However, if the question can be answered correctly by the incorrect party, an answer will be sent to the member in the interests of providing a timely response, but the response will be cc'ed to the right party as a failsafe to ensure the answer is correct and the question has been dealt with properly.

Related policies:

Volunteer Code of Conduct
Brand Policy
Social Media Policy
Advocacy Policy
Policy to Protect Personal Information