

LA as Subject Archives Forum

CHARTER

Approved April 13, 2010

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 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 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 online 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 online 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 listed in the LA as Subject Online Directory are automatically assumed to be members.

Members 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 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 within 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 as Forum Chairperson or as a member of 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 LA as Subject Archives Forum shall hold regular meetings that shall be run by the 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 are 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 member of the Executive Committee, either at regular meetings or individually.

The 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 Archives Forum Chairperson is elected directly by the general membership and serves as the Chair of the Executive Committee. S/he shall: set Forum agendas with input from members of the Executive Committee and/or the general membership; manage the process of filling vacancies among the elected positions on the Executive Committee 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 Host Institution.

If for any reason the Forum Chairperson vacates her/his office prior to the end of his/her term, the LA as Subject Coordinator, as Vice Chairperson of the Executive Committee, shall expedite the process of nominating and electing a new Chairperson.

C. LA as Subject Coordinator

The **LA as Subject Coordinator** is employed by the Host Institution and participates as a non-voting member of the Executive Committee. The primary duties of the Coordinator are:

- To serve as deputy to the Forum Chairperson, chairing meetings in the Chairperson's absence;
- To serve as liaison and coordinate communications between the Forum, the Host Institution, and the general membership;
- To coordinate all Forum projects, events, and meetings;
- To serve on Ad Hoc committees as needed;
- To coordinate the continuous updating of the online Directory, web site and listserv with Host Institution administrators;
- To take minutes of general and Executive Committee meetings, and to document all official Executive Committee business and communications;
- To partner with the Host Institution's Communications and Public Programming staff and other departments, as appropriate, to develop, implement, and promote LA as Subject-related events, including the Los Angeles Archives Bazaar.

In the selection and hiring of the LAAS Coordinator, the Forum Chairperson shall serve on the Search Committee of the Host Institution.

The Coordinator cannot represent the Host Institution's membership interests. A separate representative for the Host Institution as a member of the LA as Subject Archives Forum is recommended.

D. Executive Committee

The LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be governed and administered by the 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, the non-voting Coordinator, and from one (1) to five (5) additional voting members. No more than half the members of the Executive Committee may be employees of the Host Institution. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Coordinator shall convene and run

Executive Committee meetings. If neither the Chairperson nor the Coordinator 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 the case of tie votes taken by the Executive Committee, the Forum Chairperson shall decide the issue with an additional vote. The Coordinator is a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

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.

General members of the Forum are encouraged to recommend agenda items to the Forum Chairperson, the Coordinator, or any other 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 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.), and by overseeing the update and maintenance of the online database.

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 the Executive Committee or from volunteers among the Forum general membership.

- **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. To 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.) To supervise updates to the online 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 online database and website, hosting events that bring together archivists, researchers, and the public, and arranging tours of archives, collections, and exhibitions.

- **Services to Archives**

To promote services such as training workshops for archives with LA-focused collections on such issues as preservation, documentation, exhibition, fundraising, and public outreach. Where such services are provided by other organizations, this committee shall seek to avoid duplication of efforts by co-sponsoring, coordinating and publicizing those services to Forum members and avoid duplication.

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

To 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. To help to discover and develop new collections.

- **Advocacy**

To advocate for the interests of archives with LA-focused collections through professional and educational organizations whose activities affect the well-being of member archives. To support member or other institutions, public or private, whose archives are at risk for any reason. To collaborate with other organizations doing similar work. To 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

The LA as Subject Archives Forum Chairperson, and all other members of the Executive Committee, with the exception of the Coordinator, are elected by the general membership, and shall serve for two-year, staggered, renewable terms. The Coordinator is not elected, but shall be recruited and employed by the Host Institution [See § III.C: LA as Subject Coordinator].

A. Terms of Office

The term of office for all elected officers of the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be two years, and shall run from the first Forum meeting in August of the year in which the officer is elected to the first Forum meeting in August two years later. [For officers elected in 2010, the term shall run from the first Forum meeting in July 2010 to the first Forum meeting in August 2012]. Elections will be held every June to fill any vacancies caused by the completion of terms of office or by resignation.

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 (i.e., six (6) minus the number of unexpired terms).

B. Election Procedures

Elections shall be held annually at the Annual General Meeting in June.

During the three to six months preceding each annual Forum election, the Executive Committee and Coordinator shall serve as the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee, canvassing the general membership to identify persons willing to serve as Forum Chairperson and as members of the Executive Committee. All officers shall be elected by the full membership through electronic balloting prior to, and supplemented by print balloting at, the Annual General Meeting in June. 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 Host Institution.

Any Forum member in good standing may nominate to the Ad Hoc Nominating Committee a candidate for election, provided this nomination is made not later than three weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

The Ad Hoc Nominating Committee shall ensure that the number of candidates for the Executive Committee who are employees of the Host Institution is not such that, as a result of the election, employees of the Host Institution will constitute a majority of the Executive Committee.

The total number of nominees for membership on the Executive Committee shall be no fewer 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, and submit with this confirmation a brief (no more than 100-word) statement of his/her primary organizational affiliation (including "independent"), and reasons for wishing to serve as a Forum officer. The Ad Hoc Nominating Committee shall include these

statements in the slate that is distributed to the full membership two weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting.

Voting shall be by secret ballot. A member may vote electronically prior to the Annual General Meeting, or by paper ballot distributed to all members present at the Annual General Meeting. An electronic ballot will be created by the Coordinator and administered by the Host Institution. Electronic ballots may be submitted to the Coordinator up until one hour prior to the beginning of the Annual General Meeting. The Coordinator will also create a paper ballot, to be printed on regular 8.5x11 inch office paper, of any uniform color. Members attending the Annual General Meeting who have not cast an electronic ballot may vote by marking these paper ballots, folding them in half, and submitting them to the Coordinator. Immediately upon collection of all marked paper ballots, the Coordinator shall count all ballots received, both electronic and paper, in full view of the membership attending the Annual General Meeting. The Coordinator shall call out the totals for each candidate, and the Forum Chairperson shall note these and announce the results to the full membership immediately upon completion of the count. In the case of a tie, 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 Coordinator, or, in that person's absence, 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 other committee 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 Coordinator for posting 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 may be held more often if the Committee members agree that more meetings are necessary for any reason. The precise day shall be at the discretion of the Executive Committee, but these meetings shall be spaced evenly across the calendar year, with at least one meeting held during each quarter.

General membership 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 membership meetings among the member archives, depending on availability and capacity. A cosponsored workshop or any other special event may be scheduled either as a general membership meeting or apart from the general membership meeting schedule.

At least one Forum general membership 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 membership meetings shall be set by the Executive Committee and publicized to the general membership by the end of January of each year.

The LA as Subject Archives Forum shall hold one plenary Annual General Meeting in June 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.

VII. Implementation of this Charter

This revised Charter of 2010 is to codify amendments voted on by the General Membership in November 2007, effective in 2008.

In addition, amendments to the Charter to codify electronic balloting and modify the role of the liaison/coordinator previously titled "Managing Director" have been distributed to the general membership via the listserv for examination, and the proposed revisions were reviewed by the Executive Committee prior to its April 13, 2010, meeting. These amendments and revisions were discussed and a vote taken to implement the changes at the general membership meeting of April 13, 2010.

This Charter shall become effective immediately by vote of the general membership at the general membership meeting of April 13, 2010, and its full text shall be posted by May 27, 2010, on the LA as Subject website.

Any previous versions of the charter and 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, 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, they shall be submitted to the full membership at least one month prior to the June 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 immediately and the newly revised Charter shall be posted on the LA as Subject website promptly thereafter.

APPENDIX: CONTACT INFORMATION

The Executive Committee Members are listed on the LA as Subject website with full contact information. The primary contact person for the LA as Subject Archives Forum shall be the LA as Subject Coordinator.