

Archival Workers Emergency Fund Organizing Committee Annual Report, 2020-2021

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2021



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Overview

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States, as repositories were closing and many archival workers were losing their jobs or getting furloughed, Jessica Chapel and Lydia Tang began brainstorming for a mutual aid fund for archival workers, noting that SAA had a fund for archival repositories in crisis but not for individual workers. Responding to Jessica Chapel's posts on social media and professional listservs, a group of volunteer archival workers gathered in March 2020 to create the Archival Workers Emergency Fund ("AWE Fund").

After a whirlwind number of days drafting the proposal to the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and with generous seed money from the SAA Foundation, the Fund was established. With the support of over 800 individual donors, 26 SAA Sections, many regional archival and allied nonprofit organizations, collectively we have raised over \$140,000 and directly assisted over 176 archival workers in need. This number is simply astounding and it is due greatly to the community rallying around this fund.

While the AWE Fund itself is administered by the SAA Foundation, the ad hoc AWE Fund Organizing Committee continues to meet regularly to creatively and energetically fundraise, organize discussion panels, and issue surveys tracking the impact of the pandemic on archival workers.

The Review Committee consisting of members of the Organizing Committee and Foundation Board, created an [initial report](#) for the SAA Foundation Board in November 2020 to assess its effectiveness as a fund and successfully advocated for its continuation. This Organizing Committee report overlaps somewhat with content from the SAA report, but primarily is intended to acknowledge the activities of the volunteer Organizing Committee over the span of the AWE Fund's first year and transparently communicate with our colleagues who so generously have made this fund possible.

Fundraising and Outreach

The principal purpose of the Archival Workers Emergency Fund is to distribute cash grants to archival workers in financial crisis due to COVID-19. Thus, one of the core priorities of the AWE Fund Organizing Committee is to fundraise to ensure donations outpace need. Our goal is that every eligible applicant receives funding and that ideally no applicant must wait longer than two weeks to receive funds. Remarkably, we have been successful in meeting our goals and applicants' needs.

This is greatly due to the creativity and energy of the Organizing Committee in mobilizing networks of support by compiling a contact list of student chapter organizations, regional

archival, vendors and allied nonprofit organizations, to signal boost and donate for the cause. Throughout this process, Carady DeSimone volunteered her talents in graphic design to create the recognizable AWE Fund logo and endearing images for our various fundraising campaigns such as Coffee for Colleagues.



Applications for funding are reviewed by a committee made up of members of the AWE Fund Organizing Committee and the SAA Foundation Board. Applications are reviewed on a weekly basis based on the [publicly available rubric](#). Applications are submitted and reviewed through the SmarterSelect application software used by SAA which protects the privacy of applicants by withholding personally identifying information from Review Committee members.

As of April 1, 2021, the Archival Workers Emergency Fund Review Committee has approved 176 applicants and disbursed a total of \$147,625. Grants are awarded in the amount requested by the applicant, up to \$1,000. Currently, applicants are only eligible to receive one grant during the pilot period of the AWE Fund (April 15, 2020 - June 30, 2021).

Donating to the AWE Fund

Currently, there are two ways to donate to the AWE Fund: 1) through the [Society of American Archivists' website](#), or 2) through the [Coffee for Colleagues \(Tea on Me\) campaign](#), hosted at GoFundMe Charity.

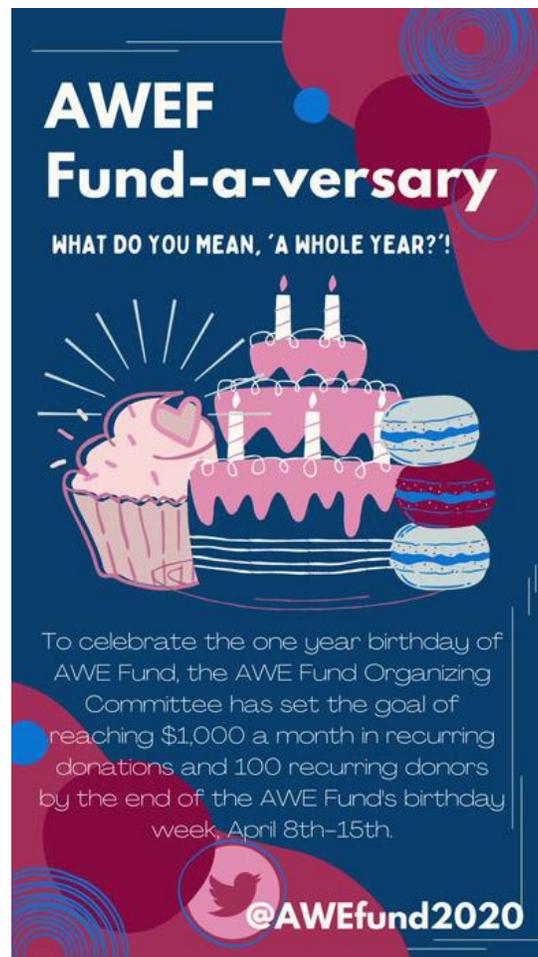
Donating Directly to SAA

If donations are made through the SAA website, 100% of the donation goes to the AWE Fund and eventually into the hands of approved applicants. The majority of donations made to the

AWE Fund in its first ten months were made through direct donation to SAA. Some of these donations were made by individuals and some were made by regional archival organizations and allied organizations.

Coffee for Colleagues (Tea on Me) Campaign

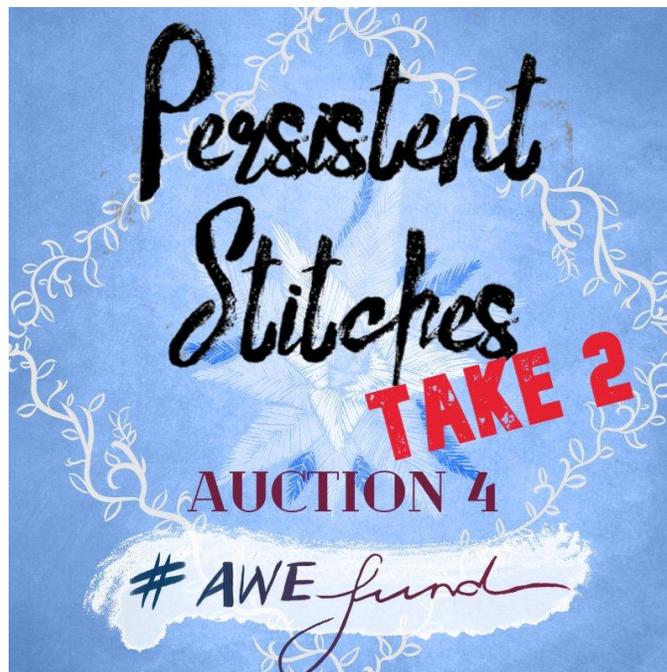
Since the SAA interface does not allow for recurring donations, we established a GoFundMe Charity campaign to support this donation approach. The idea is that while making a large donation can be difficult for many individuals, committing to smaller recurring donations is doable and actually more sustainable for the fund. To that end, AWE Fund organizers reached out to GoFundMe and arranged for the minimum recurring donation for our campaign to be reduced from \$10 to \$5. Currently, Coffee for Colleagues (Tea on Me) brings in \$374/month from 30 committed “Caffeinators” (recurring donors) with individual recurring donations tend to range from \$5-\$25 per month. The GoFundMe Charity platform assesses a 1.9% + \$0.30 transaction fee per transaction, which amounts to about 2% of the total raised funds given the average donation amount of \$21.00. The remaining 98% of funds donated through the Coffee for Colleagues (Tea on Me) campaign are transferred to SAA on a regular basis.



To celebrate the one year anniversary of AWE Fund, the AWE Fund Organizing Committee announced a special birthday campaign in April 2021. Organizers set the goal of \$1,000 a month in recurring donations and 100 recurring donors by the end of the AWE Fund's birthday week, April 8th-15th. The birthday campaign uses the same link as the ongoing campaign and is publicized on the [AWE Fund Organizing Committee birthday blog post](#).

Persistent Stitches #Auction4AWEfund Craft Auctions

In July 2020 the AWE Fund Organizing Committee teamed up with the crafting collaborative [Persistent Stitches](#) (also run by Anna Clutterbuck-Cook) to host an online auction fundraiser, [#Auction4AWEfund](#). Crafters donated a variety of items to the auction which was held July 1-4, 2020 to coincide with the start of FY21 and the 4th of July holiday weekend. The auction offered 62 items and generated \$2,165.50 in donations to the AWE Fund. The success of this event led to a second auction on February 5-10, 2021. The #Auction4AWEfund #Take2 event offered over 70 items and raised an additional \$1,312.50 for the fund.



Surveys

To track the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on archival workers, the AWE Fund Organizing Committee has created and launched two surveys to date. The summary of the summer 2020 survey is available [on our website](#).

The summary of the second survey will be available on the AWE Fund site in the spring of 2021.

Question and Answer Panels

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the AWE Fund Organizing Committee has sponsored occasional Question & Answer panels to support outreach, advocacy and networking among archives, museum and library workers.

We are currently accepting self-nominations for speakers for future discussion panels. Applications will be considered on a rolling basis. To self-nominate, please submit this [speaker nomination form](#).

[“LAM Mutual Aid & Solidarity”](#) (July 2020) featured Callan Bignoli (Protect Library Workers), Anna Clutterbuck-Cook (AWE Fund), John Chrastka (EveryLibrary’s HALO Fund), and Paula Santos (Museum Workers Speak). Panelists discussed mutual aid models of community care and community-building solidarity efforts among library, archives, and museum workers.

[“Making and Talking Money: LAM Salary Transparency”](#) (September 2020) featuring Brenda Flora (Association of Moving Image Archivists Advocacy Committee); Elena Colón-Marrero and Melissa Gonzales (Society of American Archivists Archival Compensation Task Force); and Michelle Millar Fisher (Art + Museum Transparency). Panelists discussed salary transparency efforts within libraries, archives, and museums organizations and spaces.

[“Disclose This! Advancing Disability Awareness in Libraries and Archives”](#) (October 2020) included Jasmine Clark (chair, DLF Digital Accessibility Working Group); Michelle Ganz (chair, SAA Accessibility & Disability Section); and Karina Hagelin (librarian, activist, and organizer). Panelists discussed disability awareness and representation in libraries and archives, the intersection of race and disability, the politics of disclosure, and advocacy for self and others, and answered questions from the audience during the Q&A portion of the event.

In December, we organized “Countering Crises with AWE: The AWE Fund Retrospective” (not recorded). This panel discussion featured members of the Archival Workers Emergency Fund Organizing Committee and recapped the work of the fund organizers and the impact of the AWE Fund within the archival field. Panelists and attendees also discussed ideas for how to evolve the fund sustainably into the future. Panelists included: Jessica Chapel, Anna J. Clutterbuck-Cook, Courtney Dean, and Lydia Tang. Jennifer Wachtel moderated the panel and Sarah McLusky and Steve Duckworth facilitated.

Recognition and Media Coverage

The AWE Fund was honored by a [Society of American Archivists’ Council Resolution](#) in August 2020 and has been featured in the following selected publications:

Peet, Lisa. “Emergency Fund Launches to Help Archival Workers Facing Financial Difficulties During COVID-19.” *Library Journal*. April 29, 2020.

<https://www.libraryjournal.com/?detailStory=Emergency-Fund-Launches-to-Help-Archival-Workers-Facing-Financial-Difficulties-During-COVID-19>

Ferraiolo, Nicole Kang. "Archival Workers Emergency Fund." Interview with Jessica Chapel and Lydia Tang. (Re)Collections blog post. *CLIR*. May 4, 2020.

<https://www.clir.org/2020/05/archival-workers-emergency-fund/>

"Archival Workers Emergency Fund." Interview with Anna Clutterbuck-Cook and Lydia Tang. *Archives in Context*. Podcast audio. Season 5, Episode 1. November 25, 2020.

<https://archivesincontext.archivists.org/2020/11/25/season-5-episode-1-archival-workers-emergency-fund/>

Dean, Courtney and Carli Lowe. "Standing Together in Awe." Issues and Advocacy Section blog post. August 31, 2020.

<https://issuesandadvocacy.wordpress.com/2020/08/31/icymi-standing-together-in-awe/>

Future steps

As the pandemic and AWE Fund stretches beyond a single year, the AWE Fund Organizing Committee continues to actively fundraise and search for the next step in its evolution. The initial pilot period was extended by SAA to June 2021 and we look forward with anxious optimism to what lies ahead. The pandemic, exacerbated by concurrent acts of racist violence, natural disasters, employer budget volatility, and continuing inequity relating to contingent and precarious labor practices within the field, demonstrates the ongoing need for this fund and the necessity to advocate for expanding its scope beyond "just" addressing the pandemic.

Thank you so much for reading our first annual report. This fund has persisted thanks to your support, whether it is monetary donations, crafts, your expertise, and your passion, and the Organizing Committee looks forward to learning and growing together with you in this next year. If you would like to join us, we welcome new members to our team! [Join our Google Group](#) (and/or see our [welcome](#) document) to attend future Organizing Committee meetings. You can also get in touch with us at awefund@gmail.com.

In solidarity,

The Archival Workers Emergency Fund Organizing Committee