President's Page

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Remarks delivered by David McCartney, president of MAC, at the annual Members' Meeting in Chicago on March 23:

Good afternoon. Each year at this time we take stock of our organization's activities, goals, and accomplishments. And each year we remind ourselves that we at MAC strive to do better for our members and for our profession in providing educational opportunities, networking opportunities, and professional development. We strive to seek out places of community within our profession for people of color, for LGBTQ members, for those who are disabled, for those who practice the religion of their choice. These are among the attributes that constitute what we hope and what we expect to be as a strong, diverse, and supportive organization.

MAC, however, does not flourish on its own. It is not an independent, free agent. We are not in a bubble. For that matter, MAC represents more than a segment of the information service realm. Indeed, we are part of an immeasurable, interdependent world, and like any other organization or entity, the circumstances that world presents to us will allow us to thrive, to be challenged, or both.

Every day, we see it in the 24-hour news cycles, on our Facebook feed, and elsewhere on social media: events originating from the White House, a golf course somewhere, or the halls of Congress that affect MAC's members, like all American citizens and visitors, events that threaten many of us.

And so, for that reason, today I will address not only the state of MAC, but also a larger question for us to consider in these times: how do we as archivists thrive while we are being challenged? I will suggest that these are not mutually exclusive conditions, but rather an opportunity for us to grow through mutual support among ourselves and through our own actions.

I'll begin with MAC specifically.

In 2016, Council adopted its five-year strategic plan, encompassing membership, education, publications, marketing and outreach, and administration.

As noted by Lisa Carter in the Membership Committee report earlier in our meeting, we have reversed a downward trend that we have been experiencing in recent years, and we can now report an increase in our membership in 2018, thanks to an increase in new members and our efforts to encourage them to renew. Under Matt Gorzalski's leadership, the Membership Committee is also considering additional strategies to encourage new members by reaching out to nonmembers who have participated in MAC Symposia and other events. We recognize the dynamic nature of our profession and, in doing so, we continue to seek out ways to attract members.

(Continued on page 5)

President's Page

(Continued from page 2)

The Education Committee has made possible a variety of programs both here at Chicago and at other locations in the region—including five workshops, three open forums, and three Speakers Bureau events this spring and later this year in Minneapolis; Bay City, Michigan; and St. Louis. The committee is currently reviewing data from its recent survey of MAC members to determine future prospects for topics and events.

Our publications, specifically the *MAC Newsletter,* are becoming more accessible. Efforts are underway to deliver the newsletter via an open platform hosted by Iowa State University's Parks Library, which will make it available online to all.

Yesterday, just before the plenary session, I experienced a moment of joy, and my hope is that others experienced it as well. Although I'm not currently involved with the MAC Pals Program as a mentor, I decided to step into the meet-up room shortly after 1:00 to see how things were going. You might say I was a hall monitor. The atmosphere in the room was energetic, and I sensed so much enthusiasm and vitality while eavesdropping on some of the conversations. And don't worry—what we say in Chicago stays in Chicago. My sincere hope is that those who have signed up as mentees in the Pals program have benefited, and will continue to benefit, from it. Professional development begins with meeting and supporting those who are new to our profession, whether they are students, recent graduates, or—like me 20 years ago—entering the field as a second or third or fourth career.

If you feel that you as a mentee did not obtain what you were hoping for, please let a MAC Pal or me know. We'll be happy to help answer any questions you might have, whether about MAC or about our profession.

Council yesterday discussed at length a proposal to implement a Code of Conduct with respect to any events that are sponsored or cosponsored by MAC, because we encourage and expect mutual respect among our colleagues. Council is at this point considering adding language to the proposed code that will outline response procedures. When finalized and approved, the code will be added to our website, and we will publicize it through our membership e-mail and other outlets.

A few minutes ago, in my opening remarks, I alluded to the circumstances of the world that we are confronting currently. Can we thrive when we are being challenged? What does our Constitution mean in a time when the president's behavior threatens it? The ouster of a former FBI deputy director [in March] and threats to fire the attorney general, the deputy attorney, and the special counsel who is investigating the president and his associates all contribute to a climate of mistrust, fear, and uncertainty. We are hearing demands for special treatment and protection from investigation. Those of us in this room who are old enough to remember the Saturday Night Massacre in the final months of Richard Nixon's presidency know what abuses of power can bring. But even in the darkest days of the Watergate scandal, we had confidence in a system of constitutional checks and balances. I was 18 at the time and admittedly naïve, but I too had confidence that our system and institutions would prevail.

At times today, however, I am frankly not so sure. And I know I am not alone.

An article published [in March] by *The Atlantic* offers a perspective on this that I believe is both realistic and hopeful. Quinta Jurecic and Benjamin Wittes write of constitutional infection, as opposed to constitutional crisis. They note that the term "constitutional crisis" carries cultural and emotional weight, but doesn't address satisfactorily the nature of what we as a nation, and as a profession, are experiencing. By characterizing today's circumstances as an "infection," we recognize that our Constitution is at risk and under assault on many fronts, but also that antibodies exist to bring that infection under control. This is what the authors express as a hopeful yet realistic path for us as a nation, and this is where we as archivists have a role, as we continue to preserve, maintain, and provide access to essential records that guide us based upon our collective experiences.

Natalie Moore's presentation yesterday underscores the value of those essential records, which teach us—remind us—of the consequences of policy. We understand that the New Deal codified racial segregation through its housing policies. We note the development of the interstate highway system, which has caused the destruction of scores of urban communities since the 1950s. We recognize state statutes that codified Jim Crow and the social conventions that continue to do so today. Documentation of these policies and behaviors are essential if we hope, as a society, to counter constitutional and statutory assaults.

(Continued on page 12)