Transcript of ArchivesSpace Governance Board-Community Session

SPEAKERS
Julia Novakovic, Laurie Arp, Annie Benefiel, Sean Quimby, Natalie Adams, Christine Di Bella

Julia Novakovic  00:04
So to briefly go over our agenda for the session, Laurie Arp, our director of DuraSpace Community Supported Programs at LYRASIS, she's going to cover the governance overview and the roles of some of the board members and the User and Technical Advisory Councils and sub-teams, and then also LYRASIS as our organizational home. Then our outgoing chair, Sean Quimby, who's the director of Rare Books and Manuscripts library at Columbia University. He's going to report on recent topics of discussion and initiatives from the board. We'd also like to give you an opportunity to ask questions about governance, or any recent highlights that we discussed. Annie Benefiel will be our chat moderator for the open Q&A portion, there's also going to be kind of an informal trivia portion, you know, no pressure, hosted by Natalie Adams. And lastly, we'll circle back to all five of our member representatives, we're going to break out into separate sections so that you can kind of get to know and chat with the Governance Board member who represents your membership level, so you can share your thoughts and concerns you might have with your rep, then.

So we're going to be recording the main room of this session. But we'll stop recording right before the breakout rooms. Oh my gosh, I'm so sorry, Sean, I brought the wrong thing down for Sean's role, he's actually the AUL for special collections at UPenn. And so my apologies for my outdated information. Anyway, so like I mentioned, we're going to be recording the main session here. But when we get to the breakout rooms, we're going to stop recording there, so, so don't worry about anything that comes up, then it's all confidential, or, you know, not recorded. So anyway, we hope that you'll find this all informative and useful. But without further ado, here is Laurie.

Laurie Arp  01:55
Great, thanks, Julia. The board members asked me to kind of cover some info that is frequently confusing or misunderstood. So if this is something you already know, excellent, you'll do great in the no pressure quiz. But for those of you who are new to it, or need some clarification, we're happy to do that.

This is one of my favorite images, our art designer did this. And I'm a big polka dot fan. So I just think it's great because there's polka dots, but it's trying to convey kind of all the communities within the communities of ArchivesSpace. There's so many different ways to participate. And they're all kind of overlapping and involved with each other. But I hope you'll notice that ArchivesSpace members are the heart of it all. Those are the core. That's what makes this community work and everything else possible. But you'll see kind of involved in the larger community or the User Advisory Council, the Technical
Advisory Council, the Governance Board, LYRASIS, Nominating Committee, Registered Service Providers, and then roles within the membership of user, tester, code contributor.

So let me chat a little bit about the Governance Board. The purpose of a governance board is to provide leadership for the ArchivesSpace community and advise LYRASIS, the organizational home, on the ongoing development and support of ArchivesSpace. So the board does big strategic things like sets, membership policies, that we have a membership model, what that is involved with, they also approve and review the budget and resource allocation. So they're the ones that really decide how funds get spent, and on what priorities overall. And then advises on program initiatives, always, always always with a focus on meeting the needs of a broad and diverse spectrum of archival institutions in a balanced and equitable manner. And they take that very seriously. I remember our former chair, Carol Mandel, always used to say, no archives left behind, it's really important to remember that we have really big institutions and really small institutions and all the ones in between, and we really want to meet everyone's needs, which is a challenge, but the board is up for it. And that's always what they're trying to accomplish.

So when you think of the board, the board isn't necessarily thinking like, hey, what feature requests are we going to approve? Or what date is this event? That's not their focus. They're really looking at the long-term vision, long term sustainability, how do we pay for it? And also the diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility concerns.

Just so you know a little more about the board. It's an eight-member board, five elected members representing the membership levels, and one permanent member from each of the partner institutions, and then also somebody from LYRASIS. So you're saying “But who are those people, Laurie?” and I will tell you. The current board members include Natalie from University of Cambridge who represents a very large member level and we're particularly excited that Natalie joined us as our first representative outside, I was going to say North America but just out of the US, so we're especially happy to have somebody represented from overseas. Annie represents the medium membership level. She's going to be next year's chair. We're excited about that. Austin is representing New York University. That sounded weird when I said it. I'm just used to saying NYU. And Gordon represents the large membership level. Erik is again, a partner from UC San Diego. Julia represents the small membership level. Sean, who is our chair this year. And I didn't check to make sure I had the proper attribution, but it's in there. Erin Tripp is the interim CEO for LYRASIS. And so she represents the organizational home. Before it was Robert Miller. And then we're conducting a search for a new CEO. So the new CEO would be the representative there. And then Nick, who represents the very small member level, you're going to hear all those names again, because the whole point of this session is to make sure you are clear on who your members are. So that's the first time you'll hear it. Just a little sense of the organization of the board.

We do have quarterly meetings. So we have four a year, we instituted a few years ago, kind of succession planning to make sure that we always had continuity and governance. So we have a vice chair. And the whole idea is the vice chair really shadows the chair for a year, then becomes chair, so they've kind of eased into it. And then whoever's the chair the following year, becomes the former chair, and they also serve as the head of the nominating committee. So a little sense of continuity. Those
elected representatives have three-year terms and all of the members submit conflict of interest forms annually, so you can be certain that if there's any conflicts, potentially they are surfaced.

One of the big questions is “How does governance work with the councils?” and so this session really isn't on the councils, but I want to kind of give a little sense of what the councils do so you understand the difference between the board and the councils. So we have the User Advisory Council and the Technical Advisory Council. The User Advisory Council's purpose is receiving, suggesting, discussing, and prioritizing ideas for software enhancements. A lot of these are very much in conjunction with TAC. So TAC and UAC are working together. They also advise on the design and delivery of user services, provide ongoing updates to user documentation, which I know is super important to people, and conducting usability testing as needed.

The TAC has kind of a slightly different angle on all those same things with the UAC. They receive suggest, discuss and vote on ideas for software enhancements, conduct user testing, identify integration points for ArchivesSpace with other systems, provide technical documentation updates, guidance to users on migration and overall technical guidance and work with the core committers group. And this is where kind of some of the nitty gritty happens in those sub teams. So the cross council sub-teams, where it's TAC and UAC, do a lot of testing. They're amazing, always kind of stick them on specific things to test right before releases, and they're amazing, and development prioritization where they really get into the nitty gritty of we want to do this, before we do this, or this request doesn't have enough information, we need more, this is really a priority. So the TAC sub teams include integrations, metadata standards and technical documentation and UAC sub teams include usability, user documentation and member engagement.

The other question we get a lot is, so what does LYRASIS do? What is an organizational home? And you can be totally forgiven for understanding that because it's kind of a made-up term. I think, actually, the Mellon Foundation might have worked with us when we were working on grants. And that's kind of the term that came up. The whole idea is LYRASIS is partnering with ArchivesSpace. In the other communities we work with, to provide services and resources to help grow, support and amplify the community. We're trying to provide the infrastructure and sustainability so that the program team is uniquely positioned to do things that only they can do for ArchivesSpace. We want them to do that. We don't want them to be like submitting a bill or sending boxes to a conference.

And so the whole idea is we provide all that infrastructure. So financial reporting, the budgeting, process, membership processing, when we hire or do contracts, we do that we provide administrative support for governance, marketing, outreach, technical resources, like the wiki, the CRM, we have grants officer so when there's grants to write or report on, we also work with portions of LYRASIS to do technical support and workshop support.

We also really try to have a community within a community of we have the aerospace community supported programs division, so ArchivesSpace, CollectionSpace, DSpace, VIVO and Fedora. We're all supported by LYRASIS. So trying to learn lessons across those different organizations. Also sustainability planning, one of our big interests is always making sure that these programs are sustainable as long as they're interested in, in community, and so trying to always help with that. So I
jumped ahead. That's the section that I had. I don't know if we have time for questions. But if somebody had a burning question, we could see if we had time before we go to the next section.

Annie Benefiel 10:08
You have questions, feel free to drop them in the chat. Just what I was about to say excellent. Yes. And actually,

Julia Novakovic 10:19
This is our open Q&A portion of the session. So please, by all means, if you have any questions, send them our way.

Annie Benefiel 10:27
We're all here to help. We'll give it a few more seconds, just in case anybody's busily writing. But if we don't have any questions, I think we can move on to Sean. And if any questions pop up at any time, feel free to drop them in the chat and we'll address them at a good stopping point.

Sean Quimby 11:02
So maybe I'll get started. So good morning, everyone, or afternoon or evening, I guess. To Natalie. Well, not quite almost evening. So I'm Sean Quimby. I'm the, as we've hashed out in the chat, and through Laurie, I have a very long title. It's actually even longer than the one that that Laurie gave, but at the University of Pennsylvania, and I am the very recent past chair of the governance board. So I'll just begin by saying how glad I am to be here. I've been asked to talk about recent board initiatives, one of which I should say, is actually this very session. several board members have felt that we really, maybe haven't created enough opportunities to meet face to face or screen to screen with the broader archives-based community. And we wanted to demystify what it is that we do in hopes of facilitating that communication, and encouraging perhaps, some of you to consider serving on the governance board. I think, Annie and I think both have felt sort of coming into the experience that we did didn't really know very much about what was expected of us. And so I'm so that is certainly one of the objectives here is to sort of demystify that.

Okay, so as Laurie's presentation made clear, one of the board's most fundamental responsibilities is fiduciary. Each year, we review and approve a budget proposal that balances revenue, most of which comes from membership fees against expenses, most of which takes the form of salaries for the program staff. And in my comparatively brief time on the board, the budget is tended to be very healthy, and consistently. So we've been fairly conservative in budget planning, I would say I think that the group would agree with that. And at the fiscal year 21 budget meeting, which was the summer of 2020, there was so much uncertainty around the impact of the pandemic, on institutional budgets that we impact planned for projected losses of membership revenue. And while a few institutions did have to cancel memberships, we actually have felt the impact less strongly than expected. And as a result, ArchivesSpace continues to be financially quite strong.

And then one of the benefits of sound financial management is that we're able to put resources into areas of strategic significance. So I'll take you back again, though, none of us probably want to be there to the summer of 2020. When following the murder of George Floyd and the ensuing protests,
institutions, I'm sure most of you were at institutions that issued diversity statements of one kind or another. And while this was important, and now I'm speaking solely for myself, I also was concerned that they came off as kind of superficial if they weren't also backed by some kind of material investment. And so we spent a lot of time in that board meeting talking about that issue. As I you probably know, open community calls surfaced a number of ideas relating to governance, membership, and programs into the application itself that really kind of aimed at supporting a diverse ArchivesSpace community. In fact, I think there's some 30 ideas listed on the anti-racism and inclusion initiatives page in Confluence. I can put that link in the chat I find myself referring to it fairly often. And so the board decided to invest resources in what became the diversity partnership, I had the good fortune of working with Christine and Jessica, from the program team and also Brittany Newberry from the Atlanta University Center to help scope and scaffold and raise this new program. Service providers waived hosting costs, and ArchivesSpace waived membership fees at implicitly a cost to itself and provide introductory and specialized training for the new partners in this felt really substantive in the material a way to begin to sort of address some of these issues in the archives community. And as you may know, the first cohort, which includes the Black Cultural Archives in the UK, the Detroit Sound Conservancy, Spelman College, the Weeksville Heritage Center, and Xavier University of Atlanta [sic] is shortly going to complete the first year of its sort of three-year term. And so we'll continue to there's an assessment component built into that. And the board has been in conversation with that cohort as well.

And so as I said, an ongoing discussion item has been how to make the board itself more diverse. The individual members have volunteered to talk about DEA initiatives at their institutions. I think most of us have at this point, I will give sort of special credit to Austin Booth who's described the, in more US ambitious work. And we wondered if the diversity partnership program might be one way to seed a more diverse board. But in our conversations with the members, it seems as though they're so busy getting up and running with the application itself that, you know, we're going to give them a full year and then invite them to attend a future board meeting. So that we can kind of engage with that issue. I think more substantively. And you know, I'll also say that, you know, the board has had conversations about the both the sort of benefits and risks of different approaches to trying to see the more diverse board, say carving out a seat for minority serving institutions. On the one hand, that might ensure representation. But on the other hand, there might be some risk of kind of tokenism that might be self-defeating ultimately. And this is like the kind of issue where I think we all would really welcome input from the community. It's urgent. And we know there are a lot of opinions and ideas out there. And the more that we hear, the more intelligently we can discuss these issues.

Okay. So I mentioned earlier today that the that this session came out of the conversations that we've had about demystifying our role, and so too, is the director position descriptions that you saw that Laurie mentioned, for chair vice chair member, I have to say, as a board member, these are really helpful because I didn't know what was expected of me when I became a board member. And you know, so we hope that those are resources not only to, you know, people who are find themselves new board members, but also as a way to sort of help answer questions that anyone who might be interested in potentially serving on the governance board might have.

Okay, so some other recent board business has included amending the bylaws to reflect the departure of a founding member, the University of Illinois, Urbana Champaign, which had decided to discontinue
its use of as part of a broader IT architecture strategy. And this involves removing references to Illinois in articles two and five of the bylaws for ArchivesSpace. I think at the next meeting, we recommended a commendation or for John Wilkin, the university librarian Illinois has been such a really important member of the board. We also have recently considered a proposal relating to the education program membership, which really more specifically is targeted at institutions. I mean, actually, like Illinois Urbana- Champaign I’m an alumnus of their I school that would create educational sandboxes for member institutions that are teaching train archivists who will go out into the world professionally.

And then in the last week's meeting, we considered a proposal to move to a more modular community wide virtual training model. This is for new implementers training will be offered at a fee with a reduced price for member institutions. And, and this particular aspect of the proposal, I think touches on sort of the longer term strategic discussions that the board is kind of beginning to have around incentivizing membership. And, again, this is this is something that we would really profit from a community wide discussion. You know, we've noticed that some institutions appear to feel that they have to choose between paying for hosting or paying for membership. And as a result, we, I think, as a board need to think more deliberately about how our decisions might explicitly or implicitly impact the perceived value of membership. And so as I say, this is this is the kind of conversation that will profit from direct community engagement.

Another evolving conversation, Laurie also kind of referenced Natalie's role, and the significance of it as a first non-US-based member on the governance board. And that is really kind of the expanding the international user base of ArchivesSpace, Natalie gave a presentation at the third quarter meeting, about Cambridge’s implementation of ArchivesSpace. And one of the issues that surfaced was, was ArchivesSpace has compatibility with standards that are deployed more commonly internationally like atom or access to memory. And so how and whether to invest resources and making ArchivesSpace more compatible with those standards and at what expense, both resources and time and attention is something that the board will need to continue to discuss. And so that, you know, as we move into serving more international communities that that that we do so mindfully.

And then the last thing I guess, I'll say is that, you know, with the departure of Robert Miller as the CEO of LYRASIS, we begin to think about how we, the board can most effectively work with his successor and with our organizational home. Our relationship with LYRASIS is so critical, and we simply could not be as effective as we are without the hard work of the program team, including Laurie and Christine. I know I would be kind of a hopeless mess without Laurie. So. So and I think I speak on behalf of all the board members when I say that, and so I want to offer them my sincere thanks. I'll stop there and then invite any questions or comments. I've seen some action in the chat. It looks like the board description, position descriptions have been shared just great. So thank you.

Annie Benefiel 23:18
Thanks, Sean. I think we can hold for a few moments. If there are any additional questions. We did have one if you can see the chat about the board position descriptions, and there's a link to the confluence site that I posted in the chat. But we're welcome to welcome to open to all questions you might have at this point.
Sean Quimby 23:37
There's this second question there about the ArchivesSpace roadmap. This is this is the development roadmap. We have not been -- that really is community driven. I mean, I know as the board member, as the chair of the board, I felt sort of like I needed to ask that very same question. I mean, is this something that that what is our role? But we really have trusted the community to set priorities, I would say, in our attention has been much more on sort of either, you know, the fiduciary management or really on these kind of two discrete proposals that might require resources. I don't know if any of the other board members wants to talk about that. Sorry, there's a train going by. So I'm going to mute myself and see if anyone else has something to say on demand.

Annie Benefiel 24:38
I would just add on to that, that as Laurie kind of explained earlier in her portion of the presentation. It's really TAC and UAC together that kind of drive the development roadmap, and they report to the board about progress on different priorities in and that kind of filters up through the budgeting conversations that we have with the LYRASIS organizational home. And so a lot of that kind of like we, as the board are approving hires or contracts that will see through that development roadmap, if that makes sense. Or I don't know if you want to clarify that anymore.

Laurie Arp 25:25
I think you said it in a great way. We do have regular reports at each board meeting from TAC, and UAC. And Gordon Dean's is the actual, what's the term, liaison to those communities. And then the budget process is where the board approves additional resources. We've had several contractors in the last couple years, we've been happy to have the board approve those and new positions over time is what the board has approved to further the development goals that are highlighted by the community and the staff.

Annie Benefiel 26:05
Well, if there aren't any additional questions, I think I think we have time for a no pressure quiz. Just have the Jeopardy theme song,

Natalie Adams 26:16
You're making me feel very inadequate, because I don't really know what that means.

Annie Benefiel 26:22
It's an American television game show that's been on for decades,

Natalie Adams 26:25
There's a good thing about joining the ArchivesSpace governance board, you learn all sorts of things. So I am going to start the quiz in a session. But I did want to say before I do that, a very big thanks to the board for welcoming me so warmly onto it. And really to encourage anybody who's in on this call to think about joining the governance board, because I'm a relatively new joiner of the ArchivesSpace community as well. And I couldn't have been given more help, really, and Laurie was fantastic and talked me through the role of a board member, and just the first agenda so that I had a really good grasp of what we were talking about and why. And I understood what my contribution could be. And it's,
I think it's a really good professional development opportunity. So in the organization I work at, I do not have this kind of strategic role. So for me, this is a really big step up. And it's been fantastic.

So having said that, I think I'm ready to start the quiz. And extremely grateful to Christine, as always, for helping with this, we just wanted to kind of do this as a bit of a warm up for the breakout sessions, which will be coming up soon, just as a way to invite you all to think about how you interact with ArchivesSpace, and about making the most of the benefits that you have through your membership of ArchivesSpace.

So I'm ready for the first question. Christine, if you're okay to bring it up, I'll read it out as well. So which of the ArchivesSpace groups are involved in making decisions about software enhancements and priorities? Is it the governance board, the user Advisory Council, the Technical Advisory Council, or both the ArchivesSpace Technical Advisory Board and the user Advisory Council? My goodness. I'm just gonna give it a few minutes and see how we get on. This is absolutely no pressure, there's no way any of us can see what answer you have given. And it doesn't matter if you get it right or wrong.

Christine Di Bella 28:46
All right, Natalie, just let me know when you'd like to.

Natalie Adams 28:49
Yeah. I'm wondering whether the board members are going to vote as well, or whether we should maybe stop right about now. So everybody who's answered it has got it right. And Laurie had to give me a hand with this one. In fact, it is both the members of the Tech and the User Advisory Council, both of the councils or governance groups, and then members are appointed by the governance board. And in fact, we just did that at our last meeting from nominations. And the idea is that were possible both of these councils include members from each level of membership to ensure the ongoing development represents the needs of all members. So members from both councils serve on the cross counsel sub team, which is the development prioritization team. And that's the one that discusses and makes determinations on what development prior prioritize. So that kind of digs in a little bit into the question that we had before in the chat about the roadmap.

Okay, so the next one, then I'll read it out. There There we go. So can non members of ArchivesSpace be elected to serve on the governance board? What do you think? There we go. So let's call it to a hotbed. So again, a very strong, correct answer, then with people going for No, it's membership that gives you a voice in the community and the ability to advocate for the future direction of the application. So it is only ArchivesSpace members who are eligible to serve on the governance board, and participate in voting for development priorities.

And then the final one, what is your favorite benefit of being a member of the ArchivesSpace community. So this is a good way of just reminding you of all the benefits, I'll read them out, because some of the text for me at least is not visible on the screen. So being part of the ArchivesSpace users group mailing list, I like hearing how other people are using ArchivesSpace. And sharing my experiences. I definitely love the mailing list, it helped me a huge amount in the early days, or using the technical resources that are available to support me as a member, the user group mailing list, the
ArchivesSpace, Help Center, the option to request technical support if I need it. See member events and training opportunities that let me learn from others, or being an active part of a community, I know that I can have an influence on the direction of the software that I depend on. So I will give it a little bit longer so that we can see. Which comes out as a favorite, but it probably won't surprise you to learn that obviously no answer is the right answer here. We're just interested in learning a bit more about what you think. So judging by the previous questions, we got to about 88% of people filling it in, which is where we're up to now. So this is quite interesting for me. So the mailing list is coming out strongly. The member events and training opportunities are coming out strongest of all, and being an active part of the community is also coming out strongly. But we're not having using the technical resources, which is a bit of a surprise to me.

But that is it for the quiz. I hope you enjoyed taking part. I know from my own experience, it is it is coming up to five o'clock on a Friday for me. But there's nothing like joining in with something to engage my attention. And I hope that you've felt some of that as well.

Julia Novakovic 33:07
Thanks, Natalie. I guess I'll give it another second or two, if there's any other questions that folks have. If you want to put that in the chat. We're happy to answer any questions before we head to the next part. So let's see if there's nothing else right now.

Laurie, would you mind sharing the slide with the folks’ names on it? Awesome. So yeah, just a quick introduction to your member representatives. So again, your very large level is Natalie Adams of the University of Cambridge, obviously in Cambridge, England. So this is Natalie's first three year term on the board. Then next we have the large level, which is Gordon Daines who is the curator of Research and Instruction services at Brigham Young University in Utah. And this is Gordon's second three year term on the board. You might have seen his name and a lot of emails that come through the listserv for the last several years. I know that that's how I recognized him. From the medium level is Annie Benefiel. She's the Archivist for collection management in Special Collections and university archives at Grand Valley State University in Michigan. So this is Annie is first three years. Sorry, her first three year term on the board ends in June 2023. But she is our incoming Chair of the Board for the next term. Small level. That's me, Julia Novakovic. I'm the senior archivist at the Strong Museum in Rochester, New York. This is my first three year term on the board that ends in 2024. And I will actually be the vice chair shadowing Annie next year on the board. And then our very small level is Nick Zmijewski, who's the archivist at the industrial archives and library in Pennsylvania. And this is Nick's second three year term on the board as well. So that's who your member representatives are and as you mentioned we also have Sean Quimby, Austin Booth and Erik Mitchell who are also members of the board, although they're not your member level representatives.

Annie Benefiel 35:09
So I think at this point,

Julia Novakovic 35:11
we're ready to go into breakout rooms. Is that right? Gotcha. We're ready,
Christine Di Bella 35:21
I can launch them. We're ready. Okay, so everybody who was registered before has been assigned to their breakout room based on their membership level. And there are a couple of us that weren't assigned because we don't have a membership level, but the staff will figure it out. And Valerie has actually left. So see you in the breakout rooms.