



From the AMIA Board

March 23, 2017

During our recent board meeting our priority was to make sure we continued the work that our community had achieved at the 2016 annual conference. The board voted to confirm the Diversity Inclusion and Equity Statement that so many contributed to and we spent a day with the amazing DeEtta Jones learning, thinking and talking about how we could make this statement integral to AMIA. Among other extremely helpful suggestions, she challenged us to identify AMIA's shared values. As I looked back over my time with AMIA, and I see how the field has grown, I thought about how shared values can and should change over the life of an organization.

My first AMIA conference was in San Francisco in 1992. I think there were maybe 75-100 people there. I presented a paper on how the UCLA Film and Television Archive's Research and Study Center had extracted the closed caption text off of hundreds of VHS tapes containing recordings of the 1989 events in Tiananmen Square. The text was then indexed to structured keywords based on LOC subject headings using a Paradox for DOS database. Chris Horak was President that year and I made a point of introducing myself to him, at the risk of him thinking I was some kind of stalker, while we were both walking away from the hotel. I made friends at that conference that I have remained close to since - Rick Prelinger, Karon Weber, Jeanette Kopak, just to name a few. I attended every presentation because there was no need to pick streams back then. It was thrilling to listen to others who faced the same issues I did; thrilling to hear about other collections of amazing moving images. I talked to everyone I could, even the scary "Studio Boys." I had my very first business cards, after all, and I was going to use them.

When I returned to work, I felt jubilant. I felt I had entered my profession - that I had a life outside of my immediate job - a way to build my skills and flex my wings. I also felt incredibly grateful for the on-the-job-training provided through the UCLA Film and Television Archive - the only training that existed at the time. My colleagues there in the late 80s and early 90s were the best in preservation, cataloging and curatorship. I felt rededicated to my chosen field, firm in the belief that there was great opportunity and a real future.

So as we look at shared values in 2017, I think back, what were our shared values in 1992? I think the values we shared motivated us to care for our collections, work with our colleagues to create not just a professional field, but a community we could rely on for information and to build our own careers. I think we knew we were really lucky to work with moving images and have a hand in prolonging the history and culture they represented.

Even amongst our apparent differences we knew we had similarities and we knew we needed each other. We knew there were going to be disagreements between studios and large public archives;



between academic researchers and stock footage salespeople; between large archives and small ones; between experts; between traditions. And yet we found we all struggled with advocating for our collection in our respective institutions; we all were looking for best practices to care for our collections; we all were interested in serving our constituents whether they were researchers, distributors or the general public; we all felt the weight of our responsibility to save these precious and fragile artifacts.

Since then, computer technology and all that has arisen from it both technologically and culturally has had a major impact on our field. Streaming media, open source technologies, digitally captured moving images, unstructured data technologies; to name a few. Instead of sinking or dismantling a field that dealt with acetate and oxide, it has invigorated it enormously. There are more collections than ever, more people caring for them than ever, more areas of the universe touched by moving images than ever.... it's fantastic. And when I asked people in November of 2016 to tell me what their first AMIA conference was like, although there are differences, I still heard echoes of my own experiences in 1992.

And yet despite the persistence of these core values and sentiments, in 2016 we saw great tension between members of the AMIA community resulting in some difficult moments for individuals and as a community. What we learned from our mentor DeEtta and for the work we did as a Board under her guidance, is that this is a sign that an organization is in a moment of true transition. A sign that the organization's new members and veteran members may both feel left out; a sign of the changing times; a sign that we need to collectively re-assess, re-center and re-focus on our shared values and what these mean in practice.

Below are some examples of ways that we have begun to put shared values into practice since as a result of hearing from the AMIA community about what is meaningful to the membership:

- Matching community funds to make the conference more affordable
- Sessions available via live stream and online video
- Some sessions free to the community
- Sliding scale conference fees
- A conference where action in diversity inclusion and equity was central
- Re-booted first-timer event
- Lightening talks before the annual business meeting
- A single, moderated list serve
- Formal adoption of the statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

While we feel these are positive changes, we still have a long way to go. In recognition of this, and with the goal of making sure that we are the best AMIA that we can be moving into the future, we are taking



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on a Strategic Review of the organization. This Strategic Review will take place over the spring and summer of 2017 and will address among other things:

- Organizational structure
- Diversity, inclusion and equity in the organization
- Technological change
- Communication between key constituencies
- Fiscal strategy for sustainability and growth
- Membership growth
- Benefits to volunteerism

As part of this process we will be reporting to and seeking feedback from all of you. One way that we will be collecting feedback will be through a membership survey which we hope everyone will complete.

We will also be moving forward with a major overhaul of the website to help support the great work we all do, and make it more accessible to one another and everyone who is looking for us.

As we continue to represent AMIA for all its members we ask for your help and support. Sincere thanks for your contributions up to now and for continuing to be an essential part of what makes our community vibrant and valuable to all.

Andrea

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