

2020-21 Nominating Committee Annual Report

April 16, 2020

Overview

The Northwest Archivists successfully elected a new Vice-President/President-Elect (Natalia Fernandez), Secretary (Kelsey Quinn), Idaho Representative (Amy Thompson), Montana Representative (Erin Baucom), and Oregon Representative (Matthew Brock) on April 3, 2020 with 71% of the membership participating. The nominations and election followed the methods laid out in NWA Procedures Manual ver.2019-03-01. The Nominating Committee consisted of chaired by Bryce Henry (Outgoing President | Oregon member), Elizabeth Russel (Membership Coordinator | Washington member), and Jolene Kennah (Alaska member).

Nominations

The Nominating Committee opened a nominations survey in October 2019 which received 13 responses nominating 32 members. The committee then reached out in early December 2019 seeking candidates to commit by January 15, 2020. 14 candidates accepted, but then 3 of those dropped out netting a total 11 candidates. This broke down to 2 candidates each in the Vice-President, Montana, and Oregon races; 1 in Idaho (that's 1/4 of their current membership!); and 4 for Secretary.

Ballots & Distribution

This year four ballots were distributed to avoid members voting for Representatives outside their own state. The ballots were for: Idaho; Montana; Oregon; and a General ballot incorporating Alaska, Washington, and our non-northwest members. We created and distributed these ballots similarly to the last six elections using SurveyMonkey, which enabled directly connecting each NWA member's email to their ballot thus ensuring no one was voting outside their state, voting twice, or some of the other problematic issues the Committee Chair had witnessed in past elections.

Following the conclusion of the email ballot election, the Board reminded the Committee that some members might not be receiving a ballot due to their institution's blocking of SurveyMonkey. Committee Member, Elizabeth Russell, was able to personally confirm her institution was one such and that none of the members from her organization had received a ballot. Following this guidance, on March 30, 2020 the Committee issued weblinks to the ballots for members who had not yet voted. These weblinks captured an additional 11 votes, ending with 144 votes out of a total potential pool of 203 members.

Voter Turnout

Voter turnout was good this year; tying with 2018 for the highest number of votes in the last 7 years:

- 2020 - 144 votes
- 2019 - 129
- 2018 - 144

- 2017 - 101
- 2016 - 122
- 2015 - 104
- 2014 - 135 votes

Auditing

It is the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to audit all votes cast each year. The Committee did this for all four elections and were unable to identify any significant issues or discrepancies this year. As such, all ballots were counted as received.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations for the Future

Two things the Committee tried differently this year were to begin reaching out as early as possible to the membership and potential candidates, and also to provide updates to candidates about who they were running against. By soliciting candidate nominations beginning in October it ensured the Committee could easily meet the February deadline, but the hope was that it would be easier to get more candidates to commit if the election seemed as far distant as possible. By being more transparent about who was running for what, the Committee received several notes of encouragement from candidates and both current and past Board members. One not entirely unexpected downside of this seemed to be that by knowing who candidates were running against we received two last minute dropouts

Regarding what could be done differently, or better, next year; President Johnson recommended returning to a PDF ballot. The Committee believes this is a good idea that works with tools most members have access to and avoids the distribution issues associated with SurveyMonkey. A PDF ballot would be unlikely to substantially increase the workload but it would ensure better security; for example, a PDF ballot could still largely automate the tabulation process via features like Acrobat's form distribution tool while not having to rely on SurveyMonkey's opaque weblinks in order to reach every member.

It would also be a good idea moving forward to try and incorporate one of the members from this year's Nominating Committee on next year's Committee as well. This would provide some continuity and institutional memory for things like candidates who were previously approached that said, "I would be interested but not this year," and might also be useful in better avoiding any mistakes or issues from previous years.

Finally, one of the Committee's early ideas that was never followed through on was to utilize the blog to provide an additional avenue for letting people know the election was coming and, perhaps more importantly, provide candidates an optional platform to share their ideas and visions for the future. Currently, the 200 words or less candidate statements on the ballots are pretty limiting for anyone who has actual ideas or desires to do something ambitious with the Northwest Archivists. Offering candidates more space to share their ideas with the membership could demonstrate their commitment/seriousness and help get them elected, but could also assist in pulling together people with similar interests or ideas and encourage more participation by the membership.