



CHAPTER 1

SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP)

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Southern Plains Area
Area Council of Office Professionals
2006-2008 Council Members

Davie Crowell, Chairperson

USDA-ARS Rice Research Unit
1509 Aggie Drive
Beaumont, TX 77713
409.752.5221; Fax: 409.752.5720
Email: davee.crowell@ars.usda.gov

Susan Daughtry, Information Coordinator

USDA-ARS Grazinglands Research Laboratory
7207 W. Cheyenne Street
El Reno, OK 73036
405.262.5291; Fax: 405.262.0133
Email: susan.daughtry@ars.usda.gov

Justine Flowers, Co-Chairperson

USDA-ARS Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative
900 S. Shackleford Road, Suite 509
Little Rock, AR 72211
501.954.8882; Fax: 501.954.9596
Email: jflowers@spa.ars.usda.gov

Barbara Hodges, Technical Advisor/SPA Member on National Council

USDA-ARS Cropping Systems Research Laboratory
3810 4th Street
Lubbock, TX 79415
806.749.5560; Fax: 806.723.5272
Email: bhodges@lbk.ars.usda.gov

Beth Holt, Training Coordinator

USDA-ARS Conservation and Production Research Laboratory
P.O. Drawer 10 (Shipping: 2300 Experiment Station Road)
Bushland, TX 79012
806.356.5724; Fax: 806.356.5750
Email: bholt@cpri.ars.usda.gov

Beverly Keller, Recorder

USDA-ARS Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center
2890 Hwy 130 East
Stuttgart, AR 72160
870.672.9300; Fax: 870.673.7581
Email: bkeller@spa.ars.usda.gov

Anne Steele, Permanent Member

USDA-ARS SPA Area Office
1001 Holleman Drive, East
College Station, TX 77840
979.260.9346; Fax: 979.260.9415
Email: astele@spa.ars.usda.gov

Karen Wilcox, Webmaster

USDA-ARS Areawide Pest Management Research Unit
2771 F&B Road
College Station, TX 77845
979.260.9354; Fax: 979.260.9386
Email: kwilcox@apmru.usda.gov



Southern Plains Area
Advisory Council for Office Professionals
Mission and Charter

MISSION

The mission of the Southern Plains Area (SPA) Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) is to serve the SPA Office Professionals, Location Research and Administration Management Teams, and the Area Director in an advisory capacity.

GOAL

Our goal is to strengthen and improve the professional image of all SPA office professionals through orientation, training/shadowing, networking, and scholarship availability.

GROUND RULES

- Approach tasks positively and optimistically.
- Treat each other professionally, regardless of functional responsibility, grade, or position.
- Take responsibility for our decisions and actions. We are accountable and flexible.
- Be candid.
- Encourage giving and receiving constructive feedback.
- Listen; share information and resources.
- Approach and resolve conflict openly.
- Have fun and value humor.
- Stand together as a team.
- Decisions by consensus – can live with decision made.
- Keep records; start and end meetings on time.
- Quorum (five members) should be present.

OBJECTIVES

- Improve communication, awareness, and skills among office professionals and strengthen programs and opportunities for their career development. Produce and disseminate a newsletter with input from locations.
- Provide advice and recommendations on Agency and SPA policies and programs related to the employment, development, and advancement of office professionals.
- Improve recognition of the office profession and promote professionalism within the occupation.
- Assist in the development and presentation of required and appropriate training for office professionals.
- Develop and maintain a network available to SPA office professionals.

SCOPE OF COVERAGE

The SPA ACOP will represent office professionals throughout the SPA. This includes employees in the Secretarial Series, GS-318; Program Assistants, GS-303; Office Automation Series, GS-326; and Clerk Typists, GS-322.

COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP

The ACOP will be made up of representatives from the SPA, appointed by the Area Director after input from the ACOP. An Area Office Secretary will serve as a permanent ex-officio representative to the ACOP. The SPA representative to the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP) will serve as Technical Advisor. The Technical Advisor will be selected from senior or former SPA Council Members.

APPOINTMENTS

Chairperson	Information Coordinator
Co-Chairperson	Permanent Member/Area Director's Office
Recorder	Webmaster
Training Coordinator	Technical Advisor

Membership will rotate on a three-year basis. If a member cannot complete a term, the new appointee will finish the remainder of the term. If the resigning member has one year or less remaining, the new member will serve the remainder of the term plus an additional three-year term. New members will accompany outgoing members to the annual meeting.

All ACOP members beginning their second year of a three-year term are eligible for election as Co-Chairperson. The Co-Chairperson will advance to the Chair position, and the outgoing Chair will serve an additional year as ex-officio member.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chair and Co-Chairperson will:

- Organize meetings and issue agendas.
- Preside at all meetings and conference calls.
- Advise and work with the Area Director on implementing policies and programs affecting SPA.
- Provide an annual progress report to the Area Director, NACOP, and current ACOP members.
- Provide the Area Director with accomplishments/highlights of the ACOP's annual meeting.

Recorder will:

- Record and distribute highlights and action items of meetings.
- Maintain an accurate roster and email list of ACOP membership.
- Inform ACOP members of future meeting arrangements.
- Maintain yearly ACOP records.

Training Coordinator will:

- Develop and maintain networking resources.
- Coordinate and disseminate information on training activities.
- Develop, maintain, and disseminate the Handbook for Administrative Office Professionals.
- Develop and maintain the scrapbook.

Information Coordinator will:

- Publish newsletter.
- Coordinate information requests/surveys.

Permanent Member will:

- Serve as a liaison between ACOP and SPA.
- Collect and report information on significant activities, questions, and concerns.
- Provide Annual Reports to SPA.

Webmaster will:

- Maintain web page, display board, and brochure.
- Update changes made to the handbook.



Application for Membership

SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals (SPA ACOP)

Appointment to the SPA ACOP is for a three-year term.

Applicants must have a minimum of three years work experience with ARS and currently be in job series 303, 318, or 326.

The SPA ACOP meets a minimum of five times a year via quarterly conference calls and an annual on-site meeting (date and location to be determined).

Submit completed form to: USDA-ARS- SPA, Area Director's Office, ATTN: Anne Steele, 1001 Holleman Drive East, College Station, TX 77840



Name: _____

Position: _____

Address: _____



Phone #: _____ Fax #: _____

Supervisor: _____

Years of Federal Service: _____ Years with ARS: _____

Please describe the strengths you feel you can bring to the SPA ACOP (i.e., newsletter experience, website management, etc.):



Signature of Applicant

Date

Please note:

- ✓ Supervisory approval will be required, if selected.
- ✓ All applications will be kept on file for three years; new ACOP members may be selected from the pool of applications.
- ✓ New members will be notified of their selection by the Area Office.

STEPPING INTO THE FUTURE

Report of the Secretarial Review Task Group

Summary

In November 1992, a Secretarial Review Task Group was established for the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), by Jane L. Giles, Deputy Administrator for Administrative Management, in her former role as Personnel Director. The purpose of this Task Group was to review the current secretarial structure within ARS to identify "key" functions secretaries are performing in support of the ARS mission and to identify suitable incentives (i.e., awards, retention bonuses, etc.) which could be used to reward high-level performance. Each Area, Administrative Management, and the National Program Staff designated a secretary to serve as their representative on this Task Group. In addition, two Personnel Division employees were assigned to serve and/or facilitate over this study.

The Task Group members defined the following Mission Statement which would be used to focus its efforts:

The mission of this Task Group is to explore the changing nature of the secretarial profession, determine the existing status of secretarial positions within ARS (and comparable government agencies), and recommend actions designed to benefit both ARS and its secretarial professionals.

The secretarial profession has changed dramatically over the past several decades with the increase in technology and automation. ARS secretaries no longer are behind the scenes handling routine office tasks. They are now the center of communications within their organizations. They must possess the management and administrative skills essential to organize daily schedules and assignments for themselves, their supervisors, and other employees in the organization. Many tasks that were previously considered managers' duties are now delegated to secretaries, especially those computer-oriented tasks dealing with financial and spreadsheet applications, database management, and graphics. Today's secretaries must possess good verbal, written, and interpersonal communication skills and be able to translate directions into written communications. They are technically oriented and adaptable to diverse situations. Secretaries are important members of the management team.

The Task Group encourages managers and supervisors to review the information presented in this report and use the recommendations to enhance the secretarial profession in ARS. Doing so will enable ARS to attract and retain a competent secretarial workforce.

The Task Group offers the following recommendations for consideration and implementation:

Position Classification:

- Fully evaluate the changing role of ARS secretarial support staff and pursue alternative methods in the position classification process to recognize these new roles.
- Evaluate each secretarial position on its' individual merit.
- Use TQM techniques and principles to aid in the enhancement of secretarial positions.
- Implement immediately the use of working titles for secretarial positions.
- Where appropriate, establish full performance levels which are reflective of the work assigned.

Training:

- Establish a formal Secretarial Training Program and provide opportunities for secretaries to pursue certification through Professional Secretaries International.
- Establish a Mentoring Program for secretaries.
- Implement a defined orientation plan for new secretarial employees.
- Use the Career Enhancement Program more frequently to provide career advancement opportunities.

Awards:

- Establish a National Secretary of the Year Award and Organizational Secretary of the Year Award.

Communication:

- Establish a National Secretarial Advisory Council and Organizational Secretarial Advisory Councils.

Each of the above recommendations are discussed in detail in the Task Group report and suggested methods for implementation are provided for many of these recommendations. If your location does not have a copy of the Report of the Secretarial Review Task Group entitled, "Stepping into the Future," please contact one of the council members for a copy.

History of the Secretarial Profession



Just when secretaries originated no one knows exactly. The role arose out of the natural need for a prominent person to whom confidential matters could be entrusted and who could act as an assistant for a principal. It is known that secretaries existed in Rome prior to the establishment of the empire. They were usually educated men who took dictation as "scribes," and oftentimes acted as trusted advisors.

Before the invention of parchment and reed pens, tools of the trade for scribes ranged from chisels used upon stone to styluses used on clay, wood, or wax tablets. Shorthand became part of the preparation and training of secretaries (and emperors as well, including Julius Caesar and Augustus).

In early modern times, members of the nobility had secretaries, who functioned quite similarly to those of the present day. They were always men; most had command of several languages, including Latin, and were required to have what we would consider today as a broad generalized education.

As commerce and trade expanded, people of wealth and power needed secretaries (confidants and trusted agents) to handle correspondence on private or confidential matters, most particularly matters of state.

Following the Renaissance, men continued to dominate clerical and secretarial roles. They maintained account books, in addition to performing stenographic duties, and were known for their exemplary penmanship skills. Many labored long hours, with their "secretary" desks serving as their files and workstations.

As world trade expanded in the 15th and 16th centuries, secretaries often attained an elevated status and held prominent positions. Secretarial status titles frequently included "personal" or "private."

Men continued to dominate the secretarial field until the late 1880s. With the invention of the writing machine, many women entered the office workforce in various clerical roles.



During the industrial expansion at the turn of the century, business offices faced a paperwork crisis. Women solved the crisis by adapting well to new technologies such as the adding and calculating machine, telephone, and typewriter. Many women held, or aspired to hold, positions as secretaries. They attended secretarial schools and worked to attain superior skills. The demand for secretaries was so great that it outpaced the supply.

In the 1930s, the number of men with the title secretary dwindled. Women dominated the office workforce. Some were promoted from steno pools, some were graduates of business colleges or secretarial schools, but all were seeking the professional status and pay previously enjoyed by their male counterparts.



Recognizing that continuing education was imperative to career success, a group of secretaries in America's heartland became the nucleus of an organization that would help to professionalize the occupation. In 1942, the National Secretaries Association (NSA) was formed (now known as the International Association of Administrative Professionals). NSA first administered the Certified Professional Secretaries Examination, a standard of excellence for the profession, in 1951.



1950s secretary



1950s Shorthand



Typing pool - 1960s



1970s word processor

Profession Advances in Information Age



Today, secretaries (also known as administrative assistants, office coordinators, executive assistants, office managers, et al.) are using computers, the Internet, and other advanced office technologies to perform vital "information management" functions in the modern office.

Secretaries no longer "simply" type correspondence for "the boss." Now, they often write that correspondence—as well as plan meetings, organize data using spreadsheet and database management software, interact with clients, vendors, and the general public, supervise the office and other staff, handle purchasing, and even train other workers. Trends identified by IAAP research include:



- Administrative professionals are becoming researchers and interpreters, not just disseminators of information.
- Work teams are becoming more prevalent.
- Job descriptions are expanding and new titles are being created, such as administrative coordinator, office administrator, administrative specialist and information manager.
- Employers are paying more for specialized skills such as desktop publishing and database management. In addition, many companies are providing performance-based bonuses to outstanding administrative support professionals to help acknowledge their contributions.

The future is bright for computer-literate, well-educated, customer service-savvy administrative professionals

Office Technology Time Line

1870s

Telephone
Typewriter
Carbon Paper

1880s

Comptometer calculating machine
Mimeograph machine
Cash register
Adding machine
Pneumatic tubes

1890s

Dictating and stenographic machines

1900s

Loose-leaf ledger sheets
Multigraph
Two color typewriter ribbon
Addressograph

1910s

Power statistical accounting machines
Bookkeeping and billing machines
(combinations of typewriter and computing machines).

1920s

Adding/Subtracting calculation machine
Ditto machines (gelatin duplicating)

1930s

Bank check sorting/proofing machines
Dial telephones
Electric typewriters (earliest versions)
Machine accounting systems (central records control, payroll)

1940s

Mechanical listing printing calculators
Punched card systems (payroll)
Dictaphone/stenographic machines with plastic belts

1950s

Electronic digital computers (transistors)
Electronic digital computers (vacuum tubes)
Data processing - paper and tape cards
Xerographic duplication
Data processing - telewriters
Data processing - computypers

1960s

Magnetic tape "Selectric" typewriters
Microchip computers
Magnetic tape (replacing punched cards)
Magnetic ink character recognition

1970s

Microcomputers
Optical scanning and recognition equipment
Video display terminals for data/text editing
Facsimile transmission
Electronic (solid state) calculating machines

1980s

Local area networks, integrated systems
Non-impact printers
Software packages for microcomputers

1990s

PCs
E-mail
Internet

2000 and beyond

Wireless networks
Voice recognition
Electronic document collaboration
Virtual meetings
Virtual assistants

Source: International Association of Administrative Professionals <http://www.iaap-hq.org>