

The ACADEMIC ARCHIVIST

*Newsletter of the
College and University Archives Section
of the Society of American Archivists*

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From the Chair

As the sleet is coming down outside my window, I think back to our August meeting. I hope you found our time in Washington was a productive one. We met old friends and made new contacts; we elected a new Vice-Chair, and as always, the discussion groups were lively--as you will read from the reports in this issue. The project to revise the *College and University Archives Reader* continues to move ahead. Questions generated in sessions gave us pause to think about new ideas and different ways of approaching the challenges of our job. Hallway, restaurant, and special events conversation let us share with archival colleagues what we might not normally have an opportunity to share at our home institutions. We went home, I hope, invigorated.

Then September 11th happened. For many of us on the east coast, it has been a debilitating event; how many of us knew friends, family, acquaintances in the Twin Towers and the Pentagon? How many of us can read the *New York Times* "A Nation Changed" section without feeling that the victims could easily have been one of us? And what about those who were left behind, to go forward without their life partners and members of their families? How have we documented the campus activities, discussions, protests, that came after the attack? How will we document its influences in the future?

This has also been invigorating for our profession. Whether it's the shards of paper from the Twin Towers found in Brooklyn, or the messages on the computer screens, on voice-mail, or on cell-phones, these words are the truth: they provide us with

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Study-Discussion Groups Meet in Washington

Documenting Student Life

Facilitator: Ellen Swain, University of Illinois

Group members shared their experiences in documenting student diversity on campus and collecting papers of student protest movements. They mentioned the image of archives among students. Members also discussed the impact of memorabilia exhibits on student involvement in an institution's archives; such exhibits could be anywhere from the student lounge to a business school lobby. Some mentioned how archivists can make connections to students through research projects in their archives. Some archivists related how students used their collections for researching school songs for a concert and how students loved reading student journals from the early years of their institution. One archivist discussed how her institution was starting an archives publication to encourage students to use her archives. Another member said students ask her archives about local legends and ghosts on campus during Halloween and added that this was a good way to teach students about her archives. Swain mentioned her archives' student advisory committee, whose members are drawn from different sections of student government. They advise her on the promotion of the archives and using the archives for education.

The group then discussed the challenges of

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collecting the papers of student groups. The group discussed how it was easier to collect materials from alumni who graduated fifty years ago. One member suggested that Archives could collect student materials by offering to preserve older materials. Or an Archives could copy materials, keep the originals and give copies to the donor. Other members discussed the importance of going to alumni meetings to disseminate information and make contacts in the institution community. One member meets with fraternities and sororities to encourage these groups to donate their papers; he offers to place restrictions on materials concerning membership and their rituals to meet the organizations' concerns about access to this material. It was mentioned that the national organizations seem to encourage local chapters to give their materials to them, which creates tension between the institution's archives and the national organization.

The discussion ended with questions about setting up an archives advisory committee and concerns about what areas of student life are not documented.

Faculty Papers: Ours or Theirs?

Facilitator: Jackie Esposito, Penn State University

The discussion of this group centered around the following series of questions posed by the facilitator and group members:

Why collect faculty papers? The faculty member is well known in his/her field; the faculty member's subject area of expertise is one which complements other collections held by the archives; the faculty member's papers help to provide information on the institution's history; A faculty member's professional correspondence can provide information on behind the scenes activities, collaborations, etc. in their field of study; a faculty member's grade books can provide lists of student names useful for genealogical research and institutional development issues

From whom are faculty papers solicited? Faculty members whose areas of expertise fall within defined collection areas; Faculty members who are well known in their field of study; Faculty members who have been active in institutional governance (papers are used to fill gaps in administrative files or present a different view of issues.

When are faculty papers solicited? When a faculty member achieves tenure; When a faculty member retires; as part of an institutional records retention schedule.

Group members then discussed issues such as keeping faculty papers collections intact (i.e. materials related research are kept with those relating to other activities); intellectual property rights/copyrights (who owns them?); how to solicit papers; how to deal with a deceased faculty member's family; scheduling faculty papers; and, purchasing faculty papers.

Finally, the challenges of dealing with faculty papers in electronic format were explored, with the topics of reformatting and handling databases being foremost. Participants from MIT reported on the D-SPACE project there, which is a newly developed digital archive designed to capture, preserve and distribute the intellectual output of MIT.

Preserving Websites

Facilitator: David McCartney, University of Iowa

David set the meeting up by noting the following: There is an increasing tendency of universities to go online; with paper copies being discontinued. We should focus our discussion on: 1) Technical aspects or the preferred means of capture; the role of printouts; the possible use of a contract services in a retrospective project; and the creation of a dedicated server for selected data; and 2) Editorial Content—what do we save, how far down in a website?

Discussion by the group:

I. Content (Selection/Appraisal criteria): Simmons College has discussed this with their webmaster and IT staff. They are currently documenting their entire website 4 times a year. They are using a dedicated server. Due to a lack of server space, they are using CD-ROMs. They consider it a snapshot of the website. From the group: question of upgrades? Simmons hopes to go on server, the CD is only stopgap.

Question about cataloging: How do researchers use it? Research is not a concern at this point.

Wofford College (South Carolina): Tried to contact their webmaster about website, prior to its discarding. No response—webmaster is part of Marketing, not IT. Note: There is a need to be persistent with the IT staff
Question: How often should a website be captured?

Need to sell the idea of website preservation to the university administration as a “university publication.”

University of Iowa/Concordia University: have also contacted their university legal counsel, to ensure the legal position of the university policies.

Question: What about student websites? Simmons College: Did not feel like they could make appraisals of these, important to save everything at this point.

Question: Copyright status? Concordia University: Important to distinguish official university website from student sites Arizona State University: Demonstrates the importance of selection. Important to connect with potential champions in higher administration; important to connect to the institutional mandate/mission. For instance, target university policy manuals or course catalogs, to defend the university in litigation. Importance of thinking strategically

Discussion of website size and scale: University of Iowa: Discussed documentation of student website—considered online performance art. Discussion of types of documentation: Online course interactions—documentation of learning. Scripps Oceanographic Institute: scientific data and grants (complication of ownership)

This led to the question: What are the university’s resources to select materials with questionable ownership. The importance of working with Principal Investigators on research. University of Michigan: advocates working with people upfront to capture websites—especially those combining personal and professional elements.

Mission critical such as the course catalog—use these to construct policies and expand to faculty/students. Oregon State University: noted that support on a server indicates a certain level of support, so that the material is perceived as a public record

Long-term difficulties in long-term preservation: Technical capture is easy—appraisal, preservation, cataloging and access are harder. Cornell University: noted similarity of issues to records management. Important to work with faculty collaboratively (Smithsonian Institute). Websites should be included as part of the records management retention schedule. OCLC: currently working on a website preservation initiative, centering on publications

Arizona State University: notes the development of portals (different models) that can build on the fly, and be used as course/learning tools

Difficulties in sampling-again, the importance of collaboration and the development of policies. St. Thomas University: IT approached them (in light of the general discussion about the difficulties working with IT).

Selling Records Management

Facilitator: James Cross, Clemson University, Clemson, SC

Both private and public colleges/universities have problems selling records management--it is often a low priority among other needs, and there may be only one individual responsible for records management (and that person may have no training in the field). The Assistant to the President, Comptroller, Registrar and Internal Auditor can be valuable allies. Try to make records management a part of high level (President, Board of Trustees) policy. You may want to develop a group of people to bounce ideas off of--it is a way of involving others, and may help in developing a feeling of "ownership" by these individuals for the program. You may wish to create records management liaisons in departments on campus and use them as a way to disseminate information about and sell the program. Start off with units such as the President's Office, Financial Office, Registrar, or Human Resources; a pilot program could be used to show how successfully you can fill office's needs. Work with the secretaries (!), and get them to buy into your program.

Use the services you provide to other campus units and the alacrity, accuracy, and courtesy in how you provide them to sell your program. Include the records destruction task as part of your program in order to centralize it and thus relieve offices of their worries over what to do with confidential records, thus showing you provide a needed service.

Use the control of space in your records center to "sell" the program using the carrot and stick method by refusing to take into the records center any material that has not been examined by the records management program and scheduled.

You can use the web to sell your program by having your schedules and services online. Sell your program by using your expertise with records--for example, point out you can make a significant contribution in areas such as information technology systems design because of your knowledge of record-keeping systems .

Send schedules to secretaries on a regular basis; it reminds current staff of your services and alerts new staff to the existence of your program. Make the need to train new staff due to turnover an opportunity to increase their awareness of your program.

Use disasters--like fire, flood, and litigation--to sell your program by pointing out how records management made (or could have made) a bad situation less severe. If you don't have a disaster of your own, borrow someone else's and use it as an example! Of course, more positive events, like anniversaries, can also be used to sell you program, too.

Use the classic cost-savings selling point, but be prepared to explain how "making it all digital" will not necessarily save money.

Special Mission Archives

Facilitator: Ariel Lucas, University of California, San Francisco

Participants:

Ruthanne Vogel - University of Miami (Pan American World Airways)

Thomas Doyle, Keane State College (Malaysia Archives)

Ariel Lucas, UC San Francisco (Tobacco Control Archives)

Carole Prietto, Washington University in St. Louis (Monsanto Company Archives)

Special Mission Archive are often the biggest draw on time.

The Pan American Collection at Miami: 1000 c.f., 500 c.f. unprocessed. Keane State College has a large

collection dealing with indigenous people of Malaysia. Funding sources - ranged from none (Pan Am) to grant funding (Malaysia) to company funding (Monsanto). Volunteers - a personnel issue; much depends on who wants to volunteer. At Miami, many former Pan-Am pilots have expressed interested in working with the collection, but they want to rearrange the collection the way they want it! One institution expected volunteers to join a friends group before they could volunteer. Offsite storage : About half the Pan Am collection is stored offsite (unprocessed portion); this material is considered closed, so almost no reference is done on this portion of the collection. At UCSF, lawsuits and harassment has led to unique reader service issues with the Tobacco Archives.

Special Mission Collections are not always in concert with the rest of the library or university. Malaysia Archive - archivist has had to network with library staff and faculty, especially re: language expertise, both for processing the collection and servicing it.

What's Happening to Archives? A Tale of Three Sessions

by Jerry George

(Editor's note: This piece appeared in a recent issue of *CLIR News*, published by the Council on Library and Information Resources. The three sessions discussed here were sessions at SAA in Washington. CLIR is on the web at www.clir.org)

TO LIBRARIANS, THE declaration would have seemed familiar. Technology will change archives, the speaker asserted. Professionals in the field will become "cyber archivists." And he, for one, welcomed it. In that high spirit, Leon J. Stout, president of the Society of American Archivists, opened SAA's annual meeting in Washington, D.C., last August.

As Mr. Stout knows, successful "cyberarchivy" will depend on answering a hard question that faces librarians as well as archivists. Namely, how can we ensure that all the valuable digital material we are expensively putting online persists, is preserved, and stays accessible?

Archivists are digitizing some records and providing Web access to finding aids that describe many others. Like librarians, they need to preserve such material for ongoing use. But archivists have a more urgent need. They must find ways to provide electronic access in perpetuity to a continuous stream of electronic records judged permanently valuable. These are records that governments and others have generated and continue to generate. Failure to provide long-term access to these records would mean great losses of documentation of our era's history. Like cyber archivists, "cybrarians" also are loading the Web with useful information books, journals, special collections that needs to be preserved for future as well as current use. But can librarians and archivists do it? Can we transfer relatively unstable digital data from tape to tape, program to program, system to system indefinitely without significant loss? Can we retrieve, on tomorrow's computer systems, data generated on systems that are already becoming obsolete? And can we preserve and provide access to great volumes of digital data generated in increasingly complex forms?

If not, the online archival and library information that can so easily be studied, searched, enhanced, and creatively recombined today will be unavailable tomorrow. As one expert on the subject, Jeff Rothenberg, has said, "Digital information lasts forever or five years, whichever comes first."

How do archivists hope to meet the digital preservation challenge?

Archives of the Future: Under Development Today

The answer to this question came in a second SAA session, one of several that dealt with electronic records. In it, Kenneth Thibodeau asserted that preservation mastery is not complete, but that the "archives of the future" is in sight. An Electronic Records Archives (ERA) is actually under development by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Thibodeau directs this effort.

NARA has been accessioning electronic records since 1970. But, said Thibodeau, "proven methods for preserving digital information across generations of technology are limited to the simplest formats." He said that NARA needs a way to preserve millions of government records in all digital formats, with "continuing authenticity" through "unlimited time." That is what he hopes the ERA will do.

The ERA is evolving from technologies already under development to support e-commerce and e-government in multiple ways. For NARA, computer scientists are using a "persistent object preservation architecture" to relieve records from dependency on particular software and hardware, Thibodeau explained. In simplest terms, the goal is to preserve information about records their content, structure, and context in ways that permit reconstituting the records for access on future computer systems.

This "transformative approach," according to Thibodeau, differs from preservation by "migration," which relies on recopying, or by the "emulation," on new computer systems, of obsolete systems used to create the records being preserved. Will it work? The approach has critics, yet there are grounds for optimism. The San Diego Supercomputer Center has demonstrated the feasibility of the approach in tests involving, among other kinds of records, a million government e-mail messages.

When will the ERA be finished? "Ten years after computer development stops," Thibodeau quipped. By this he meant that the ERA will be "dynamic," alterable to accommodate continuing technological evolution, and "progressively deployed." A core ERA, without "full functionality" but capable of basic work, will be operable within five years, he speculated, and will continue developing incrementally. To run it, he added, archivists will need to transform themselves into "archival engineers."

Anticipating Users' Needs

At a third SAA session, a new question arose. To paraphrase the movie, "If we build ERA, will users come?" Archivists and their archives are changing, but so are some of their traditional patrons, and the two parties sometimes move in different directions. As archivists employ technology to preserve records for the study of history, historians increasingly express interest in studying archivists. That is, a number of historians and other scholars have taken up the study of social memory "how it is created, by whom, and with what effects and motives.

Francis Blouin spoke of this "new historiographical direction" in his introduction to an SAA session on "Archives, Documentation, and the Institutions of Social Memory." That was also the title of a recent yearlong seminar at the Bentley Historical Library, which Mr. Blouin directs. The seminar had to do with how society constructs what gets collectively remembered. Such studies include how archives function and make choices about which records to preserve. Some historians expressed the view in the seminar that such choices reflect ideology, politics, authority, and control of power. One seminar participant even pondered whether archives, by helping determine what society saves from its history and transmutes into social memory, could be "technologies of rule in themselves."

That certainly shed a different light on both technology and archives.

Afterthoughts

What effect might NARA's archives of the future have on social memory? If the ERA can store more records than paper archives have had space to keep, will the result be a correspondingly broader view of history? If the ERA makes access easier, for more people in more places, will the power that comes from information be less the property of just the privileged? And will today's archival guidelines for appraising the significance of records make sense to such future ruling technologists as the cyberarchivist and the archivist-engineer?

Perhaps we do need the historians' new questions as well as the archivists' new machinery. Five years from now, when the ERA shows us how to save digital documents, maybe we can also take a new look, in an SAA session, at that fundamental question: What are we saving?

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memories, they form part of the story, they will be part of our attempt to understand the event. They console us, they make us question, they stir up the soul. Efforts to capture oral history about the events are underway. Sites of public mourning are being preserved. Voicemail messages are being copied; email messages are 'archived'. On the national level we write letters to our representatives about the need for open access to presidential records. We continue to work hard to keep words free and available. Without the words, we would be inconsolable.

Nanci A. Young, Chair
Smith College

Thanks to Claude Zachary (U. of Southern Calif.) for his service as editor of the *Academic Archivist*. With this issue, Carole Prietto takes over as editor. Send submissions to Carole at 935-9730 (fax) or prietto@library.wustl.edu

Update to College and University Archives Reader Moving Forward

In Washington, a great deal of progress was made on the Section's proposal to produce an update to the 1979 publication *College and University Archives: Selected Readings*. First and foremost is that several section members came forward and volunteered for the project. Hurray! Thanks to David Gartrell (UC Santa Barbara), Debora Rougeux (U. of Pittsburgh), and Claude Zachary (U. of Southern California) for pitching in. Chris Prom and Ellen Swain (U. of Illinois) have done a fine job in directing the work. At this point, the committee is gathering input from archival educators as to themes that should be explored, potential authors, and literature which we should be surveying.

While in Washington, Mark Shelstad, our liaison with Publications Board, met with the members of the Book Committee and with the Section Steering Committee to discuss possible directions for the book and a timetable for publication. Section members with ideas for the book can contact any member of the Book Committee with their suggestions.

C&U Session Proposals for Birmingham

As this issue of AA goes to press, we've just received word that the 2002 session proposal of Aaron Purcell (U. of Tennessee Knoxville) has been accepted by the Birmingham program committee. Aaron's proposal was titled, "I Read the News Today, Oh Boy: Documenting Controversy and Scandal at College and University Archives". Congratulations, Aaron!

Other session proposals for Birmingham submitted by C&U section members were:
"Electronic Theses and Dissertations," (Rob Spindler, Arizona State University)

"Sustaining the Human Mosaic: Diversity Activities in University Libraries and Archives." (Tom Connors, University of Maryland)

Introduction to METS, the Metadata Encoding Transmission Standard (Bradley D. Westbrook, University of California, San Diego)

"Managing an Interview," submitted by Mott Linn, (Clark University) and Louis Hammill (Holy Cross College)

"Outcomes Assessment: A New Approach to a Never-ending Question," Judy Turner (Milwaukee Public Museum).

At press time, we do not know whether these sessions have been accepted. Stay tuned!

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