Proposal: RAO Section Access to Electronic Records Working Group

For over a generation, archivists have grappled with born-digital and electronic records. Intense scrutiny has been placed on accessioning, processing and preserving electronic materials, but very little attention is given to how we provide access to these materials.

The Society of American Archivist's Reference, Access and Outreach section is well positioned to lead efforts to investigate this issue, and possibly even recommend standards to govern access regarding born-digital and electronic records.

The following is a proposal to create a new RAO sponsored working group to explore this issue.

Proposed Objectives

Gather and share information about how archivists provide access to born-digital and electronic records. Identify key principles and strategies which govern access to born-digital and electronic records.

Proposed Responsibilities

- Conduct initial research to determine on which key focus areas related to reference, access, outreach, and preservation work the working group shall focus its efforts.
- Compile a bibliography of key resources, including publications, presentations and workshops, which explore how archival institutions provide access to born-digital and electronic records. Other organizations active with electronic records will also be included in this resource list.
- Conduct a survey of the archival profession regarding current practices and attitudes towards providing access to born-digital and electronic records.
- Compile and analyze the survey data in order to identify challenges and opportunities which RAO can address.
- Publish and share the results of this survey with RAO members and the archives profession.
- Develop a best practices guide or resource which can assist archivists in the process of establishing procedures and resources to provide researchers with access to born-digital and electronic records.
- Provide an annual report to RAO and all other interested parties. This report will be made accessible through the RAO microsite.
- Coordinate working group activities with other SAA sections and roundtables as needed. It will be the responsibility of the working group's leaders to solicit feedback and support from other sections and roundtables.

Role of the Working Group

This working group will serve in an advisory role with its products intended to benefit the archives profession and users of archival repositories.

Membership

Working group leaders (chairs/co-chairs) will be appointed by the RAO section steering committee. Working group members will be solicited from amongst the RAO section's members. Membership from other SAA sections and roundtables is encouraged. Members from other sections and roundtables can be appointed to represent other sections and roundtables with approval from the leadership of those sections and roundtables.

Anticipated Date of resolution

The working group's progress and effectiveness will be evaluated annually by the RAO section steering committee. Initial action items, as determined by the RAO steering committee, will be completed prior to August 2015.

The steering committee will annually evaluate the status of the working group and will provide recommendations to maintain, expand, disband or otherwise change the working group.