

Spring 2014

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# The Records Manager

The Newsletter for the Society of American Archivists



# In This Issue



Welcome to the Spring 2014 issue of *The Records Manager*.

In this issue, our chair, Brad Houston, discusses how RMRT will have a Records Management Webinar on October 7, 2014 in the Chair's Message. He also reminds members that August 15, 2015 will be RMRT's Annual Meeting Unconference.

One of our Steering Committee Members, Meg Tuomala, reports on the RMRT's virtual discussion about the National Archives and Records Administration's Capstone Email Initiative.

Jennifer Hoover, one of our members, discusses her graduate research on records management of electronic health records in small, rural healthcare practices.

Our Vice-Chair, Beth Cron, calls for volunteers to work in the Functional Thesaurus. They will be creating an electronic thesaurus for use in functional classification.

Finally, another one of our members, Lauren White, discusses Purdue University's Records Project.

Enjoy the Spring 2014 issue of *The Records Manager*.

**Lorette S. Weldon**

**Editor, *The Records Manager***

In This Issue .....	2
Chair's Message .....	3
NARA's Email.....	5

Smaller, Rural Healthcare Switching to EHR. ....	6
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Creating an Electronic Thesaurus for Functional Classification...	7
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Purdue University's Records Project.....	8
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**Next issue: Summer 2014**



# Greetings to our Members . . .

Message from the Chair, Brad Houston

Happy spring, RMRTers! The weather is finally warming up a bit here in Wisconsin, and hopefully in your part of the country as well. The steering committee hopes that you will join it in shaking off your winter blues and participating in the many activities and volunteer opportunities we have on offer in the next few months. Some of these will be described elsewhere in this newsletter, but I want to at least touch on a few here too:

## Save the Date: Records Management Webinar October 7, 2014!

Yes, after months of wrangling, the webinar we have been promising for the better part of a year was finally approved at the SAA Education Committee's recent meeting, and will officially be happening on or around October 7, 2014! The webinar is aimed at archives/records management students and new records management professionals, and aims to present a very high-level overview of various records management principles and practices, including discussion of standards, basic records survey and scheduling tips, some thoughts on managing e-records, and

a comparison of the "traditional" records management paradigm with the new "Information Governance" model.

Look for the addition of the RM basics webinar to the SAA catalog sometime soon. Hopefully this will be the first of many webinars that we run through SAA, to fill a gap in SAA's education coverage and provide a low-cost way for our members (and other supporters of the RMRT) to add some professional



development opportunities to their resumes. (Of course, our Google Hangouts remain a \*free\* way to get some professional development under your belt, but in case you need

something official, we've got you covered.)

knowledgeable on a particular RM issue, please consider volunteering to facilitate a discussion. Again, look for the official announcement on this (and the form to sign up) on the RMRT list sometime in late May/early June.

### **The RMRT Annual Meeting Unconference: August 15, 2014**

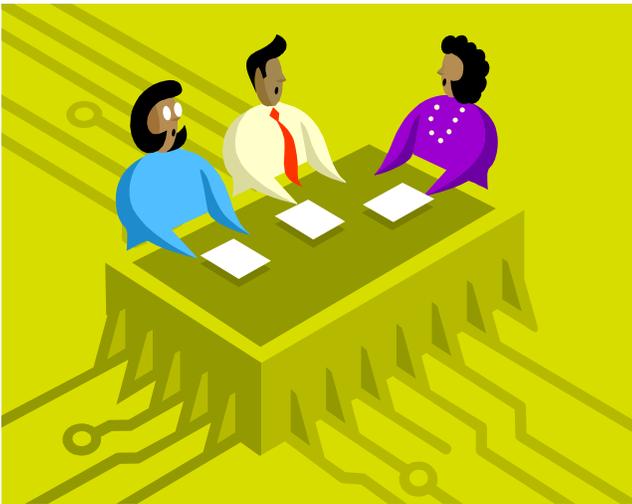
Thank you to all who took the time to fill out our survey earlier this year about the form our Annual Meeting will take this year. Enough people showed interest in a wide variety of topics that we had trouble narrowing it down to one. Luckily, with the unconference model we did select, we don't have to choose! Unconferences, for those of you who are unfamiliar with the term, are usually described as "participant-driven meetings", where the attendees select the topics at the start of the meeting and generally hold open discussions about them, without the traditional speaker-panel model. We're not going to select the topics the same day, as many unconferences do, but we \*are\* going to solicit your ideas for topics of interest a few weeks ahead of the August 15 meeting. Following our year-in-review business meeting, we will then break up into topical groups to allow discussion on problems and best

As always, we ultimately want to hear from you, the membership, about what you want from the RMRT, so please don't hesitate to send us an email, post a comment on our blog, or talk to us on social media about what else we should be doing. I will unfortunately not be in attendance at SAA this year, but I hope to see many of you at MAC in a few weeks, and will see you in spirit in DC!

Brad Houston, RMRT Chair, 2013-2014

He blogs at

<http://saarmrt.wordpress.com/author/herodotusjr/>



practices for each. We would like to recruit facilitators for each topic to keep discussions moving, so if you consider yourself especially interested or

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# RMRT Hosts a Virtual Discussion on NARA's Capstone Email Initiative

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By Meg Tuomala , Electronic Records Archivist at UNC-Chapel Hill, NC

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On February 7th the RMRT hosted a virtual discussion about the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) Capstone Email Initiative <link to: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/bulletins/2013/2013-02.html> >, which gives guidance on a new way for federal agencies to manage email records. The discussion was led by RMRT member Arian Ravanbakhsh and RMRT steering committee Vice-Chair Beth Cron, both records management policy analysts in the Office of the Chief Records Officer at NARA. RMRT steering committee member Meg Tuomala and Chair Brad Houston were on hand to provide questions for discussion and an occasional comment.

During the discussion, Arian and Beth gave a great overview of the Initiative and weighed-in on several questions and considerations surrounding it for not just federal agencies, but

state governments, universities, and private organizations too.

A video recording is available here <link to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwmDKuZK6fs> > and on the



RMRT's YouTube channel <link to: <http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCo249og3QN7vzdZEDlzXPAA> >. We hope you'll take a moment to watch.

Next up on our agenda, *Archiving Email: Two Innovative Projects*, is a joint virtual discussion hosted by both the RMRT and SAA's Electronic Records Section following up on the email topic. We had a slate of participants who shared their experiences preserving, processing, and providing access to email archives. You can watch it at

<link to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtoSVprvhtQ&feature=share>>

Stay tuned to the RMRT blog, *The Schedule* for updates!

And please email Meg at [mtuomala@email.unc.edu](mailto:mtuomala@email.unc.edu) if you have any ideas for future virtual discussions that would be of interest to the RMRT! ■

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*Meg Tuomala is the electronic records archivist at UNC-Chapel Hill and can be contacted at [mtuomala@email.unc.edu](mailto:mtuomala@email.unc.edu) She blogs at <http://saarmrt.wordpress.com/author/mtuomala/>*

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# Smaller, rural healthcare practices switching from paper records to EHR for the first time

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By Jennifer Hoover, Master's Candidate, Archives & Records Management, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA

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I am a master's candidate in the Archives and Records Management program, directed by Dr. Rand Jimerson, at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. I also work at the university in Advancement as an IT specialist.

My graduate research focuses on records management of electronic health records (EHR). When I started in the Archives and Records Management master's program, I knew very little about records management. My original plan was to concentrate on visual archives since my undergraduate background was in photography. My focus shifted to records management after the 2011 SAA conference in Chicago, where I attended a session about electronic records format preservation.

Realizing that a staggering number of electronic records often get created only to become obsolete and unreadable in a short length of time was an "aha moment" for me. I decided that I wanted to be at the front end of the records continuum and work to try and prevent record loss and disorder.

Spurred by my initial, but as yet unfocused, interest in electronic records management, I began to

research emerging electronic records management technologies (ECM, ERMS, etc.). I came to realize that technology will only take an organization so far in realizing best electronic records management practices. Even as technology becomes more intelligent, every organization needs knowledgeable records management personnel who can develop a records retention strategy appropriate to the specific needs of the organization, but also address ongoing changes in regulation, technology and business needs. What I learned, however, is that management tends to place too much trust in technology alone to manage electronic information.

As I read about the widespread, fast paced adoption of EHR by healthcare providers, I began to question about how well that information would be managed. I especially worried about smaller, rural healthcare practices switching from paper records to EHR for the first time. Would such healthcare providers, already existing on lean budgets, spend less on personnel and instead splurge on the EHR software product? Existing research articles on EHR are chiefly focused on patient data privacy breaches, end-user mistakes, and other horror stories related to the EHR technology, but there is scant

discussion about records management specific to EHR. For this reason, I designed a survey to learn more about the prevalence of records management among healthcare providers who use EHR systems. I hope that my research will contribute to a larger discussion about the importance of records management principles in the era of EHRs.

If you or any of your professional contacts manage EHR systems, please share your experience by completing my brief survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ehr-rm> . ■

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# Call for Volunteers: Functional Thesaurus Working Group

By Beth Cron, Records Policy Analyst at the National Archives and Records Administration

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The Functional Thesaurus Working Group would like to request your help! We are continuing our work to create an electronic thesaurus for use in functional classification. Based on our research into finding aids and records schedules to find commonly used functions/terms, we've added over 40 new terms to the thesaurus. We are using The Open Metadata Registry to build the Functions and Activities Thesaurus for Organizations and Institutions.

We are now in the process of confirming and validating the relationships between the new terms we added and the existing

terms. We currently have over 400 terms that we need to review and validate. This is where



you come in! We would like to request help from roundtable members to help us with this review. The review will involve looking at the terms and making sure that the definitions are accurate and that the appropriate properties are associated with each terms (i.e. related to, has broader, has narrower).

If you are interested in helping, contact me (Beth Cron

[bethany.cron@nara.gov](mailto:bethany.cron@nara.gov)) and I will provide you with instructions. Thank you in advance! Even if you don't have the time to help now, please go check out the Thesaurus and let us know your thoughts. We would welcome any suggestions or ideas.

Thank you,

Beth Cron, Vice Chair,  
Records Management  
Roundtable (2013-2014) ■

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*Beth Cron is a Records Policy Analyst at the National Archives and Records Administration. She can be contacted at [bethany.cron@nara.gov](mailto:bethany.cron@nara.gov). She blogs at <http://saarmrt.wordpress.com/author/bethcron/>.*

# Purdue University's Records Project: Growing University Archives

Reported By: Lauren White, Project Archivist for University Records, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN

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**A**n original class syllabus, dated 1893. A set of 19th century correspondence on the founding of a College of Agriculture. The papers of the department head of the nation's first computer science program.

One might suppose these rare historical finds would be carefully tucked away in the university archives, but at Purdue University, these materials are more typically found hidden in dusty attics, leaky basements, and rescued from dumpsters. These are the materials the University Records Project seeks to recover from forgotten corners of the university.

## Project Overview

The University Records Project is a two-year university-wide initiative

that aims to discover where Purdue's important historical documents are stored and collect basic data about these holdings, such as size and formats of the collections, date ranges covered, and storage conditions. The Project is focused on potentially growing the university history collections within the Archives, founded officially in 2009. Although there has been a Special Collections library at the university for over a century and there are some collections of immense historical worth within the Archives (such as the Neal Armstrong and Amelia Earhart collections), there is no formalized plan for the collection and preservation of the university's official records and history.



To that end, the goals of the Project are:

- Discovery of Purdue-created documents and records
- Documentation of all academic departmental records holdings
- Education of and outreach to departments concerning care and preservation of their materials
- Planning the feasibility of launching a university archival records program based upon survey findings

Currently, there is no established campus policy for identifying historical documents to be retained. As a result, much of Purdue's history is lost without formal representation in the Archives, and this makes conducting research on Purdue history and events incredibly difficult and, in some cases, impossible.

Unfortunately, some of the university's earliest departments have no records of their historical accomplishments and, in the worst cases, have no idea who their founding or early faculty and staff even were. Without the proper policies in place, this critical information has vanished, and the University Records Project seeks to prevent the future loss of Purdue's historical record.

### **Methodologies**

Before the actual inventory process could begin, several unglamorous – but vital – preparation steps had to be taken. As part of this phase of the project, I prepared a comprehensive list of campus departments (none existed previously) and created a prioritization metric to determine which departments would be targeted first. Since March 2013, I've been interviewing faculty and staff in these departments about their records collections, both analog and digital, and collecting key data not only about the materials themselves but about their historical information needs.

To date, 42 departments have been surveyed, and, a few key trends have come to light.

### **Findings Thus Far- Departments' Needs**

One of the corollary aims of this initiative is to discover not only what information departments have on their own histories but how they make use of this resource. I've discovered that departments have a wide variety of historical information needs, including:

- Grants for research
- Fundraising
- Alumni outreach
- Student recruitment
- Anniversaries and events
- Accreditation

All of these above efforts are supported by access to reliable historical information, but, unfortunately, many departments either no longer possess this data or cannot easily retrieve it in their current storage environments, digital and physical.

### **Findings Thus Far – The Records Themselves**

Why, then, if departments have such a pressing need for historical data are they

unable to find it in their own records collections?

Often, I've discovered, the physical storage spaces allocated to departments – basements and attics - are not ideal preservation environments. Many departments have lost their oldest documents due to mold, fire, or floods, and an even greater number have lost them due to simple human error. Without a guiding policy in place, faculty and staff admit that they do not recognize which materials have historical value and which are merely “junk,” and when pressed to consolidate storage space, physical or digital, servers and storerooms alike are purged en masse.

Of those departments that have retained their records over time, a pervasive lack of a defined organization system has led to the materials being scattered throughout various locations: unlabeled boxes and file cabinets, loose stacks of paper and film, unlabeled folders and files in a SharePoint site or shared drive. In addition, because no individual within the department has a responsibility to manage these materials, there is typically a lack of institutional memory about

the department's records holdings, including what and where they are.

### **Next Steps**

The University Records Project is scheduled to conclude in January 2015. I will continue to collect data and observations about departments and their records to build the most robust data set possible within the scope of this initiative.

Based upon this data, I will craft a proposal for a

university-wide archival records program that would ensure that historical documents are incorporated into the university retention schedules and that transfer to the Archives is the proper disposition for materials of permanent historical value. Such a program would centralize Purdue University's historical legacy, guaranteeing that it is easily accessible and useable by both the university's own faculty

and staff and the greater community.. ■

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### We're on the Web!

*See us at:*

Website:

<http://www2.archivists.org/groups/records-management-roundtable>

RMRT Blog:

<http://saarmrt.wordpress.com/>

Google Hangout:

<https://plus.google.com/u/0/118358692462079747504/posts>

## About Our SAA Records Management Roundtable...

The Records Management Roundtable encourages discussion of current issues in records and information management and promotes better understanding of the importance of collaborative efforts between archivists, records managers, and other information professionals. The roundtable works with SAA to promote proactive and responsible records and information management practices that benefit SAA, archival and records management institutions and professionals, consumers of records and information management services, and society as a whole through the verification of authenticity and accuracy of records.

The roundtable endorses and upholds the profession's ethical standards and guidelines, while encouraging a strong commitment to professional development of its members through continuing education; developing professional standards and practices; and educating society about records and information management. The roundtable encourages diversity, initiates discussions and training in records management technologies, and promotes public awareness of the records and information management profession and its close ties to archives management.