

Fonds Farewell: Mapping American Archival Vulnerabilities Due to Climate Change

EIRA TANSEY and BEN GOLDMAN

Abstract: Climate change threats to archival repositories have not been thoroughly examined within the profession. Climate change has the potential to impact everything from demands on building cooling and heating systems, to disaster response strategies, to permanent relocation of records from repositories in geographically vulnerable areas. Despite scientific and diplomatic consensus that to avoid even further environmental degradation, the global community must keep temperature increases below 2°C, 2015 was the hottest year on record with temperatures rising close to 1°C above pre-industrial averages. In the United States, several major cities face serious risk of rising sea levels that will make some coastal communities uninhabitable within 100 years, if swift action is not taken to mitigate further emissions. Coastal cities are already experiencing periodic high-tide flooding, and native communities in Louisiana and Alaska are grappling with relocation decisions.

Archivists Eira Tansey (University of Cincinnati) and Ben Goldman (Penn State University) will discuss their current research activities concerning the climate change risks to geographically vulnerable American archives. Complicating this research is the dearth of comprehensive and current information about American repository locations, holdings, and staffing. Tansey and Goldman will share their preliminary findings, discuss the importance of situating archival work within an environmental outlook, the short and long-term effects of climate change on archival operations, and solicit feedback on further research directions.

About the Authors:

Eira Tansey is the Digital Archivist/Records Manager at the University of Cincinnati. She received her BA in Geography from the University of Cincinnati and her MLIS from San Jose State University, and previously worked at the Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University. Her research interests include cultural heritage labor equity, public records law and impact, and the intersection of archives and environmental issues. Tansey recently published “Archival adaptation to climate change” in *Sustainability: Science, Practice & Policy* (<https://sspp.proquest.com/archival-adaptation-to-climate-change-3f245c06d9c0#.wag8mfzhp>).

Ben Goldman is the Kalin Librarian for Technological Innovations and Digital Records Archivist in the University Libraries at Penn State University. He is responsible for acquiring, preserving, and providing access to digital collections, and administers the Libraries’ web

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