

Breakout Session Report: Archiving Email

Michael Shallcross

Our session commenced with a description of the MeMail project at the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library. The initiative, funded by the Mellon Foundation, is focused on developing the workflow and resources necessary to preserve emails of record written and received by administrators at the University of Michigan.

The brief description of the project led to a discussion of the difficulties inherent to an email archiving project. The conversation touched upon:

1. General Issues

- a. The cost of commercial email archiving systems (as well as their tendency towards capturing everything so as to meet e-discovery requirements)
- b. The nature of email: different individuals use email for different purposes (file sharing, document storage, etc.) and it is often a very personal means of communication.
- c. Diverse email systems present on campuses and the challenges posed as a result (i.e. in establishing different procedures for MS Exchange and IMAP servers).
- d. Securing the cooperation and buy-in of record creators
 1. Email is used in the line of university / college business and therefore may be considered records akin to paper correspondence
 2. These individuals need to feel comfortable with the capture and preservation of their electronic correspondence.
 3. Record creators need to assist in identifying emails of record (a point also discussed in appraising email)
 4. The importance of educating administrators in regards to the nature of records of value
- e. Coordination of the archives with IT staff.
 1. Archives often have limited technical resources and abilities
 2. Participants noted that there are sometimes disconnects in how IT departments and the archives approach email archiving

2. Work flow

- a. Appraisal:
 1. Given the large amount of routine correspondence and spam present in email systems, the process should be automated or take place before records are transferred to the archives.
 2. The Bentley Historical Library's MeMail project involves record-creators in the identification of emails of record
- b. Transfer to archival custody:

1. The Bentley Historical Library has record creators transfer email to an archival mailbox to which archivists have access and from which content can be retrieved on a regular basis.
 2. Other solutions to the transfer of email included saving messages to removable hard drives, CDs or DVDs and also printing out material in a paper format.
- c. Arrangement and description
1. Discussion touched upon the appropriate level of description and how much is necessary (item is impossible; series is more feasible)
 2. The
- d. Storage
1. We discussed the possibility of using a DSpace repository to store email
 2. Preserving messages on removable media or hard drives
 3. Printing content to paper

In sum, the participants were very aware of the challenges involved with email archiving and at the same time are very interested to know how other archivists are handling this challenge. Participants hope to hear more about this topic at next year's conference.