

Artificial Intelligence: Archival Intelligence
Proposal for a Special Section in the *American Archivist*
Submitted by Rosemary Pleva Flynn, Brenda Gunn, and Jennifer Gunter King

Archivists are encountering artificial intelligence in their daily practice whether we're ready or not for this juggernaut. Without disciplined professional discourse, archivists risk adopting technologies reactively rather than strategically, missing opportunities to shape how AI serves archival values and ultimately the communities we serve. This section proposes to help archivists develop AI literacy and frameworks so that archivists can make thoughtful and ethical decisions about how they will incorporate AI into their work.

We are at a critical moment. Archivists can be informed, AI literate, and uphold archival fundamentals of authenticity, context, and equitable access. We have professional expertise and standards in these areas that we can contribute rather than having standards imposed on us from outside of the field. We want to help shape the conversation, not just respond.

We propose that *resisting* AI or *embracing* it constitutes a binary that does not serve archivists well. We are cautious about upholding our ethical commitments and about being conscientious stewards of our shared environment. This special section can set the stage by foregrounding opportunities and ethics—leveraging AI's potential for description, discovery, and access while remaining vigilant about bias, provenance, and professional judgment.

The growth of professional attention to AI in archival work is evident across recent conferences, revealing a widespread interest and a critical need for synthesis. The 2025 Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting featured six sessions examining various aspects of archives and AI, while the SAA Research Forum presented five additional talks on the topic—making AI one of the meeting's most prominent themes.

At the international level, the scale of engagement is even more striking: the International Council of Archivists Congress in Barcelona scheduled 13 sessions

comprising 29 papers and presentations on AI and archives. This global conversation included voices from across six continents—presenters from the United States, Canada, Costa Rica, Brazil, Colombia, China, Singapore, South Korea, Gabon, Benin, South Africa, Nigeria, Finland, Austria, Spain, United Arab Emirates, Italy, Belgium, and Barbados.

The December 2024 IEEE Conference on Big Data Computational Archival Science Workshop included 18 papers. Since 2016, the new field of Computational Archival Science is primarily concerned with the growing application of artificial intelligence, and the complexities for archivists that related to issues of digital privacy, copyright and authenticity of records. In the last nine years, 119 research papers on CAS have been presented at IEEE Big Data Conference Computational Archival Science workshops. The next conference and 10th Computational Archival Science (CAS) Workshop is coming up in December 2025 in China. The papers represent five continents and 26 countries.¹

This explosive growth in AI-focused programming signals more than casual interest—it reflects archivists worldwide grappling with urgent practical challenges and seeking guidance. Yet conference presentations, while valuable, are ephemeral and reach limited audiences. Without a dedicated space for sustained scholarly attention, such as a section within a journal, these important conversations remain fragmented and inaccessible to archivists unable to attend multiple conferences.

A special section in *The American Archivist* can capture this momentum, offering archivists opportunities for sustained reflection, informed consideration, and purposeful growth—equipping the profession to meet this challenge not reactively, but with intention and professional authority. A special section will appeal to a diversity of writers, bringing together critical perspectives on an essential part of archival work.

Editorial Team

¹ Lemieux, V. L., & Marciano, R. (2025). Teaching computational archival science: context, pedagogy, and future directions. *Information Research an International Electronic Journal*, 30(iConf), 301–318. <https://doi.org/10.47989/ir30iConf47347> <https://ai-collaboratory.net/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Teaching-Computational-Archival-Science-Context-Pedagogy-and-Future-Directions-2025.pdf>

- Rosemary Pleva Flynn, Principal Librarian and Archivist for the Energy and Environmental Research Center, University of North Dakota
- Brenda S. Gunn, Associate University Librarian for Special Collections and Preservation, the University of Virginia
- Jennifer Gunter King, Associate University Librarian for Academic Engagement and Special Collections, Boston University

Editorial Division of Labor

- **Pre-Launch Planning**
 - Develop vision statement and scope for the special section
 - Define target themes/topics and desired balance (e.g., theoretical vs. practical, institutional case studies vs. research articles)
 - Establish timeline with key milestones
 - Determine editorial review criteria/rubric collaboratively
- **Call for Papers**
 - Draft and refine CFP collaboratively
 - Identify distribution outlets:
 - SAA publications (In the Loop, Archival Outlook)
 - Social media (SAA channels, editorial team networks, LinkedIn)
 - International outlets (ICA, regional archival associations)
 - Adjacent fields (digital humanities, library science, records management)
 - Stagger announcements to maximize reach
 - Respond to preliminary inquiries from potential authors
- **Decision-Making and Quality Control**
 - Hold regular editorial meetings throughout the process
 - Make accept/reject/revise decisions collectively (or establish voting threshold)
 - Ensure consistency in feedback and standards across portfolios
 - Write introduction to the special section collaboratively

Individual Editor Responsibilities (Portfolio Management)

- **Initial Review Phase**
 - Conduct preliminary assessment of assigned submissions using rubric

- Prepare summary/recommendation for editorial team discussion
- Flag any conflicts of interest early
- **Peer Review Coordination**
 - Identify and recruit appropriate peer reviewers for portfolio submissions (typically 2-3 per submission)
 - Send reviewer invitations with clear guidelines and deadlines
 - Follow up with reviewers as needed
 - Synthesize reviewer feedback into coherent editorial guidance
- **Author Communication and Shepherding**
 - Serve as primary point of contact for authors of portfolio submissions
 - Deliver editorial decisions with constructive feedback
 - Guide revisions through multiple rounds if needed
 - Ensure revised submissions adequately address reviewer concerns
 - Coordinate with authors on final copyediting and proofing

Shared Administrative Tasks

- Liaison with *The American Archivist* editor
- Maintaining submission tracking system/spreadsheet
- Monitoring deadlines and sending reminders
- Coordinating promotional efforts upon publication

Editorial and Publication Timeline Overview

- November - December 2025 - Gather information on AI content ideas
- December 2025-January 2026 Draft, revise and finalize CFP
- Spring 2026 - CFP distributed
- August 2026 - Editorial outreach at SAA 2026
- October 1, 2026 - Deadline for submissions
- November 2026 - January 2027 - Editorial team completes article selection, reading, and editing
- February 2027 - Article reviews by Amy Cooper Carey
- March 2027 - Articles sent for copyediting
- May 2027- Articles sent for layout

- Section published in Spring/Summer issue of *American Archivist*

Call for Papers

We propose that a call for papers will come in March/April 2026 with a proposal deadline of October 1, 2026. We anticipate that the special section will be included in the *American Archivist* Spring/Summer 2027 issue..

Example topics (not limited to these):

- Understanding AI through an archival lens
- Practical AI literacy
- How does AI change and enhance core archival activities
 - **Description** work, including remediation and using inclusive language
 - Providing **access** to legacy and hidden information
 - Archival **Processing** with AI
- Concerns at the intersection of AI and archives
 - Authenticity and provenance
 - Archival labor
 - Algorithmic bias
 - Legal and ethical frameworks
 - Environmental Impact of AI
- AI in Archival Education
 - AI literacy for Archivists
 - Incorporating AI into graduate studies
- Focus on uses of AI for different archival formats or collections
- Focus on uses and adoption of AI for different types of archival repositories
- Case Studies of the application of AI tools in an archival setting
 - Transcription
 - Processing backlogs
 - Records management
- General impact of AI on the profession and our communities
 - AI and archival identity
 - Practicing an ethics of care with AI
 - Recognizing handwriting

- Digital Preservation
- Digital Humanities

Recent sessions on AI at the 2025 Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Anaheim California and at the 2025 International Council of Archivists Congress in Barcelona, Spain (October 27-29)

2025 Society of American Archivist

- Session 103: Avoiding the Abyss: Archives, Audiences, and Artificial Intelligence
- Session 205: Balancing Bots and Bias: Generative AI and Archival Description
- Session 304: Crowdsourcing, CustomGPT and Inclusivity: How AI is Changing Archives
- Expo Hall - Description, Discovery, and Digital Access: Applying AI to Advance Archival Value with JStor Seeklight
- Session 501: Accounting for AI: Surveying the Archival Adoption of Artificial Intelligence for Access.
- Session 601: From Pixels to Metadata: Reviving the Music Index with AI Powered Archival Structuring

2025 SAA Research Forum

- Early Birds in the Coal Mine: Business Archivists as Partners in AI Development and Implement
- AI is for Access: An Investigation into AI adoption
- Read the Dang Article: Archivists Views on AI and Peer REview
- Metadata Remediation through Human-AI Collaboration
- Enhancing Access to Legacy of Slavery Records using Generative AI

2025 International Council of Archivists' Congress. 13 sessions with 29 papers/presentations.

- AI tools for Archives
 - Clio-X - British Columbia
 - Project of describing audio - Costa Rica

- Using Transkribus for finding aid descriptive work - Austria
- AI in Archival Education
 - AI reshaping archival work - Singapore
 - Competencies for the AI literature archivist - Columbia
 - AI in archival education in Brazil - Brazil
 - AI and the transformation of archival studies - China
- Reimagining Records in the age of AI
 - Fake documents in electronic document management - Gabon (Central Africa)
 - Inclusive Metadata using AI - USA
 - AI and the Records Continuation Model - Finland
 - Open Document Format and AI - Republic of South Korea
- AI and Archival Practice
 - AI and archival identity - China
 - Engineering with Humanity, USA
 - AI and archival processes - Columbia
 - Developing Countries and AI - Nigeria
- Tools for Archival Accessibility
 - AI for paleographic transcription - Brazil
- Contemporary perspectives in archival work
 - AI for handwritten music recognition, Spain
- The Future of Archival Education
 - integrating AI and emerging technologies into professional training - Benin
- Resilient Archives: Integrating AI, Access, and Accountability in the Digital Age
 - AI-powered transcription models - USA
 - Records Management and AI - Republic of South Korea
- Reconstructing Memory: Artificial Intelligence, Archival Practice, and Digital Ethics
 - AI and classification of university archives - Brazil
 - AI and recognizing handwritten Chinese characters - China
 - Open data, AI and big data - United Arab Emirates
 - Using AI to reconstitute archival aggregations and create metadata - Italy and Belgium

- Intelligent Archives; From AI Tools to Theoretical Models for Enhanced Access
 - Using AI in an archival openness review in China - China
- Preserving Trust: AI, Standards, and the Future of Digital Records
 - AI applications in digital preservation - South Africa
- Modernising Archives Responsibly: From AI ethics to Open Source Solutions
 - AI and policy - Spain
- AI Archives and Accessibility
 - Digital Humanities and AI - Spain
 - AI and archival data - Spain and USA
- Keynote: AI Ready Archives, SPAIN
- Keynote: AI, decoloniality and reparations - Barbados

[2024 IEEE Computational Archival Science Workshop, Washington DC](#)

- A Computational Review of the Literature of Computational Archival Science (CAS): Advancing Archival Theory in the Age of the Digital Tsunami and the Vanishing Box Problem
- Exploring Large Language Models for Analyzing Changes in Web Archive Content: A Retrieval-Augmented Generation Approach
- Historic Black Lives Matter: Recovering Hidden Knowledge in Archives Through Interactive Data Visualization
- Can Generative AI Uncover Hidden Patterns in Historical Domestic Traffic Ads Through Data Analysis? A ChatLoS-DTA Exploration
- Ontology-driven knowledge base for digital humanities: Restructuring knowledge organization at the library of the Folkwang University of the Arts
- Myanmar Law Cases and Proceedings Retrieval with GraphRAG
- Maturity Assessment of Appraisal Processes in the AI Age: Ongoing Framework and Measuring Method
- Maturity Assessment of Appraisal Processes in the AI Age: Ongoing Framework and Measuring Method AI-Ready Data: Knowledge Extraction from Archival Lab Notebooks Automating Chapter-Level Classification for Electronic Theses and Dissertations

- Model Selection for HERITAGE-AI: Evaluating LLMs for Contextual Data Analysis of Maryland's Domestic Traffic Ads
- Sifting U. S. Census Records with Computer Vision and Machine Learning
- Video Content Summarization with Large Language-Vision Models
- Beyond Essentials: Nuanced and Diverse Text-to-video Retrieval
- Computational Archival Processes & Assessable Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities
- An Ethical Reflection Aid for Responsible AI in Computational Archival Science
- Can GPT-4 Think Computationally about Digital Archival Tasks?
- Training in Computational Archival Science: Do CAS Educational Frameworks meet Professional Expectations?