A Brief History of the Electronic Records Section

The predecessor to the Electronic Records Section of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) was the Electronic Records Roundtable (ERR), which had two trial runs as SAA sessions before becoming an official roundtable. ERR held its first meeting at the September 1992 SAA meeting in Montreal.

In 1993, at the SAA conference New Orleans, President Edie Hedlin asked the ERR to transform itself into the Electronic Records Section. Hedlin's reasoning was that roundtables within the SAA are merely informal groups that promote discussion on a specific topic. Sections, however, are more formal and also sponsor sessions on topics of interest for the annual meetings, participate in outreach and education, and respond to proposed rules and standards.

Given the importance of the issue of electronic records in the archival world, it was time to transform the roundtable into a section. So Tom Ruller and Nancy McGovern met in Albany to devise the operating structure for the group, and the roundtable held a mid-year meeting in 1994 at the National Archives and Records Administration to make the transition.

The Electronic Records Section (ERS) held its first official meeting at SAA in 1994. For the 1995 SAA meeting in Washington, DC, the section sponsored a series of electronic records sessions and hosted an information open house with representatives from affiliated organizations, including the American Society for Information Science (ASIS) and the International Association of Social Science Information Service and Technology (IASSIST). In 1999 the ERS annual meeting hosted a talk concerning document and records management applications. At that same SAA meeting, the ERS sponsored a discussion forum relating to current research in electronic records management.

Over the years, the ERS has taken seriously its responsibility to foster good management of all electronic records, especially those that are archival. To those ends, the section reviews a number of session proposals on electronic records for the SAA annual meeting and endorses the best of those. The section also often responds to suggested changes in laws and rules governing the management of electronic records. In January of 2002, the section sent the National Archives and Records Administration a detailed response to a Public Citizen Petition related to portions of 36 Code of Federal Regulations 1234, "Electronic Records Management." In September 2002, the section responded to the National Archives' proposed program for redesigning records management at the federal government level.

For more on recent ERS activities, please see the website. You can find annual reports, bylaws, recent issues of the section newsletter and stories on hot topics at http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers/index.asp. For more on who's who in the ERS, please see the webpage on ERS Leaders at http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers/leaders.asp.

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