SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring, 2002

A Look Back at the 2001 MER Conference

By Nancy Kunde, CRM, CA
Records Officer, University of Wisconsin-Madison

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See whole story...

SAA ERS Meeting Minutes Summary

Washington DC
August 31, 2001

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See whole story...

Featured Website

New electronic records developments on-line

CIC University Archivists Group Electronic Records Working Group, http://www-personal.umich.edu/~deromedi/CIC/cic.htm

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DISCUSSION GROUP UPDATES: Standards and Membership Needs

Standards: One initiative discussed at the annual meeting was the joint ARMA/SAA project on Conversion and Migration Criteria for Records Keeping Systems...

Membership: The SAA Electronic Records Section membership survey is available at http://www-personal.umich.edu/~deromedi/ersurvey.pdf

See whole story...

Standards for an Electronic Records Policy.

See whole story...

ECURE 2001
Mesa, AZ October 12-13

by Jennifer Jacobs
University Archivist, UC Irvine

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See whole story...

FROM THE ERS WEBMASTER

Hello, my name is Chris Frey, and I am the new webmaster for the Electronic Records Section...

See whole story...

| ERS Home | Annual Reports | Bylaws | Electronic Mailing List | Leaders | Meeting Minutes | News|

Page last updated: 24 February 2004

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The 9th Annual Managing Electronic Records Conference (MER) sponsored by Cohasset Associates Inc. was held September 23-26, 2001, at the Westin Hotel in Chicago. Conference attendees, nearly 400 in number, came from a wide variety of industries and both the public and private sectors. Perhaps one of the major appeals of attending MER is the fact that you can find many, certainly not all, of the major electronic records themes and speakers at one event. In a rather compact time frame, just two and half days, one can get in-depth information on both practical and theoretical aspects of ERM, electronic records management.

One of the more interesting plenary presentations was Julie Gable's talk on ERM software. She is a consultant and has worked with organizations on implementing this type of software product. Her presentation, "A Look Into the Future: The Factors Driving Electronic Records Management Software (ERMS) Changes," provided an assessment of the experiences of some companies that have installed ERMS products. She related some lessons learned from those applications, and a look forward at what may be on the horizon in the way of new developments in this area. As someone who has looked at products such as TRIM and OpenText Livelink with hopeful anticipation, an independent look at the problems and pitfalls as well as the potential benefits of implementing these packages was welcome and revealing of the realities behind these mega systems.

Gable's assessment of the experiences of companies having implemented ERMS stressed planning as well as practical implementation issues. She noted that a pattern emerges in reviewing the installations--the necessity for better internal infrastructure before bringing in an ERMS. She stressed the need for attention and improvement in all of the following areas: policy development, understanding of the business processes, strategic planning, and understanding of how the system will support business needs of the enterprise. Attention to the last item will greatly increase the likelihood of successful implementation. She stated that all of ERMS packages need to be customized and customization is a major cost.

One of her messages was that records management is going to have to become document centered. In the analog world records managers were able to impose their concepts on records. She noted records managers have frequently been in the business of imposing order on chaos. However, in the electronic world records management records managers will not be doing the classification. Users will carry this function in compliance with a classification plan. She stressed the importance of user based classification schemes that will permit subject/topic searches across the spectrum of corporate records and across all media. She hinted that records managers may need to take some

lessons from library science in that there may not be one classification scheme but several that will need to be employed. (She mentioned a forthcoming article in the Information Management Journal on automated classification systems.)

From her discussion of the practical experiences using ERMS, she moved to a discussion of software, comparing document management and enterprise content management packages and the potential role of records management in the evolving software arena. Her comments were very insightful and thought provoking. She noted that records management software will likely become embedded in other software products and that it will likely be among many middleware packages that include such things as data transformation, routing, directory services, and process management. On her list of hot topics for future ERMS functionality: archiving of web pages and the whole area of digital preservation. On the down side, she noted that ERMS developers still do not seem to understand what records management is. She pointed out the use of the Gartner definition of records management as "print stream data."

Many of the MER presenters stressed familiar electronic records management themes: early involvement in the process, assignment of responsibility, media independent retention schedules, and the importance of policy development. Some of these familiar themes were frequently presented in the context of practical working experiences however. Tim Slavin's session on "Training Traditional Records Managers to be Electronic Records Managers" was one such session. Tim discussed his experience with conducting a training program for traditional records manager positions in a State government setting and gave an honest assessment of the challenges involved in educating a broad spectrum of employees on a very complex topic. Similarly, Laurie Fischer's presentation on a "Checklist for Electronic Records Management" provided the mix of the familiar ERM concepts with practical aspects of implementation.

This particular MER conference placed a significant emphasis on legal issues. Rae Cogar, Esq. Cohasset Associates, outlined the many complexities behind the current hot button issue of privacy and the Internet. The Conference finished with a keynote presentation featuring Professor Charles Nesson, Harvard Law School, who led a role-playing exercise featuring many of the presenters from the MER event. The exercise was not only effective in demonstrating the many electronic records issues that can come quickly into focus in a court case, but also the need for close collaboration among key organizational components; i.e. legal, information technology, records management, and management; in order for ERM to be successfully carried out.

Finally, Bob Williams has been conducting an annual survey about the status of electronic records management in connection with MER since its inception. He closed the Conference with a brief overview of the most recent survey findings. From the survey results, it seems clear that there is still a great deal of work to be done in terms of organizations developing and implementing effective ERM or even RM programs. While there is increasing awareness of the importance of ERM particularly as it relates to legal issues, fully operational records management programs are still out of reach for many organizations.

The content of the MER Conference is extremely good, and it is very well managed. The size of the conference is a significant factor in its success. It is large enough to attract a broad spectrum of participants and speakers, but small enough that informal conversation can take place. MER provided solid educational and professional development sessions in a setting that permits an easy dialogue with colleagues. The MER Conference is probably not the only event to obtain up-to-date information on ERM. It is, however, a good conference to attend to get thoroughly immersed in the topic and touch base with many of the leaders in the field.

Recognizing that archivists and records managers are often lone voices for these efforts in their organizations, it would be beneficial for them to seek staff from their legal, audit, and information technology departments to accompany them to MER or whatever conference they determine is best suited to their organization's needs. Getting a group together to attend a conference is not an easy task either, but other professionals who share responsibilities for organizational record keeping can benefit from attending specialty conferences such as MER as much or more than the organization's records professional. However, an advantage to the MER conference is that two sets of CDs with all the conference presentations are included in the registration fee, as well as a

substantial notebook with all the handouts. This permits those listening to the CD to follow along just as though they were sitting in the session. With these "take home assets," it is possible to share the benefits of the conference with others when you return.

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| ERS Home | Annual Reports | Bylaws | Electronic Mailing List | Leaders | Meeting Minutes | News|

Page last updated: 24 February 2004

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

SAA ERS Meeting Minutes Summary

Washington DC
August 31, 2001

Full text of the minutes is available at
http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers/2001mtg.asp

Cheryl Stadel-Bevans, Chair of the ERS, led the meeting. The Section held elections for two leadership positions, with Geof Huth becoming our new Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect and Phil Bantin being appointed to the Steering Committee. Cal Lee became the new Section Chair at the end of the meeting. Jennifer Jacobs agreed to become the new newsletter editor and Harold Thiele the new webmaster (replaced by Christopher Frey in January). We would like to thank outgoing steering committee members Tom Ruller, Anne Marie Phillips, and Chuck Thomas for their service to the section.

The meeting included the following announcements:

Kris Kiesling encouraged section members to submit session proposals for next year's meeting.

Tom Battle, SAA Council Liaison to the ERS, asked members to let him know if there were any concerns or issues that he could take to Council for us.

Steve Hussman encouraged everyone to attend the annual ECURE conference in Arizona.

Rosemary Pleva Flynn announced the formation of a new discussion list for ERS members and that a survey of members' interests would be available soon.

Cheryl Stadel-Bevans reiterated the need for session proposals, offered the section's assistance in developing them, and asked that those seeking ERS endorsement submit them to the section by October 1.

Members divided into three groups, who each then reported back to the section on what they had discussed.

Standards

Discussion Leader: Nancy Kunde

Participants: Bruce Ambacher, Terry Baxter, Garth Clarke, Fynnette Eaton, Pat Galloway, Jerry Handfield, Steve Hussman, Randy Jones, Janice Krahn, Nancy Kunde, Margaret Merrick, Jonathan Nelson, Richard Pearce-Moses, Betsy Pittman, Sarah Polirer, Rose Roberto, Tom Rosko

The group discussed four general topics:

What types of standards efforts are undertaken by which groups? The group recommended the creation of both a standards clearinghouse and the appointment of a liaison to work with the SAA

Standards Committee.

The need to identify all the standards groups that are working in areas of interest to or directly impact the work of archivists and records managers.

The need for a common vocabulary for discussing electronic records issues.

The current joint project between ARMA and SAA on Conversion and Migration Criteria for Records Keeping Systems.

[See sidebar on for an update from the Standards discussion group.]

Legislation

Discussion Leader: Cal Lee

Participants: Christopher Frey, Geof Huth, Paul Lasewicz, Cal Lee, Mike Miller, Cheryl Stadel-Bevans

Discussion focused primarily on intellectual property concerns, specifically those related to the anti-circumvention provisions of the Digital Millenium Copyright Act. The group identified some specific issues related to file formats, such as PDF, which are openly documented by still owned by specific vendors. Cal Lee volunteered to promote further discussion of these issues through online forums and to possibly initiate the drafting of a white paper.

Membership Needs and Information Sharing

Discussion Leaders: Nancy Deromedi, Rosemary Pleva Flynn, and David Read

Participants: Phil Bantin, Richard Boyden, Mark Conrad, Jean Deken, Nancy Deromedi, Rosemary Flynn, Howard Lowell, David Read, Jill Tatem

The discussion focused on three main topics: a membership survey, dissemination of electronic records information, and the content to be shared.

Nancy Deromedi and David Read presented to the group a survey they created. The group decided to review and possibly revise the survey in order to then distribute it through several electronic mailing lists.

Regarding information dissemination, the group discussed the recently created Yahoo! Groups mailing list, the need for contributions to the ERS newsletter, and possible revisions to the ERS Website.

The group identified a variety of different types of information resources that the ERS could provide, deciding that work group members should take responsibility for resources in specific areas.

[See sidebar on for an update from the Membership Needs discussion group.]

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Page last updated: 24 February 2004

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

Discussion group updates: Standards & Membership Needs

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY AND MEMBERSHIP NEEDS UPDATE

The SAA Electronic Records Section membership survey is available at www-personal.umich.edu/~deromedi/ersurvey.pdf. The membership survey is the first phase of activity planned for this year by the Membership Needs and Information Sharing discussion group at the annual meeting in September. After the surveys are returned, an on-line directory will be compiled. The directory will include names, electronic records specialization, and, for those who are willing, contact information.

To move ahead with the second phase-constructing new and strengthening old communications channels-the Membership Needs Committee requires a couple of volunteers to review Cal Lee's Directory of Electronic Recordkeeping Resources (http://www-personal.si.umich.edu/~calz/ermlinks/) for possible inclusion on the ERS website, and to put a procedure in place for the endorsement of links from the site. Prospective volunteers should contact Nancy Deromedi at deromedi@umich.edu or Chris Frey at freyce@umich.edu

STANDARDS DISCUSSION UPDATE

One initiative discussed at the annual meeting was the joint ARMA/SAA project on Conversion and Migration Criteria for Records Keeping Systems. According to Nan Kunde, one of the coordinators for the project, six working teams have been established, and writing has begun. The teams are interested in comments from archivists about whether the drafts are maintaining an appropriate mix of theory and practical advice. To participate in this evaluation, please contact Nancy Kunde at nkunde@library.wisc.edu, (608)262-3284 or Kermitt Nicks at kermitt.nicks@srs.gov.

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| ERS Home | Annual Reports | Bylaws | Electronic Mailing List | Leaders | Meeting Minutes | News|

Page last updated: 24 February 2004

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

From the ERS Webmaster

Chris Frey
Records & Information Analyst, Pfizer

Hello, my name is Chris Frey, and I am the new webmaster for the Electronic Records Section. I recently received my Masters Degree from the University of Michigan School of Information in Archives and Records Management, and just began as Records and Information Analyst at Pfizer Global Research and Development in Ann Arbor.

My role is to facilitate development of the ERS website, which will have a new, theoretically "permanent" (hey, we are the e-recs group, little of this is "permanent" without our efforts) address very soon at the SAA website. My plan is to follow up on the many great ideas expressed at the Section meeting in Washington last year for building on the website's content areas.

I am open to further input and invite everyone to contribute to the ongoing development of the website by submitting ideas, links, papers and additional content. Please take a look at the Meeting Minutes for 2001 and think about what YOU would like for YOUR website: http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers. You can contact me at freyce@umich.edu.

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SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

Featured Website - CIC University Archivists Group

New electronic records developments on-line

CIC University Archivists Group Electronic Records Working Group
http://www-personal.umich.edu/~deromedi/CIC/cic.htm

The CIC University Archivists Group, CIC UAG, has recently approved a statement on Standards for an Electronic Records Policy. The CIC (Committee on Institutional Cooperation), with headquarters in Champaign, Illinois, is the academic consortium of the Big Ten universities and the University of Chicago. Its programs encompass nearly all aspects of university activity. CIC archivists and records managers have recognized the critical importance of having electronic records addressed as an institutional policy issue. In developing the Standards statement, the CIC archivists focused on identifying key components of an electronic records policy that could then be customized to meet individual CIC institutional settings, needs, and environments.

All three members of the CIC UAG working group, Nan Kunde, University of Wisconsin, Nancy Deromedi, Bentley Historical Library, and Phil Bantin, University of Indiana-Bloomington, are also members of the SAA electronic records section.

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| ERS Home | Annual Reports | Bylaws | Electronic Mailing List | Leaders | Meeting Minutes | News|

Page last updated: 24 February 2004

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

ECURE 2001

Jennifer Jacobs
University Archivist, University of California-Irvine

ECURE annually provides an opportunity to address the preservation and access issues of electronic records at colleges and universities. According to its publicity, ECURE's goals include coordinating efforts among record creators, technology professionals, archivists, librarians, and records managers; supporting the efficient use of technology in university administration; and encouraging the development of practical approaches to preserving the historic record.

ECURE 2001 suffered some loss of participation due to the events of September. About 40 people attended. However, all but one of the sessions went forward as planned, and the event was well received. Rob Spindler, one of the co-chairs, reported that two-thirds of the attendees were information professionals, and one-third university administrators.

Clifford Lynch, Executive Director of the Coalition for Networked Information, gave the keynote address. He set the focus for the next two days: the subtle, cumulative ways that university records have been completely reinvented, and other "things administrators would really rather not hear about." Lynch stressed that although we can't know the parameters of the electronic record situation yet, we must move ahead because digital information cannot survive under "benign neglect." Media that will last for a thousand years is not the solution. Archivists must actively manage the bits and formats, which are much more intractable.

He then gave some examples of the changing political landscape of records and cultural artifacts. The Library of Congress, for instance, received $100 million from Congress to start a national digitization project, but $75 million is contingent on matching funds, services or equipment from other cultural institutions. Lynch wondered if the cultural record is in danger of becoming a service in more politically powerful, commercial hands, as indicated by the music industry's movement toward renting out music from a pool in their control. Finally, he discussed the murky space between students' course work and the web, especially as represented by courseware: Who owns it? Do students understand their rights? How long should it be kept? Does signing up for the course imply consent to be posted on the web? How much has plagiarism risen because of the web?

Lynch finished with the observation that collaboration will be key to smoothly managed electronic records. Archivists' perspective on authenticity may be the most important tool for archivists to bring to this quest for common understanding.

The sessions following the keynote address were conducted in conference rooms surrounding a foliaged indoor courtyard onto which 8 floors of hotel rooms opened. This small courtyard, safe from the stifling Arizona heat, was ideal for holding all of the participants close to the session rooms during breaks for networking. Regardless of the physical arrangement, the author was unable to attend concurrent sessions, so the brief notes below represent only a sample of the presentations given.

Donald Skupsky, JD, CRM, FAI, MIT spoke on "Legal Requirements for Electronic Records."

Though the law varies from state to state, Skupsky offered the uniform laws, which many states use to fashion their own laws-one frequent exception is California. The uniform laws relevant to electronic records include: Uniform Rules of Evidence, Uniform Photographic Copies of Business and Public Records as Evidence Act, Uniform Preservation of Private Business Records Act, and the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA).

According to Skupsky, intent is a key measure used by the courts to establish compliance with the law. One of the most important steps for a university to take is to develop procedures that include training and audit components, and to follow through on them. The establishment of such a system makes a business compliant with part of the Uniform Rules of Evidence. The thorough documentation of the system indicates its intention to be compliant, even if circumstances or misunderstanding result in an instance of non-compliance to another part of the Rules.

Skupsky has strong opinions about email. He recommends that email should be defined as "non-record" and should self-destruct after 30 days. But he acknowledged that archivists may not feel comfortable with such disregard for possible content in email. A specific procedure in place to convert an email into a "record" would ensure that only messages the author intended to be a record would be saved.

Sessions by Steven Warona of EDUCAUSE and Kathleen Kimball, Information Security Officer at Penn State, dealt with broader university computer use. Warona maintains that universities are moving too slowly in response to technological change. Attempts to police the sites students visit is beside the point: don't fall behind technology because, as a former president of Harvard claimed, "universities are ISPs that charge tuition." Kimball describes technology in the university setting quite differently. Rather than a marketing tool, she sees it as a highly volatile security hazard, even a potential terrorist weapon. Easy, distributed access, wide-ranging users and uses, and high-speed connectivity are conducive to the anonymous use of university resources. And anonymity is vital to someone interested in wreaking havoc through floods, worms, and denial of service attacks.

Wendy Duff, a professor at the University of Toronto, presented "Metadata: An Introduction." Data about data, she says, is many things to many people. To librarians, it is a bibliographic record, represented, for instance, by the elements in Dublin Core. To information technologists, it is the field properties and schema used to provide information about the architecture and rules of a particular database. To archivists, it is contextual information, and the front matter of a finding aid. The number of opinions is part of the cause for the variety in the several Metadata initiatives that Duff touched on next. A recent endeavor that builds on XML is EAC-Encoded Archival Context. EAC will describe the context of records in the manner that EAD describes the records themselves. Others she mentioned include the ISO-who will tackle metadata after their electronic records standard comes out-and the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System from the Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems.

For more information, I recommend looking at Wendy Duff's PowerPoint presentation on the ECURE website at http://www.asu.edu/it/events/ecure/. Duff's slide "Metadata Facts to Remember" is particularly thought-provoking, but the website also includes almost all of the PowerPoint presentations given at these sessions and many that are not mentioned here. The conference materials give a good indication of the rigorous focus provided by the ECURE co-chairs, and admirably maintained by the speakers.

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Page last updated: 24 February 2004

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2002

Notices:

- **Didn't see your news here? Submit it for the next issue. Contact Jennifer Jacobs at jljacobs@uci.edu.**

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| ERS Home | Annual Reports | Bylaws | Electronic Mailing List | Leaders | Meeting Minutes | News|

Page last updated: 24 February 2004