SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION NEWSLETTER

Spring 2003

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- From The Chair, by Geof Huth.
- NARA's New "Access to Archival Databases" System.
- Featured Website
- ERS Online Communication Survey, by Christine Di Bella.
- Notices

From the Chair

by Geof Huth
Manager, Records Service
Development, New York State
Archives

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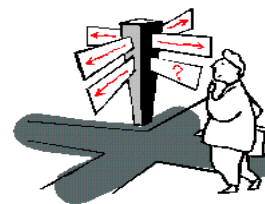
See whole story...

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AAD SYSTEM NOW OPERATIONAL

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See whole story...

Featured Website

New electronic records developments on-line

NARA's Electronic Records
http://www.archives.gov /electronic_records_archives /index.html

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From the Chair

by Geof Huth
Manager, Records Service Development, New York State Archives

Currently, our section is embarking on an interesting new quest, one to develop an online press kit. The section can use this kit to promote its activities, teach the press and others about archives and electronic records, and introduce our section to the world. In some years, certainly, the section has more need for a press kit than others, depending on what issues and questions come to us. But the idea is an ingenious one.
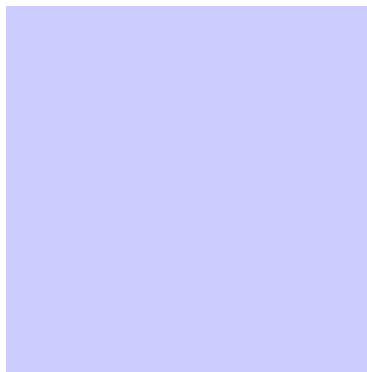
This concept was the brainchild of section member Kris "Kobi" Kobialka, who is also the one putting the press kit together for us. Soon, if a journalist or other person is interested in a brief introduction to archives, electronic records, or the Electronic Records Section, we will be able to point the person to information on our website. If someone is desperate for some little piece of information on the section, that person can find the information easily on our website. And we will no longer have to email (or worse: fax or mail) people information about the section and our issues. In the near future, we expect to include brief bios of section members, so that a journalist who has just interviewed one of the members can find a brief run-down of that person's accomplishments.

One of our hopes for this new press kit is that the section will be better able to promote archives in general and archival electronic records in particular. We are not putting this kit together because we are sure there will be a great call for this kit, but we want to be flexible and to be prepared for any eventuality. When I began this small column, for instance, I was in a small cabin on a small lake in the southern Adirondacks, surrounded by five feet of snow everywhere and almost no people, but with access to electricity and a telephone line. That would be all I would need to hook up my laptop to the Internet and scout a bit of information about the Electronic Records Section—assuming, of course, I knew we existed!

If you visit the Electronic Records Section's website at http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers/, you'll soon be able to take a look at the press kit. And if you have any suggestions, please get back to me or Kobi or any member of the section's leadership.

Image on this page from Alcohol Risk Assessment Guide: Environmental Approaches to Prevention, by Barbara E. Ryan, Tom

Colthurst, and Lance Segars (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, revised 1997), pp. 29 and 41. Reprinted with permission. For more information, visit the Center's Web site at www.edc.org/hec.

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On 12 February 2003, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) released the "Access to Archival Databases" (AAD) System to the public. AAD provides researchers with online access to over 50 million historical electronic records organized in over 350 databases that were created by some 20 Federal agencies. The long-term plan calls for the program to be expanded to over 500 databases.

The AAD System is the first publicly accessible application developed under the auspices of the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) Program. The ERA program seeks to address the challenges of preserving and increasing the variety and volume of government records that have been created and stored in electronic form.

AAD enables researchers to search, retrieve, print out, and download records. Researchers will need to determine in advance the series and file units of interest before initiating their research. To access the System, tap into: http://www.archives.gov/aad/.

Excerpted from NCH WASHINGTON UPDATE (Vol. 9, #8; 21 February 2003) by Bruce Craig rbcraig@historycoalition.org, National Coalition for History (NCH)

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Featured Website

New electronic records developments on-line

NARA's Electronic Records http://www.archives.gov/electronic_records_archives/index.html

The most daunting challenge facing archivists today is how to adequately care for, preserve, and provide access to electronic records. The technological solutions we have at hand today (migration, saving in stable formats, etc.) all have obvious problems associated with them and all may become obsolete as electronic documents and formats become more complex over time. The solution of all too many archivists has been to ignore the problem: to assume that sufficient documentation will survive in paper form and to avoid the troubling problems associated with electronic records.

But the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has, to its credit, launched a large, multi-year, multi-pronged project to study the issue of what a true electronic records archives (ERA) would be and to design a long-term solution to the preservation of electronic records. NARA's focus, as it should be, is currently on designing a digital archives that will preserve archival electronic records of the federal government for as long as they're needed.

NARA's current design activities for the ERA involve computer science, engineering, and archival theory and focus on elaborating the archival business model for a proposed ERA system articulating the necessary information management architecture determining what the specific system components will be.

NARA is working on this research with a number of partners and held four "user dialog sessions" across the country in February to get more information from possible users of the system. Although NARA is satisfied that a successful ERA can be built, much work remains before the ERA will be a reality. This is important research, and anyone interested in the management of archival electronic records should pay close attention to where this might lead our profession.

Submitted by Geof Huth, ERS Chair

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The ERS Online Communication Survey

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At last summer's ERS meeting in Birmingham, the membership discussed a number of issues related to the ERECS-L mailing list. Concerns were expressed about the low traffic and relative difficulty in establishing and maintaining meaningful discussion on the list. Some of those present at the meeting also expressed interest in increased communications options and functionality, including document sharing, the ability to establish ad hoc lists related to particular issues, and the ability to send particular announcements to ERS members only (the discussion can be found in section 6.3.1 of the ERS meeting minutes, available online at http://www.archivists.org/saagroups /ers/2002mtg.asp). A group was established to investigate these issues and various software options and report the findings back to the membership.

As part of that work, Christine Di Bella and Rose Roberto , with assistance from Kevin Glick, Rosemary Pleva Flynn, Jean Marie Deken and Brian Doyle, have created a brief online survey to assess experience and interest in using various online communication tools. The survey is now available on the ERS website (http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/ers). Please take several minutes to take the survey and offer your thoughts on communication options for discussing electronic records issues. The survey results will be reported at the ERS meeting in Los Angeles in August. If you have questions about the survey or the project, please contact Christine (cdibella@umich.edu) or Rose (rose@mygarden.com).

Thank you in advance for your feedback.

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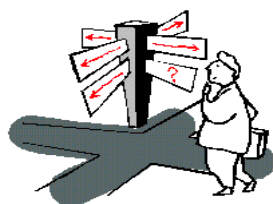
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Do you have something to share with the membership of ERS? Contact Jennifer Jacobs at jljacobs@uci.edu to put it in the next newsletter, or Jean Marie Deken at jmdeken@slac.stanford.edu to put it on the website.

The Electronic Records Section meeting in Los Angeles is on Friday, August 22, from 8 am to 10 am.

SAA ELECTRONIC RECORDS SECTION 2002-2003 Leadership:

CHAIR:	Geof Huth, New York State Archives
VICE CHAIR:	Rosemary Pleva Flynn, University of North Dakota
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