

# **Actors, Artifacts, and Enduring Value in Architecture**

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## **Abstract:**

A story of contemporary architecture is one of making things – making places, making buildings, making drawings, making models, making decisions. It is a messy story with many actors. Each of these actors plays a role in the history of architecture, the construction of the built environment, and the creation of architectural archives. This presentation will share my dissertation research on architecture as socio-technical practice, wherein the decisions and negotiations of actors in everyday practice effect artifact creation, management, and preservation. My argument is that all participants in architectural practice are making archival decisions when they actively select what to make, what to discard, and what to keep.

The story I want to tell about architecture requires investigation through three methods. The historical examination of computer technologies for architecture situates my understanding of the artifacts of practice within the context of debate about the value of specific tools for architecture and discussions about the role of an architect within the industry. A reflective analysis of learning architectural technology describes my work to understand two specific tools used in architecture, AutoCAD and Revit. Finally, an investigation of people and artifacts in one architectural practice provides an opportunity to engage in discussion about the value of architectural artifacts with architects. Drawing on archival literature and the results of my research, I explore approaching the preservation of architectural artifacts as traces of socio-technical networks.

## **About the Author:**

*Katie Pierce Meyer* is a PhD Candidate at the the University of Texas at Austin School of Information. She is also the Head of the Fine Arts & Humanities Subject Team and Humanities Librarian for Architecture & Planning at the University of Texas at Austin. She received a BA in Philosophy from Southwestern University, an MS in Information Studies and an MA in Architectural History from the University of Texas at Austin. She brings her background as an archivist and training as an architectural historian to her research on the socio-technical environment in which architectural records are created. Her primary concern is a disconnection between contemporary practices in architecture, engineering, and construction and the ability of cultural institutions to preserve the industry's records. She believes that actively working with the community that generates records is crucial to the long-term preservation of records.