

Digital Dilemmas: Archiving E-Mail

NANCY ADGENT and LYNDA SCHMITZ FUHRIG

Abstract: The Collaborative Electronic Records Project (CERP) of the Rockefeller Archive Center and the Smithsonian Institution Archives is a three-year project to develop a strategy and the means to preserve historically important information created in electronic formats by the two institutions' depositors. E-mail records are the primary focus of the project because of their importance in documenting daily activities, complying with regulatory and legal matters, and providing information to future scholars, as well as their vulnerability to obliteration. A parallel goal is to share project products with the archival and non-profit communities.

Now in the final year of the project, we have captured, verified, and tested sample e-mail caches and have developed guidance documents and processing forms to facilitate archiving e-mail in digital form. A model technical infrastructure system is being developed, and we are selecting metadata elements and schema for deposit into and access from a long-term storage repository. Nancy Adgent will address the challenges of accessioning e-mail, the processing forms and best practices documents developed for archivists' use, and the guidance documents prepared for depositor education. Lynda Schmitz Fuhrig will provide a demonstration of the parser the group is using for xml output of the email collections. Discussion also will include the elements of an Archival Information Packet (AIP) for deposit into the long-term repository DSpace.

About the authors:

Nancy Adgent is a Project Archivist at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) for the Collaborative Electronic Records Project being conducted in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution Archives. She developed best practices guidelines and other documents related to archiving e-mail, and wrote several articles and participated in team presentations (<http://siarchives.si.edu/cerp/cerpindex.htm>). She researched, wrote, and curated onsite and online RAC exhibits, "Their Bellies are Being Satisfied: The Rockefeller Quest to Conquer Hunger" and authored companion articles in the RAC and other newsletters. (See <http://www.rockarch.org/exhibits/agriculture/>.)

Nancy authored entries for the *Tennessee Encyclopedia of History & Culture* and ABC-CLIO's *Women in the American Civil War Encyclopedia*, and penned articles and book reviews for various history publications. Previously at the Center for Historic Preservation, Middle Tennessee State University, Nancy compiled *Holding On to the Homestead: A Guide to Programs, Services, and Opportunities for Tennessee's Farmers*. Her work at the center pertained to the Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area, African-American history, and the Century Farms initiative, and involved research, writing, and editing tourism brochures, historic house tour interpretation, exhibits, and educational materials. She also researched and wrote nominations for several properties placed on the National Register of Historic Places. She gained archival experience from a private estate collection, the Rutherford County Archives, and the Albert Gore, Sr.

Research Center, MTSU, where she co-authored *Middle Tennessee State University: A Pictorial History*. She earned a masterss in History/Public History from Middle Tennessee State University in 2003 after a 25-year career as a commercial property/casualty insurance underwriter.

Lynda Schmitz Fuhrig is a Project Archivist at Smithsonian Institution Archives Electronic Records Division. Lynda joined the Smithsonian Institution Archives in August 2005. She previously served as Editorial Library Director at the Army Times Publishing Co. in Springfield, Va., where she was responsible for electronically archiving nine print publications, managing the library's collection of microfilm, bound volumes, and books, and conducting research for staff. She also worked as a librarian, news editor, copyeditor, page designer, and reporter at Knight Ridder-Tribune in Washington, D.C., and various newspapers in Illinois.

She has a master's degree in History from the University of Illinois-Springfield. Her master's thesis was on the Mexican population in the Chicago area during the Great Depression. Lynda also has worked on various historical projects, including obituary and slave birth databases, at the Alexandria (Va.) Local History/Special Collection Library.