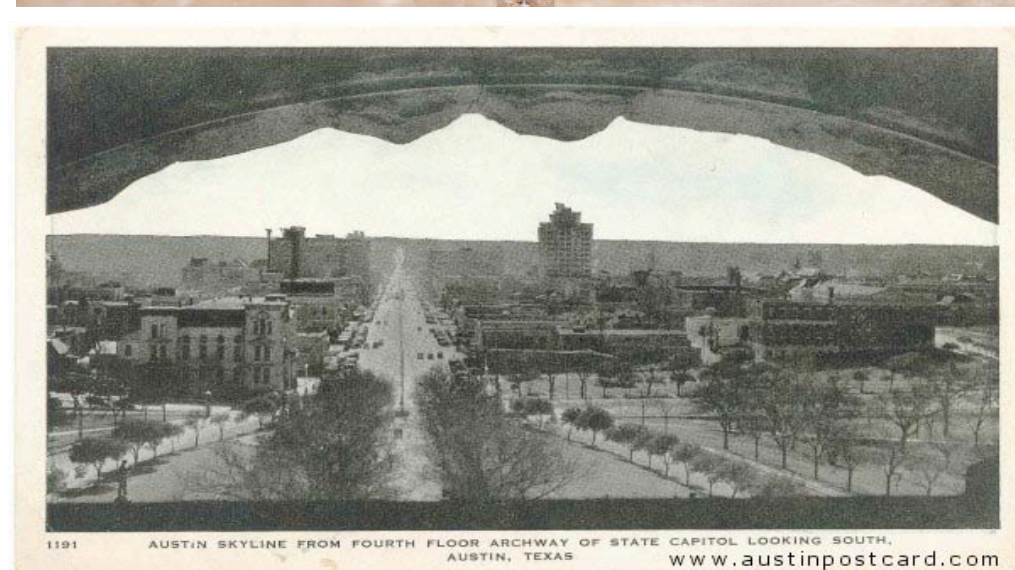
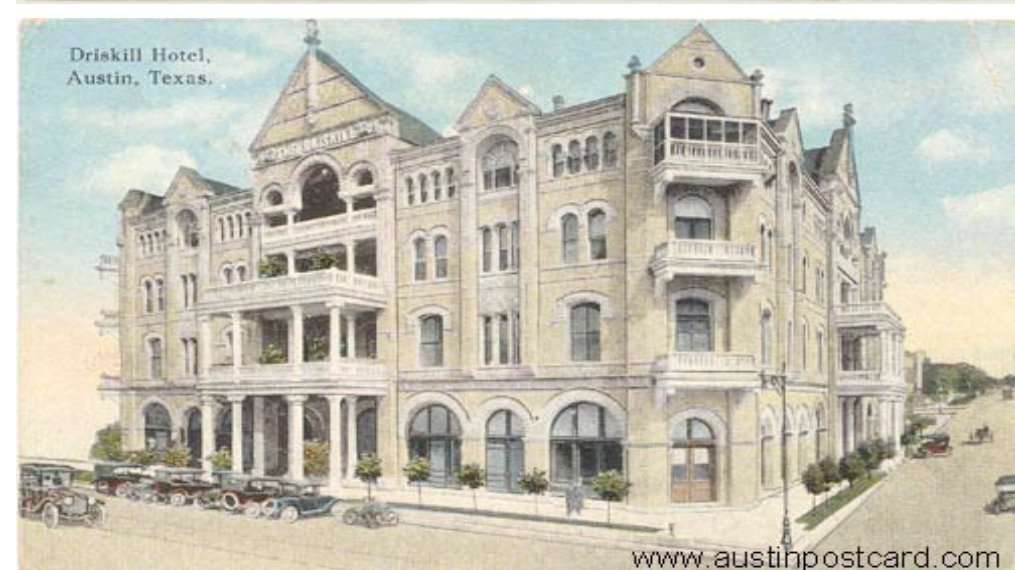
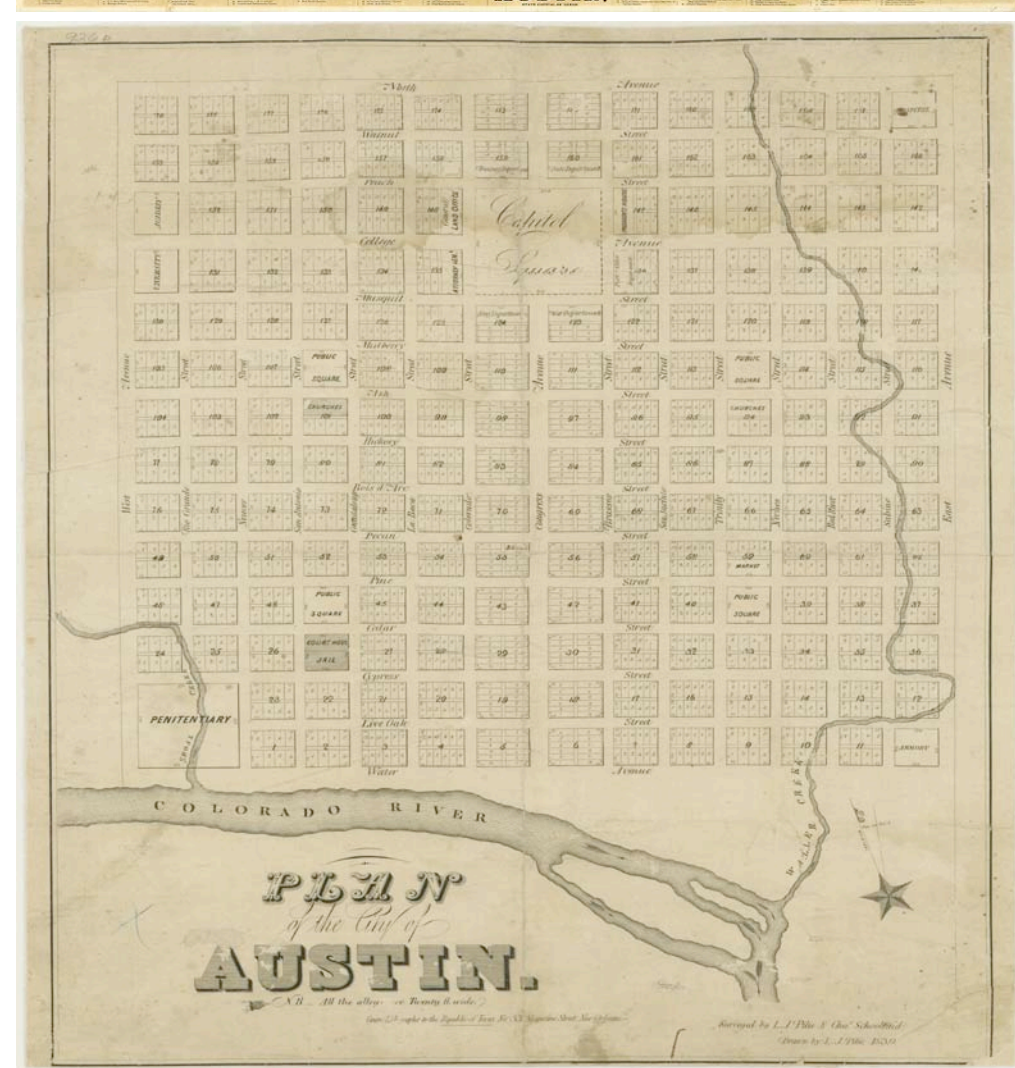
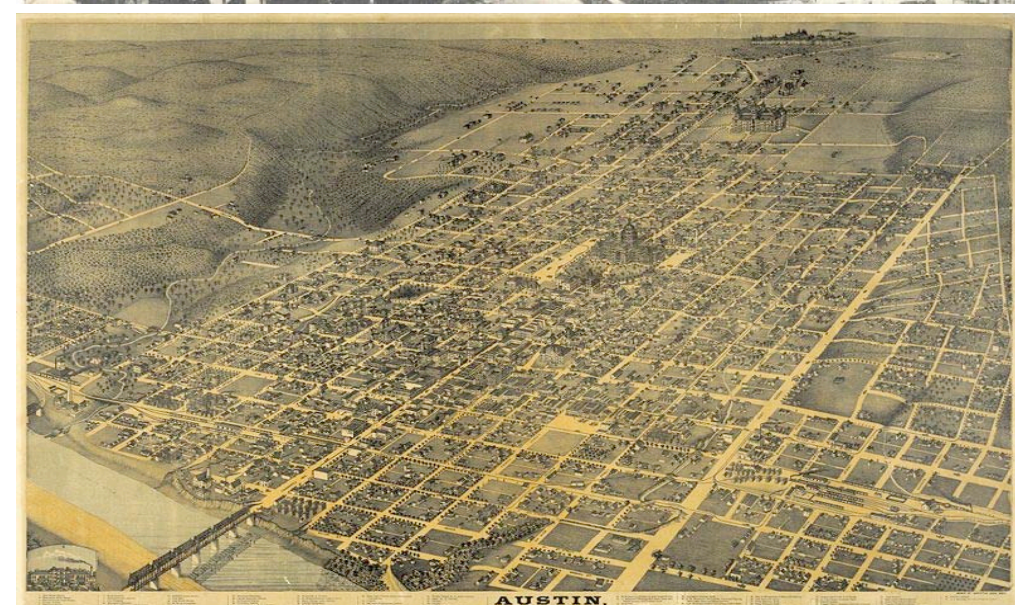
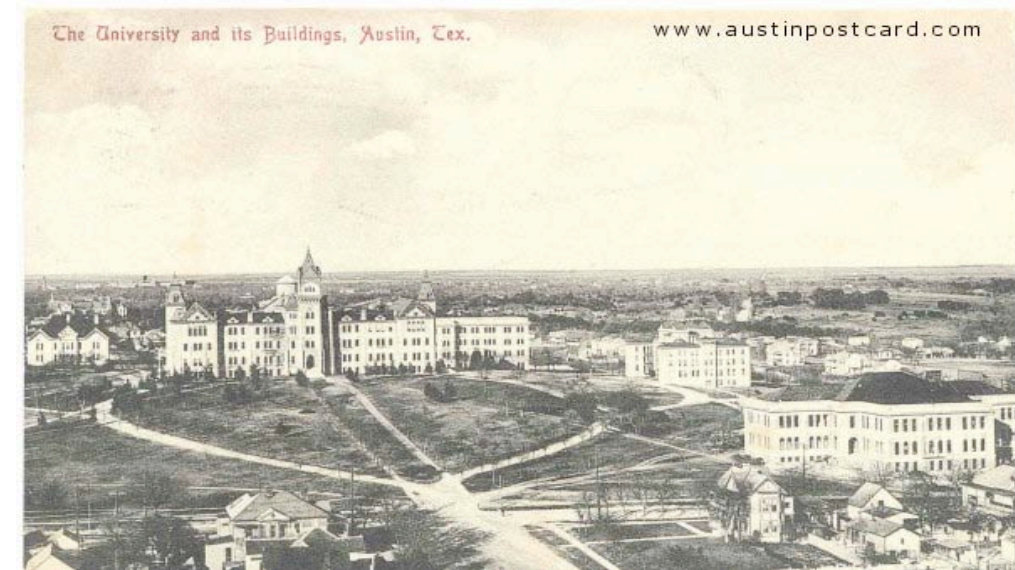
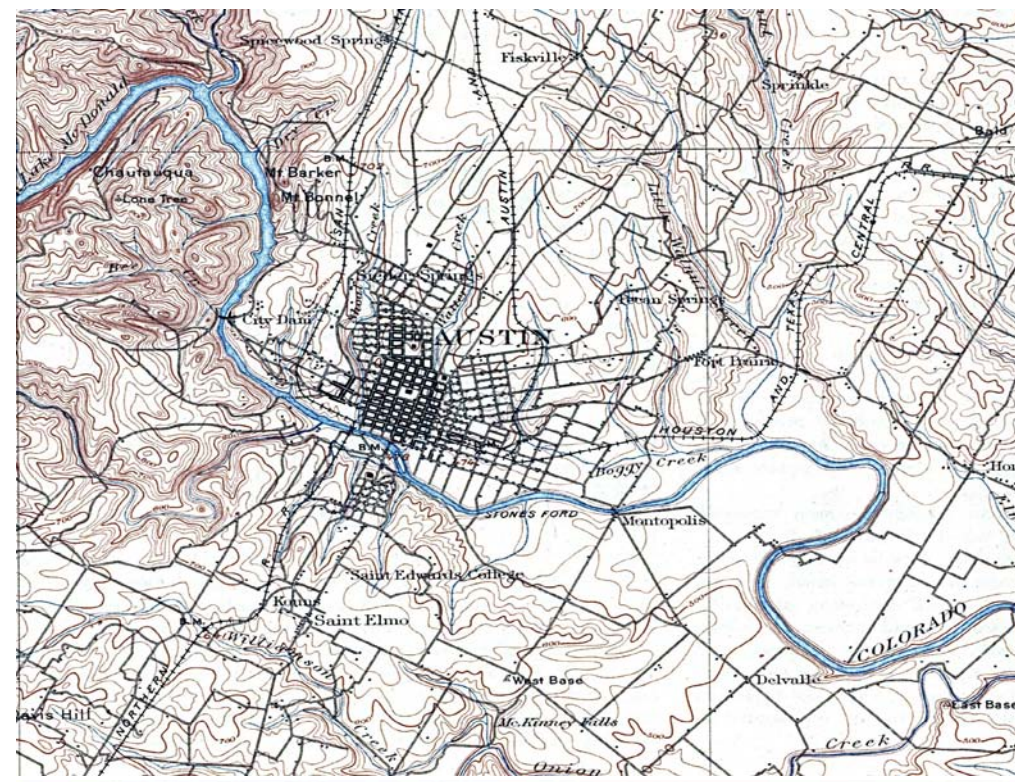


Building Communities: Designing the Austin Historic Architecture Digital Archive

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Kathryn Pierce, SAA 2010



Research Motivation

The City of Austin (Texas) currently lacks an up-to-date, comprehensive, citywide inventory of historic and culturally significant properties. Without accurate and accessible records, further city-planning efforts, including rehabilitation, redevelopment, and historic property identification and preservation could be obstructed or prohibited. Worse still would be the destruction of historic properties due to misguided or uninformed decision-making. To resolve this issue, we are developing a web-based resource that will facilitate the identification and collection of relevant information from multiple contributor communities, provide convenient access to public information, and once established, allow regular updates to survey information while preserving a strong historical record of Austin’s built environment.

A review of similar historic property projects revealed that these information coordination issues are not unique to Austin, and suggest that other local governments have recognized a growing gap in the documentation of historic properties and the impact that the loss of this information can have on the preservation of historic properties and city planning. We believe that complex municipal projects such as the Austin Historic Architecture (AHA) Digital Archive could benefit from a more thorough understanding of identified issues prior to investing significant resources in developing a functional system. We assert that using documentation strategy to identify stakeholders, records, and policy requirements will enable our team to better articulate specific stakeholder responsibilities and guide the development of the AHA Digital Archive with the improved likelihood of continued use, proper management, and archival preservation of valuable architectural records.

Research Questions

- Who are the stakeholders that may contribute to the development of the AHA digital archive?
- What stakeholders will the AHA digital archive serve?
- What types of information are required to be in the AHA collection?
- What are the applicable information management policies of identified stakeholders?

Methodology

We employ the Documentation Strategy Process Model as described by Hackman as a methodological construct to guide the documentation of Austin’s historic properties by means of the development, implementation, and maintenance of the AHA Digital Archive. The AHA documentation model will consist of five steps:

Documentation Area Definition and Preliminary Analysis

- Define subject to be documented
- Identify potential stakeholder

Documentation Strategy Drafting

- Draft formal strategy statement vetted by the stakeholders.
- Create a descriptive profile of the geographic area to be documented

Strategy Implementation

- Document Austin historic properties with continued stakeholder involvement.

Documentation Reporting

- Regular and routine communication between all stakeholders.
- Submission of status reports to the Office of Planning and the City Records Manager.

Documentation Area Reconsideration

- Re-evaluation and possible revision of the documentation strategy.
- Regular review of the documentation strategy scope, stakeholders, their roles and responsibilities, and the documentation strategy statement.

Data Collection Methods

Stakeholders

What stakeholders (people, groups, organizations, and systems) contribute to or will be served by the development of the AHA Digital Archive?

- Through a series of meetings determine stakeholders and identify preliminary roles and responsibilities
- Anticipated primary stakeholders include the Texas Historical Commission, Austin City Office of Planning and the Historic Preservation Office, and the Austin City Records Management Department.

Information Collection

What is the minimal information required for the tool to be effective? What other information might more thoroughly document historic properties and which stakeholders might provide this information?

- Minimal requirements are those needed to be considered for historic designation by national, state, and local agencies.
- User-contributed materials add a personal narrative to the factual data found in the official records.

Information Policy

What are the policies and practices of government and non-government stakeholders? How do the stakeholders’ information management policies and practices overlap, conflict or cooperate?

- Examine stakeholder information management manuals for commonalities and conflicts.
- Interview stakeholders without formal written policies.
- Examine state and local records management laws and administrative rules.
- Interview non-governmental contributors to determine expectations for the dissemination and management of their contributions.

Limitations of Methodology

- Primary goal is not archival preservation.
- Archivists are partners, not leaders of initiative.
- Model is valid only if it is sustained and routinely re-evaluated.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Dr. Gary Geisler and our Spring 2010 digital library classmates, plus our colleagues in the School of Architecture, for their support of this research. We would also like to acknowledge the Institute of Museum and Library Services for their generous support of the Preservation Doctoral Fellows program at the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin.