

An Archival Advocate: Public Policy Research in PolicyArchive

SARAH BUCHANAN

Abstract: Scholars, investigators, policymakers, and legislators participate in the production and use of research in the public policy arena, drawing on institutional models for data collection and assessment. A broad range of social issues investigated (e.g. economics, real estate, and tax policy), combined with dissimilar methods for archiving and preserving these research outputs constitutes a need to make this policy research accessible in a central repository. Results of a survey report (2005) which assessed organizations' publication volume will be presented alongside current data on the types of documents available in PolicyArchive [<http://www.policyarchive.org>]. This archive combines open access contributions and structured metadata indexing to provide subject-based access to 30,000 publications from over 800 distinct publishers, representing all shades of the organizational and political spectrum.

PolicyArchive enables more effective and accountable public policymaking by exposing unique research reports, data sets, recommendations, and legislative analysis. The ability to access publications openly and freely enables researchers to conduct more thorough policy research, and allows researchers to focus efforts on issues which are truly undocumented (rather than "hidden" offline or behind single-issue networks). A poster will present research collection methods which involve outreach, document preparation, metadata population, and use of Special Collections to group like content. Although the archive itself is neutral, its content in digital form carries significant political and intellectual power (Jimerson). As current research increases in interdisciplinarity and nuance, PolicyArchive provides direct and persistent access to publications, and increases the impact of that research by advocating for its use by society at large.

About the author:

Sarah Buchanan is a librarian at The Meadows School in Nevada, where she performs arrangement of archival materials and teaches Latin. She has worked as Metadata Administrator with PolicyArchive, part of the Center for Governmental Studies, since July 2009. Her research interests include the use and accessibility of archival materials for classroom teaching, recordkeeping practices, and informatics applications in the arts and humanities. She received an M.L.I.S. from the University of California, Los Angeles.