Sherwood Archive Project: Preserving "At Risk" Private Digital Business Records that are of Public Interest

SAM MEISTER AND DAVID KIRSCH

Abstract: In 2008, the Digital Archive of the Birth of the Dot Com Era (DCA) began a partnership with Sherwood Partners, Inc., a consulting firm located in Mountain View, California. Sherwood provides a specialized "private workout" service to failing companies as an alternative to public bankruptcy filing. During the private workout process a company assigns all of its assets, including its paper and digital records, over to Sherwood. As a member of NDIIPP, the DCA recognized the opportunity this partnership provided in supporting its goal of identifying, collecting and preserving at risk digital business records.

The main objective of the Sherwood Archive Project is to develop a new workflow to guide the process of collecting and managing the paper and digital records of failed businesses, including the routing of selected records to an outside repository for long-term preservation and access. In our presentation we will discuss the methodologies used during data collection, the results of completed stages, and next steps in the project. We will also provide insight into the technical and ethical challenges encountered while attempting to collect and preserve the "abandoned" records of failed companies.

About the authors:

Sam Meister is a graduate of the Master of Library and Information Science program at San Jose State University, where he focused on Archival Studies. He is currently working as an Archival Consultant on the Digital Archive of the Birth of the Dot Com Era Project. His research interests include digital archives, digital preservation, and recordkeeping systems at the scale of small organizations and individuals.

Dr. David Kirsch is Associate Professor of Management and Entrepreneurship in the M&O Department at the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business. From 1996 to 2001, Kirsch held various adjunct and visiting appointments at the Anderson Graduate School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles. He received his PhD in history from Stanford University in 1996. His research interests include industry emergence, technological choice, technological failure and the role of entrepreneurship in the emergence of new industries. In 2000 Rutgers University Press published his revised dissertation, The Electric Vehicle and the Burden of History. His work on the early history of the automobile industry has also been published in Business History Review and Technology and Culture. In 2003, his co-authored article on the Electric Vehicle Company received the IEEE Life Members Prize from the Society for the History of Technology. Kirsch is also interested in methodological problems associated with historical scholarship in the digital age. With the support of grants from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and the Library of

Congress, he is currently building a digital archive of the Dot Com Era that will preserve at-risk, born-digital content about business and culture during the late 1990s.