

Identifying Research Contributions of Archival Studies and Recordkeeping to Societal Grand Challenges: A Report from the AERI Grand Challenges Working Group

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Abstract: *Grand challenges* are complex, multifaceted, and widely recognized fundamental problems with broad applicability and that require extraordinary breakthroughs and the engagement of multiple areas of expertise to address (National Science Foundation Advisory Committee for Cyberinfrastructure Taskforce on Grand Challenges, 2011). *Recordkeeping* is a fundamental infrastructural component of administrative, economic, scientific, technical, clinical, educational, governance systems, and evidentiary functions. It is also integral to key societal processes such as cultural and community sustainability, identity formation, reconciliation and recovery, and remembering and forgetting. However, the relevance of recordkeeping research and development to grand challenges has not been widely recognized.

Established in 2008, the Building the Future of Archival Education and Research Initiative (AERI) convenes annual institutes for faculty and doctoral students from across the U.S. and worldwide who are engaged in recordkeeping and archival research. Plenary sessions led by Sue McKemmish at AERI 2011 and 2012 began to identify ways in which such research might contribute to nationally and internationally identified societal grand challenges. A special AERI report, to be released in July 2014, outlines the need for such research and development, and provides examples of broad areas (e.g., organizational transparency and accountability, global health and well-being, peace and security, environmental sustainability, and human rights and social justice) where it might make important contributions and the kinds of research questions that might be pursued. The presenters will review the rationale and contents of the report and discuss ways in which it is to be disseminated to other fields and funders engaged in grand challenge research.

About the authors:

Heather Soyka is a doctoral candidate and teaching fellow in the Archival Studies program at the University of Pittsburgh School of Information Sciences. Previously she held the post of assistant university archivist and then head of preservation for Texas Tech University. Heather has been an active member of SAA since 2005, and recently completed three years on the Distinguished Service Award Committee. She has served on several SAA roundtables, presented during the SAA conference each year since 2009, and has been an active participant in the IMLS-funded Archival Education Research Institute (AERI) for the past five years. She received a masters degree with concentration in archives and records management from Simmons College GSLIS, and expects to earn the PhD in Archival Studies at the University of Pittsburgh in 2014.

Marika Cifor is a second year doctoral student in Department of Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles where she is also pursuing a Concentration Certificate in Gender Studies. Previously she has worked as a processing archivist for the History Associates and in a range of archival positions for community, government and academic institutions. Marika has been an active member of SAA since 2009, and is currently co-chair of the Lesbian and Gay Archives Roundtable. She has been an active member of IMLS-funded Archival Education Research Institute (AERI) since 2013. She holds masters degree with an concentration in archives management from Simmons College GSLIS.