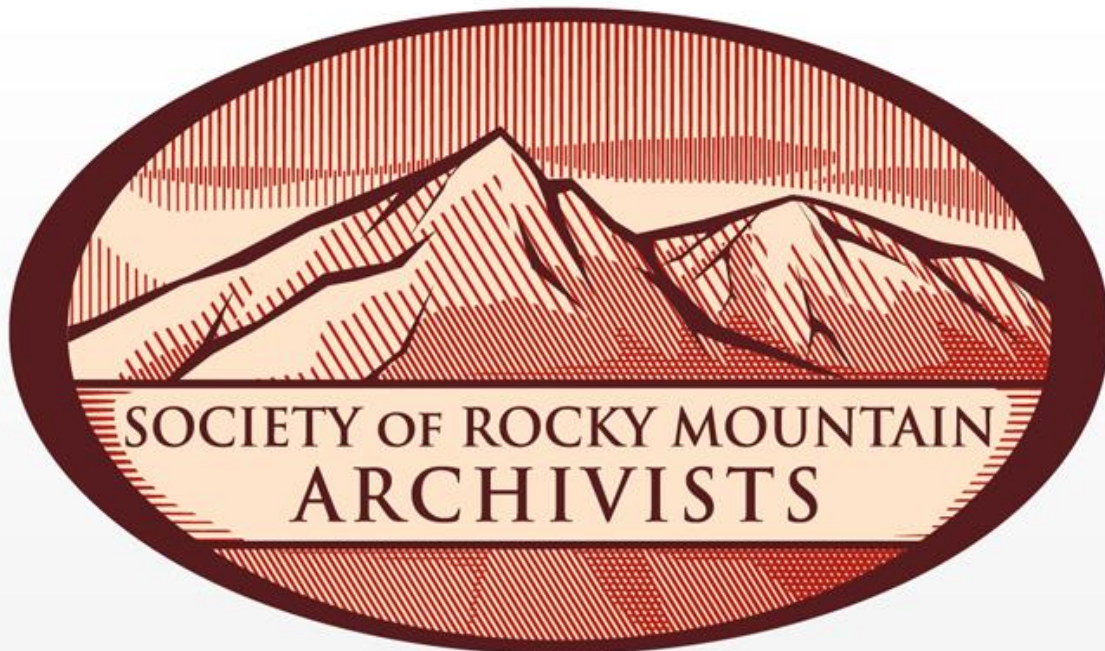


THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARCHIVIST

Vol. XXXI, Number 3

Fall Issue



In this issue...

Notes from the President.....	2	Society of American Archivists Conference.....	5
Deeds of Gift Visualization Project.....	3	Digital Preservation and Deaccessioning.....	7
Archivist Awarded.....	4	Western Roundup.....	12

SOCIETY OF ROCKY MOUNTAIN ARCHIVISTS

Notes from the President



It was great to see so many of you at the Fall Meeting at the United States Olympic Committee Headquarters in Colorado Springs. What a treat to tour the new archives and learn about their interesting collection and beautiful facility. A big thank you to all that presented and shared details about the many great collaborative projects taking place in our region.

I am so pleased to begin my term as President of this great organization. For those of you who don't know me, I would like to tell you a little bit about myself. I am the Manager of Special Collections and Museum Services Department for the Pueblo City-County Library District (PCCLD) in Pueblo, CO. The department includes Western History, Special Collections, Genealogy and the InfoZone News

Museum. I have been with PCCLD since February of 2008. Prior to that I was the Executive Director of the *Bessemer Historical Society*, *CF&I Archives* and *Steelworks Museum*, currently the *Steelworks Center of the West*, for six and half years. I am a native of Pueblo, CO. I have a Masters degree in Museum Science from Texas Tech University and a Bachelors degree in Anthropology and Latin American Studies from the University of New Mexico. I became a Certified Archivist in August of 2013. My husband Jeff is a newspaper reporter and I have a wonderful nine year old daughter and my son was born at the end of May, 2014. I like to call myself a professional volunteer, as I am currently serving on four different boards and commissions, including SRMA.

My first order of business was to work with the SRMA board to fill some spots that became open on the Board. I'd like to welcome the following new members of the SRMA board:

- Max Miller, Newsletter Editor, is a young professional living and working in the Denver area. He obtained his MLIS from the University of Denver in June, 2013, and currently works for a government contractor as an archives technician at the National Park Service Denver Service Center for design, planning, and construction in Lakewood.
- Lyndsay Schettler, Preservation Member-at-Large, is finishing up her MLIS degree at the University of Denver, with a concentration in preservation librarianship. She initially became involved in library preservation when obtaining her museum studies degree at the University of Iowa. Currently, she is the preservation librarian/specialist at DU working on creating the preservation procedure manual, including emergency management, book and paper repairs of non-circulating materials, and guidelines for stabilization and rehousing before and after reformatting.

A big thank you to Amanda Stow, outgoing SRMA Newsletter Editor and Julie Carmen, outgoing Preservation Member-at-Large for their contributions to SRMA.

I have also been busy working as the Program Co-Chair for Western Round-up 2015. Mark your calendars, Western Roundup is coming to Denver **May 27-30, 2015! Western Roundup will be held at the Embassy Suites Downtown Convention Center.** The Western Roundup is a joint conference of the Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists (CIMA), Northwest Archivists (NWA), Society of California Archivists (SCA), and Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA). The program and local arrangements committee are working hard to develop a wonderful conference.

Feel free to contact me if you have any ideas for SRMA or would like to get involved.

Thanks for your support of SRMA,
Maria E. Sanchez-Tucker

Call for Participation: Deeds of Gift Visualization Project

Adam Speirs and Blake Graham, Douglas County History Research Center, Douglas County Libraries

In June of 2014, during a meeting with members of a local historical society, staff at the Douglas County History Research Center (DCHRC) were confronted with an issue about details in their Deed of Gift regarding ongoing oral-history collections. During this time, staff audited their active Deed of Gift and discussed ways to move forward with prospective emendations. In order to make an informed decision about whether to edit the existing Deed of Gift at DCHRC, a variety of Deeds of Gift from across the country were collected online and inspected in the process. As a consequence of these activities, a research project was conceptualized by Adam Speirs and Blake Graham.

Since early July, Adam Speirs and Blake Graham have been collecting Deeds of Gift online and compiling them for evaluation. The project initiative, as it currently exists, is to collect Deeds of Gift from all varieties of archives and compartmentalize areas of the Deed into six elements: donor identification, materials description, transfer of ownership, provisions for use, intellectual rights, and disposition. These elements are defined as the typical units used to construct a Deed, as suggested in SAA's *A Guide to Deeds of Gift*. The project goal is to break-down all textual elements into a database and, in turn, craft a visualization of all six elements. The end-product will map the interests of numerous institutions as reflected in their use of limited space in legal transfer documents. For instance, Institution A devotes 50% of its available word space to disposition, whereas Institution B devotes 50% to intellectual property rights. Ideally, the database would allow users to chart institution types and geographic correlations that exist for both Institutions A & B.

Adam and Blake are hoping for a wider range of participation in the project as they continue to collect and winnow Deeds over the next several months. The total of Deeds collected is currently marginal in comparison to the targeted data set. Title-identifying information can be redacted in the process before releasing results – expected in spring of 2015 – if a participating institution prefers.

If you are interested in participating in this project, or if you have any questions regarding details of the project, please email either Adam or Blake. Thank you in advance for the consideration.

Adam Speirs, aspeirs@dclibraries.org

Blake Graham, pgraham@dclibraries.org



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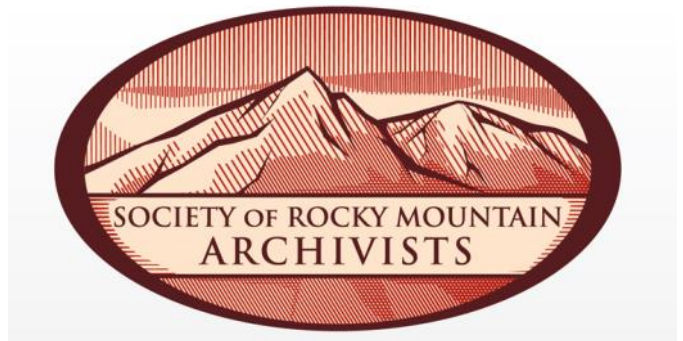
Archivist Awarded

Archivist Patty Rettig received the Friends of the South Platte Award on October 22nd. The award is given annually by the South Platte Forum to "recognize individuals and organizations who, through diligence and dedication, have made exceptional contributions in the South Platte River Basin." Rettig is the head archivist for the Water Resources Archive at Colorado State University. She works throughout the state to preserve the important historical documentation of Colorado's water history.

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Society of American Archivists Annual Conference 2014

Aly Jabrocki

First I would like to say “thank you” to the SRMA Board for allowing me the opportunity to go to this year’s Society of American Archivists conference in Washington, D.C. I attended numerous sessions and had a chance to network with colleagues new and old. In the following few paragraphs I will provide a brief overview of some of the sessions I attended.

Wednesday I attended an informal meetup of Audio-Visual archivists at the Black Cat – a music club in the city. During the event, a variety of AV clips were shown from a sampling of archives in the area. One memorable video depicted an Army research video, where they filmed a group of soldiers marching in formation. They then had the soldiers consume LSD and had them try the same formations after a few hours. The results were quite humorous and the crowd got a big kick out of it. The group was hoping to make this an annual event at upcoming conferences from here on out – although I hope there is a way for all regions to be represented.

One of the first sessions I attended was titled *Getting Things Done with Born Digital Collections*. I wanted to attend this as at my current institution (Denver Museum of Nature and Science) we are starting to develop our digital management policies as we receive more and more digital content. The panel stressed that in order to be successful; archivists must work well with their in-house IT department. Oftentimes there is a language barrier and confusion on how to reach a shared goal. A suggestion was made that archivists should invite their IT department to their conferences and vice-versa. Another suggestion was that we should make lists and come to IT meetings prepared with intelligent facts to support our needs. We should ask questions, learn about their server architecture and get them excited about digital collections management.

On Friday I attended a session on audiovisual collection access which covered a broad range of issues surrounding such materials. To make things easy, it was stated that institutions should really only try to accept donations from single rights holders. When there are multiple people or institutions involved, copyright transfer can be a big hassle. In order to protect your digitized audiovisual materials once they are put online, it is imperative to imbed metadata. Watermarks should be added to visual content and posted videos should be kept a low resolution to lower the risk of duplication. Because digitizing audiovisual collections is so costly, it may be necessary to seek out several grants at once in order to provide proper long-term storage and access.

When a session on project management for archivists was sold out, I stepped into a discussion of sexual misconduct and ethics in religious archives. Having previously worked for a Catholic archive in the area, I found the discussion highly informative. Melanie Delva and Jac Treanor were both energetic speakers who presented cases which required them to adhere to a high level of ethics. In dealing with any records of a religious institution - Federal, State, Local and Cannon law all have to be considered. Jac discussed his issues with the Chicago Archdiocese in recognizing these laws and the importance of transparency.

One of the most enlightening moments of the conference for me happened during the Museum Section on Friday afternoon. In working for a large natural history museum in Denver, we are somewhat isolated and it was great to connect with archivists from similar institutions across the country. A smaller breakout session was formed where we discussed a common issue for science institutions – which is linking archival collections to museum objects. I look forward to future collaborations and learning opportunities with these institutions and archivists.

Perhaps my favorite session of the conference was *Taken for Granted: How Term Positions Affect New Professionals and Repositories that Employ Them*. As someone who has been employed through grant projects for seven years, it was a topic I could relate to. The panel was made up of two Project Archivists, two supervisors and one officer from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. I was glad to hear the supervisors both arguing for reasons to employ permanent young professionals and how not doing so could hurt the repositories. Constantly hiring and interviewing for project positions, as well as writing follow-up grant reports wastes time and energy for any involved with hiring and supervising. Additionally, project archivists may not always feel valued and will be continuing to look for permanent employment

SAA continued from page 5 ...

which may distract them from their work. One panel member added that it will take a few months for any new employee to settle in and get comfortable. Not providing job security means that you may have to rehire a few times over the course of the project. While it is unrealistic to expect grant-funded positions to go away completely, Alex Lorch of the NHPRC gave some tips for grant writing to help young professionals when hired. He suggested that institutions write good, specific job descriptions which justify salary and length of the grant. Professional development money for the employee is also important to include in proposals as supervisors should all advocate for their Project Archivists and assist them in their career goals as much as possible.

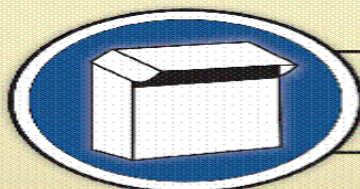
While at the conference, I also got to explore the National Museum of the American Indian, the National Museum of American History, and the National Museum of Natural History. I discovered some excellent ideas for engaging donors and viewers in social media, which I hope to utilize at DMNH.

Again, thank you for this wonderful opportunity and I look forward to next year's conference in Cleveland!

Volunteers Opportunities

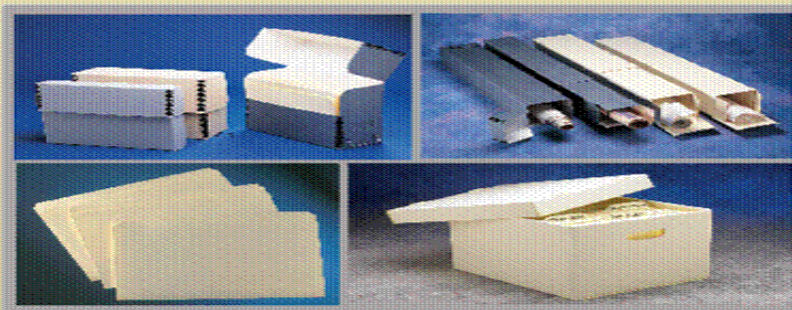
Are you looking for volunteers? Are you looking to volunteer your services?

If you have any archives related volunteer experiences coming up please submit them to Caroline Blackburn, SRMA electronic Resources Manager (srmaerm@srmarchivists.org) to be placed on the website.



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Digital Preservation and Deaccessioning

Editor's Note: Do you wonder what are the newest trends and theories archival students study? University of Denver students have submitted their recent studies to the newsletter, their instructor Jamie Seemiller provides further information:

During the fall quarter (2013-2014 academic year), Library and Information Science students in my Archives Appraisal (LIS4801) class at the University of Denver were asked to write a final paper about appraisal theory and practice. The papers were a way for students to further explore a topic discussed in class and also offered a unique opportunity for the students to partner with SRMA and share their research. The papers review appraisal theory and practice as well as ask some fundamental questions about how, why and what we collect in archives. The four themes presented in these papers are: why and what do we collect; social justice and diversity; format and subject appraisal and digital preservation and deaccessioning. Each newsletter during 2014 will feature a theme with two student articles.

Deaccessioning: Methods and Motives

Amy Delgado

Introduction

For archivists, the topic of reappraisal and deaccessioning has been a thorny one for decades. Some, such as Karen Benedict, view deaccessioning as anathema (1984). Ms. Benedict's view is that items should be removed from a collection only when items are accessioned that replace them. Leonard Rapport is a representative of those who feel that deaccessioning is a critical tool to manage collections that would otherwise grow out of control and out of scope (1981). I strongly agree with the latter camp, and this paper will discuss my belief that reappraisal and deaccessioning should be an active part of an archives policy. Gerald Ham quite eloquently expressed it thusly: "Deaccessioning...is a creative and sophisticated act of reappraisal that will permit holdings to be refined and strengthened" (Ham, 1985).

Reappraisal and deaccessioning are functions as critical to a collection as appraisal and accessioning. Therefore, they should be included in any formal policies a repository creates in order to manage holdings.

P:I offer the metaphor of a garden or a tree; these are things that are carefully cultivated to grow, but also must be weeded or pruned to thrive. Growing things, left unchecked, will succumb to deterioration over time. Collections also need regular attention and care.

Why should we deaccession?

While there are many reasons why deaccessioning may be necessary, the most basic is to correct mistakes of the past. This list is certainly not exhaustive. Special situations will always raise their heads, but items which are commonly deaccessioned include:

- Out of scope records or artifacts: if a repository changes its focus or collecting scope, items may become extraneous. Of course, this is not always true. Items acquired under an earlier collecting scope may still be valuable to represent the history of a collection.
- Records with no research value because they are incomplete: partial collections may have merit, but if they do not portray a rounded picture their worth is diminished.
- Items with low usage or demand: if patrons do not utilize items, they may not be appropriate for a particular collection and may be better suited to another repository's collection.
- Duplicates: this is particularly true in a digital age in which multiple copies of single documents can proliferate. "De-duping" collections is often done at the time of accession, but can also be performed at the time of reappraisal. I have witnessed firsthand the number of duplicate, identical, photographs that are held in the archives where I am completing my practicum.
- Inability to provide proper care: if an archive does not have the funds, staff, or expertise to care for items, it is preferable to find them another home. Preservation of unique items can be particularly expensive and require extensive skills.

Delgado and student papers continued from page 7 . . .

- Some items simply should never have been accessioned: this could be due to archivist error or bias, or perhaps items may have been accepted to curry favor with a potential or important, ongoing, donor.

Are there reasons that we should not deaccession? Yes, there certainly are. Deaccessioning is never to be used because an archive is simply in need of space or funds. It is a process to be used to cultivate a stronger collection, not a crisis management tool.

How do we deaccession?

There are several methods for disposing of deaccessioned items; the three that I see as most common will be addressed here. Before beginning deaccessioning, there are two caveats to keep in mind: if there is a deed of gift it may have instructions as to how disposition should be handled, and local abandoned property laws must be adhered to. SAA provides a helpful list of state abandoned property statutes on their website (Abandoned Property Project, n.d.).

Often items are transferred back to the donor, or to the donor's family. If the donor is deceased or you are unable to locate them, this may take some time and work. Transfer to another repository is often a good option. An institution with a different collecting policy may be a more appropriate fit for a collection. Having relationships with other repositories and archivists is very helpful in this case; knowledge of their collecting scopes and missions may help you to find a better home for a collection that is no longer useful to you.

The sale of deaccessioned items is an increasingly utilized option for disposition. When used for proper motives, this is certainly a legitimate method but can be damaging to a repository's reputation. I will return to this topic.

When all other possibilities are exhausted, destruction of items will be necessary. This process must be thoroughly documented and particular care must be taken to ensure private and sensitive information cannot be recovered.

Sale concerns

The deaccessioning and sale of holdings for profit has become increasingly common occurrence (Wajda, 2006). Sale at auction is much easier now with online venues such as eBay (Doynen, 2001). However, this raises the question: are some items being sold as an ethical function of disposition, or simply to fund depleted coffers?

Thomas Kemper writes of the American Film Institute's collection of records from Charles Feldman, a noted Hollywood agent. AFI allowed a dealer to "cherry-pick" through the files and purchase selected items to "shore up the strained resources" of the repository (Kemper, 2010). Several of the items were known to have been re-sold and were residing in private collections. While this is an extreme example, there are certainly repositories today that have had to decide if this is a course they want to take.

The issue of trust arises no matter what manner of disposition is used after deaccessioning, but archivists must be particularly careful when selling deaccessioned holdings: donors give items to be useful and accessible and often dislike them ending up under private ownership. I would suggest sale is the last option to pursue before destruction. To help prevent damage to your repository's reputation if you choose to sell items, Frank Boles suggests that using profits to maintain and improve your collections may help to avoid the implication of avarice (2005).

Conclusion

Disposition of deaccessioned items can be difficult at the best of times. Damage to a repository's reputation and donor relations can be negatively affected. However, thoughtful and ethical sales can be tools to help refine your holdings.

Deaccessioning is necessary, but not necessarily evil as some believe. Archivists can improve their collections through conscientious, ethical, user- and donor-focused reappraisal. Reappraisal and deaccessioning are tools that should be included in collecting policies as part of a rounded process to continually cultivate holdings. Preparing for these processes in advance can help to prevent the need for crisis management.

Delgado and student papers continued from page 8 . . .

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Digital Preservation

J. Todd Ford

The internet dominates our current lives- we ask Siri for directions, to make a reservation when we forget an anniversary, and even peruse the weather channels to ensure we can easily travel from one point to another without getting stuck in snow, rain, or any other type of bad weather. We state our every move on social sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We think nothing of posting these items and expect them to forever be accessible; unfortunately, things happen preventing us from effortlessly pulling up these items in the future—files structures change, become corrupted, or hardware and software becomes incompatible with older versions. Then, what are we suppose to do? We cannot utilize the data we need, or want; yet we still see the file sitting in front of us.

Part of that frustration comes from the understanding that some of these issues can be avoided by working with our data from time to time. To better understand the current level of understanding among my friends, cohorts here at the University of Denver, and various library professionals I know, I created an informal five question survey asking: 1) How would you define digital preservation? 2) Is digital preservation necessary? 3) What should be digitally preserved? 4) How should one preserve their data? And 5) Does digital preservation really matter? This survey was posted on four different Linked-In groups, emailed to 20 friends and family members, 20 cohorts here at the University of Denver, and 20 library professionals.

While I admit this is just a small control group, the results tell plenty. Of the 50 responses, only four could define digital preservation; only three stated that digital preservation is necessary (or matters), and only six, all listed as a cohort or other library professional, stated any type of opinion on what should be preserved. This prompted me to start thinking about how I, as a future library professional, need to spread the word about digital preservation and the role it plays, and will increasingly play, in our future.

Ford and student papers continued from page 9 . . .

To start, there is no standard, generally accepted definition of digital preservation. Dobрева and Ruusalepp in their chapter, *Digital preservation: Interoperability ad modum*, defines digital preservation as, “a set of activities which ensures interoperability in the future” (Dobрева and Ruusalepp, 2012). While that definition may work for those of us within the digital “world”, its brevity really does not accomplish anything for the general public. Another definition comes from the Digital Curation Centre [DCC] located in the United Kingdom that states, “Digital curation, preservation, involves maintaining, preserving, and adding value to digital research throughout its lifecycle” (Digital Curation Centre, 2013), and is generally accepted as the best definition.

The Problem

Since the beginning of time, man (civilization) has understood the importance of preserving at least one copy of its record for future usage. Ancients wrote down the events they deemed historical significant (i.e. the conquest of the Ancient Hebrews (recorded in the Bible), The Rosetta Stone (recording a decree issued by Ptolemy V Epiphanes in Memphis, Egypt creating a divine cult for himself around 200 BC) and the Mayan Calendar (destroyed by Spanish Conquers around 1000 AD). However, all of these examples were initially unreadable when originally discovered. It was not until the discovery of other pieces of history one is able to decipher the text (Hirst, 2013). In the case of the Mayan calendar, a true understanding still eludes us; archaeologist believe the keys are in place to decipher this millennium old riddle (Hare, 2010) yet all predictions based on the calendar have not come to fruition.

Today, we battle this same dilemma with digital data: if our society goes to only recording data in a digital format, is that data going to be accessible, and useable, in the future? In actuality, the problem can be simplified into two separate issues, according to Bollacker, “the preservation of the data itself and the comprehensibility of that data” (Bollacker, 2010). Therefore, addressing the problem now will prevent future problems and allow for data usability in the future.

The Solution

An answer to this question is, “store it in the right conditions” (Walsh, 2008); okay, way to state the obvious. Bollacker’s two separate issues can be used to resolve the issue: *the preservation of the data itself* and *the comprehensibility of data*. To accomplish this, data needs to be stored in a format that will be usable, and on a machine useable, in the future. Before even worrying about where to store your data, a user needs to ensure a commonly used data format is used for the saving of their data (Matusiak, 2013). Lossless, or uncompressed, format such as pdf, .bmp, or .wav are much better than compressed formats (.gif, .jpeg, or .png) to accomplish this objective because the compressed formats lose important data every time the item it is opened (Fridrich, Golijan, and Du, 2002), thus causing the data to become less clear, or easy to view, over time. So, uncompressed formats are generally recommended for the creation of data. However, due to its uncompressed manner, uncompressed files, lossless, are traditionally very large and thus require a lot of space to store. After the data is created in a digital format, a compressed version, surrogate, is generally recommended for the general daily usage of that data. Not only is this version easier to work with on a daily basis, its smaller size is easier to store in a location useable for all (Walsh, 2008). As the compressed version starts to deteriorate, another copy can be made from the original without much fanfare, or difficulty. Data formats do change over time and need to be addressed as they change. This requires the person storing the data to create a schedule to revisit the data and ensure the current format is still accessible. Also, at some point, the data will need to be upgraded from one format to another. Thus, the general preconception that storing data once and leaving it alone is not truthfully preservation, but an ignoring of the data.

The second issue, according to Bollacker, is the comprehensibility of the data (Bollacker, 2010), or maintaining the ability to read the data no matter technological advances. While a simple solution to this would be to keep a copy of every computer ever used. This view is again not really realistic as space and financial constraints prevent this from happening. Plus, a computer technician would need to be regularly consulted to ensure the hardware continues to properly work; and this, will require the user to spend more money on the hardware. The simplest way is through computer software, called an emulator, “which will preserve the original bit stream and the operating system,” (Lorie, 2001) allowing for the software to run as it was originally created. Technology will continue to advance, requiring new hardware and software to be written; however, getting rid of the old data, or re-writing the old data is not realistic. And, space constrains forbid the ability to keep a copy of every piece of hardware and software ever created. Therefore, emulators appear to be the best, easiest, solution to keeping our data properly preserved. Though the creation of these emulators are not free, spending the money once should solve

Ford and student papers continued from page 10 . . .

many of our institutions issues, and is well worth it.

Why it matters?

Data created thousands of years ago still exists and we are able to read it, study it, and learn from it. From that, we are able to better understand various civilizations and how to improve our own civilization. Besides that, we are able to create records that better tell the story of our lives and can preserve them for future generations. It is in that vain that we study the issues, and solutions, of digital data; and through that study, one is able to better answer the question does data preservation really matter. The simple answer is yes; however, to delve deeper, one sees that as our society continues to evolve into one where digital data is replacing the traditional, paper, record more every day, issues arise that complicate the preservation of our records for future generations. Therefore, we, the library community, need to work with the general public to not only create a standardized definition of data preservation, but also techniques. Then, we need to continue our calling as “information professionals” (ALA, 2013) to inform our patrons on both the necessity of data preservation, but also the techniques necessary to have long term access to that data.

Conclusion

In order to truly determine the importance of preservation, understanding the methods and techniques necessary to preserve that data must first be better understood, Here, we have examined those concepts and presented some techniques a library, archive, or one of our patrons, can engage without huge outputs of money, time, or energy. With that being said, to state that data preservation matters is purely an understatement; a more realistic view is that data preservation is a necessity. With the constant bombardment of data (information) in our daily lives, traditional views of archives, and dealing with data, need to be discarded and new ones created. However, with only a fluid, constantly changing, definition of data preservation, and the techniques to preserve the data, data is not going to be preserved thus preventing us from telling the story of our lives. Therefore, we need to work together and decide on the basic concepts before proceeding. However, even without those issues resolved, following the advice above, is better than not doing anything believing the issue will resolve itself, or that data will be accessible forever- which it will not!

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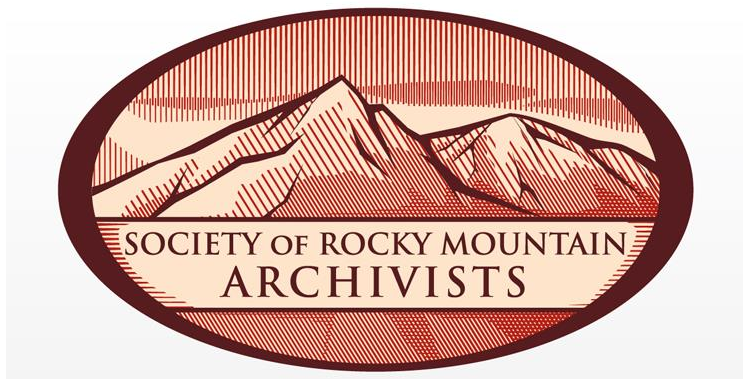
May 27-30, 2015

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The Western Roundup is a joint conference of the Conference of Inter-Mountain Archivists (CIMA), Northwest Archivists (NWA), Society of California Archivists (SCA), and Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (SRMA).



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Membership Information & Benefits

SRMA membership is drawn from regular and volunteer staff of archives, historical societies, museums, businesses, government agencies, libraries, colleges and universities, religious institutions and other persons who are concerned with the identification and care of information that documents the history of our region. Individual membership is open to any interested person. Institutional memberships are welcome and encouraged.

SRMA membership facilitates the exchange of archival knowledge and assistance. It advances the interests of

individual archivists and of the archival profession. Members automatically receive the SRMA newsletter, membership directory, regional archives directory, and informational materials. The Society also has an editorial board for the publication of occasional papers. We invite you to complete the membership application form located on the SRMA website to enhance your personal career developments and to further the cause of the archival profession in the Rocky Mountain region.