A Descriptive Study of Electronic Records Housed in the

Area Research Centers of Wisconsin Universities
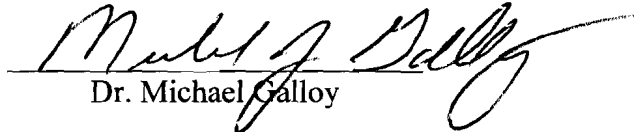
at Stout, Eau Claire, and River Falls

by

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A Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

The digital age is here. Advancements in technology have enabled people to achieve things never before thought possible. Information technology has affected how people create, work, communicate, and document. With the maturation of the Internet and web access to subjects never before thought possible, the world is available through a keyboard. The electronic record is becoming the norm, driven by today's technology.

One subject that benefited greatly from the Internet is genealogy. The magnitude of genealogy related electronic records on the Internet has created a world community within itself. Another subject that has shared genealogy's success is history.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of current technology as it relates to electronic records housed in the local archives of U. W. Eau Claire, U. W. River Falls, and U. W. Stout. These area research centers are the stewards of local history

in their respective geographical areas. An additional intent of this study is to address how each archive addresses issues of categorization, quantification, and selection of subjects, principally the subjects of genealogy and local history.

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Acknowledgments

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: Introduction

Popular search engines allow computer users to experience the Internet, a paradigm that has changed the world forever. This technological mass of computers, servers, routers, switches, and other network devices has created a vehicle of communication that the world has never before experienced. It has changed the way business is done, altered how people communicate at work and at home, and has had a profound influence on the education of students at all levels. To try to describe all the information on the Internet would be overwhelming and, frankly, a waste of time.

The Internet contains many websites relating to history and past wars. Websites on the War of Rebellion (Civil War), World War II, the Korean War, and numerous others not only have information relating to these wars, but personal accounts relating to specific battles in these conflicts.

People have a profound interest in genealogy. The information on the Internet relating to history and genealogy has erupted the last five years. In the beginning, much like other topics, there was a scattering of genealogical information available on the Internet, mostly people sharing information and searching for relevant personal information. Today, the volume of information relating to history and genealogy is extraordinary. To validate this point, one can search the Mormon church's website (http://www.familysearch.org/) to see the numerous categories available. People can search for immigrant ancestors who were processed through Ellis Island in New York at this website (http://www.ellisisland.org/). The website for the USGenWeb Project (http://www.usgenweb.org) shows the intricacy of the current state of genealogy on Internet. The website allows users to search in specific states and specific counties within

the state. Individuals can contribute information to the county website even though they may not be living in that county.

The ancestral search of a family begins with the immediate family and travels back into history by researching local government records required by law. Births, deaths, and marriages are significant records of authenticity. These records validate a researcher's efforts and official documentation is sought by every researcher. Focusing on Wisconsin will lead you to the Wisconsin Historical Society located in Madison, Wisconsin. The website for the Wisconsin Historical Society is located at http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/. This website refers users to the Wisconsin Area Research Network. This network consists of 13 Area Research Centers (ARCs). These ARCs are geographically located throughout the state in the libraries of the University of Wisconsin System. It is a unique collaborative project between the Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Wisconsin System. To further explain the partnership, each ARC is responsible for regional Wisconsin counties where the universities are located.

The change in libraries in the last 10 years has been significant. Specifically, university libraries are populated with computer browsers able to access online specific databases used in research and scholarly study. Teaching methods have changed due to the popularity of the Internet and many instructors have learned to integrate resources on the Internet into their program of study.

With the myriad of information relating to genealogy and history on the Internet and the integration of Internet resources in Wisconsin's educational systems, what has been the effect at the local geographic level? With the advance in networking technologies and online access, students are no longer geographically tethered; they can

access these databases from the convenience of their homes. The sophistication of online areas of study and digital creation of online books, journals, and other related resources is astounding. Technologies such as digital cameras, scanners, and related software have added a visual richness and quality to online books, journals, and other online resources never imagined in the past. On the Wisconsin Historical Society home page, (http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/) the online user can select from a host of digital pictures relating to different categories such as individual portraits of Native American chiefs.

With the availability of online resources at the national and state levels, the researcher focuses on the ARC. Has the regional ARC experienced the same eagerness of online users for more online access to local genealogy and historical records? Does the local community have access to records housed in the regional ARC? Are certain records housed in the local ARC off limits to online access? The researcher, living in western Wisconsin, intends to investigate and quantify the online records available in three local ARCs.

Statement of the Problem

Realizing the volume of electronic records available today and web accessible records on the Internet relating to genealogy and history, it is only logical that the ARCs of the Universities of Stout, Eau Claire, and River Falls will need to address the extraordinary increase in electronic records. These archives are experiencing an explosion in technology and, with ever-changing technology, storage of these electronic records will create challenges in relation to categorization and quantification.

Purpose of the Study

The intent of this research paper is to investigate the current electronic records available at each university archive. Has the explosion of online genealogy created a demand for increased quantities of online electronic records at these ARCs? The research centers hold a variety of records that would be beneficial to researchers of local community history. Local government records from the past often provide researchers with not only ancestral history but relevant history such a court records. There may be limitations hindering the creation of more electronic documents at these research centers which require exploration of factors affecting the creation of these electronic records. With the expansion of electronic records, new technology must create challenges with respect to media storage and retrieval. Quantifying and categorizing electronic records related to topics such as genealogy, local history, and official records must be a challenge as well.

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study is to research the electronic records housed in the regional archives of U. W. Eau Claire, U. W. Stout, and U. W. River Falls. The survey will consist of an interview with each of the archivist at the universities selected. The modality will be a combination of email and a follow-up telephone conversation clarifying any data supplied by the archivist. The initial phase of the interview is an email to the individual archivists listing the research questions of the study. The research questions are listed below:

1. What types or categories of electronic records are currently housed in the Area Research Centers of U. W. River Falls, U. W. Eau Claire, and U. W. Stout?

2. How are electronic records categorized and quantified in these archives?

3. Does the archive have electronic records relating to genealogy?

4. Does the archive have electronic records online?

Assumptions of the Study

With the explosion of access to online electronic resources, the archives at U. W. Stout, U. W. Eau Claire, and U. W. River Falls must be experiencing a transitional period during which space occupied by volumes of archival information stored in traditional paper filing cabinets will be replaced by digital storage requiring less physical space and allowing increased capacity or volume of electronic archival records.

Definition of Terms

Electronic record. "A record created, generated, sent, communicated, received, or stored by electronic means" (Minnesota Statutes, section 305L.02, as cited in Minnesota Historical Society, 2007, para. 24).

Internet. "The vast network of computer systems that enables worldwide connectivity among users and computers" (Minnesota Historical Society, 2007, para. 40).

Web site. "A collection of Uniform Resource Indicators (URIs) in the control of one administrative entity. May include different types if URIs (e.g., file transfer protocol sites, telnet sites, as well as World Wide Web sites)" (Minnesota Historical Society, 2007, para. 80).

Limitations of the Study

The most apparent limitation of this study is that there is no standard or systematic approach to categorization of electronic records unless mandated by the University of Wisconsin System. In addition, the study is limited to the archives of U. W.

River Falls, U. W. Eau Claire, and U. W. Stout. Other factors limiting this study are the lack of existing public research pertaining to these archives, especially relating to electronic records; current categorization; and standards, technical and procedural, relating to electronic records maintained by the University of Wisconsin System. The increased use of electronic records and advancement of web-based technologies has allowed the individual archives to publish online records relevant to many subjects beyond local history, genealogy, and required electronic documentation mandated at the state level.

.Chapter II: Literature Review

With the advancements in technology relating to electronic records ongoing and changing, other problems arise. The purpose of storing records is to access them at a future date. Many of these records are a function of government and required by law. How are electronic records categorized and quantified? As more and more records are digitized, what system related to categorization will interoperate with other like systems? We can no longer dedicate physical space to store paper records or filing cabinets. How long do we store these records, and in what electronic format or media? Information technology will have a new role in storing these electronic records.

At the national level, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has begun the task of addressing electronic records. The intricacy of the NARA's website (http://www.archives.gov/era/) alludes to the huge undertaking involved in addressing electronic records. The intent of the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) is to reproduce electronic records independent of hardware and software (NARA, n. d.). This is essential because the NARA deals with a multitude of agencies including businesses, libraries, educational institutions, local archives, or government institutions. The creation of electronic records has its challenges such as the enormous volume of electronic records. The advancement of technology and the diversity of records pose another challenge. These records must be as valid in the future as the time when they were created. This is a formidable and challenging task. The task of building such an electronic records system and management of that system was awarded to Lockheed Martin Corporation.

Literature regarding electronic records at the state level requires knowledge of state operations. The Wisconsin Department of Administration (DOA) deals with the enterprise operation of the state as whole (State of Wisconsin, 2007). DOA's website (http://doa.wi.gov/category.asp?linkcatid=222&linkid=23&locid=0), illustrates the divisions DOA has under its authority. The list of divisions is extensive. A partial list is follows:

1. Division of Administrative Services

2. Division of Capitol Police

3. Division of Enterprise Technology

4. Division of Enterprise Operations

5. Division of Gaming

6. Division of Intergovernmental Cooperation

7. Division of State Facilities

The partial list shows a wide spectrum of responsibilities under the Department of Administration (DOA) at the state level. Another major function of the DOA not listed above is state government - the Wisconsin State Legislature. Documentation of senate and assembly actions are a legal function of state government. The everyday function of state government requires extensive documentation relating to senate and assembly bills, laws, and required forms. Electronic documentation does not end at the state level. Decisions made at the state pertaining to updates, additions, and removal of existing laws need to be communicated to the local levels of government such as county, municipality, and township. The creation of electronic records pertaining to the function of state government can actually be classified a legal history of the state. The Wisconsin State

Legislature Revisor of Statues Bureau website

(http://www.legis.state.wi.us/rsb/stats.html), reveals hypertext links to a searchable

database of state statutes.

The Division of Enterprise Resources (http://enterprise.state.wi.us/home/; 2006),

makes it quite evident that strictly focusing on one level of information technology (IT)

pertaining to electronic records does not give the big picture of what kind of

infrastructure is needed to address the handling of electronic records. The intricate design

of network switches, dedicated fiber optic cabling, and routers are the traffic controllers

of all data which is routed from all over the state and connecting to the World Wide Web

(WWW). This mesh of cabling, electronic network switching devices, electronic routers,

and other network devices makes up what is called the BadgerNet Converged Network

(BCN). Electronic records are transmitted on this network within the state and to the

world. Within the Division of Enterprise Resources website is a hyperlink titled e-records

(http://enterprise.state.wi.us/home/erecords/Default.htm). At this webpage are hyperlinks

pertaining to processes, procedures, and even a primer that has been developed to aid in

the identification of electronic records. This website has developed training materials

addressing electronic records. An additional hyperlink addresses electronic records

retention activity as the state is currently updating its email retention policy at the

enterprise level.

Along with retention of electronic records, there have to be policies and guidance

in addressing what constitutes a record of significance regarding email. What email

documentation is necessary to save and what should be deleted? Many emails contain

attachments - should they be saved as part of the email or discarded? Many attachments

to emails are saved in a different electronic file format and need to be opened by specific software program loaded locally on a personal computer. In the digital world, it basically breaks down into what is commonly called "ones and zeros." Graphics, text, video, and audio are treated similarly in this digital format. Email can transport all of these hypermedia formats; thus the enormity of categorization, retention, and disposal of electronic records.

The review of literature would not be complete without investigating the University of Wisconsin System. The DOA maintains records pertaining to many state divisions and public services, but there is a separation between DOA and the University of Wisconsin System. Section three of the Board of Regents' policies addresses laws and regulations and states that the main function of these policies is to maintain compliance with state and federal laws (University of Wisconsin System, 2007). The public records management policy applies to all the U. W. system institutions. One purpose of this records management system is public accountability. Other purposes include information and digitization tools, business tools, and electronic storage of information pertaining to university functions. There have to be policies and procedures ensuring that electronic records documenting university business are retained or stored. In addition, the chancellors at each UW institution are responsible for assigning a records and forms officer to maintain federal and state legal requirements. Who is responsible for ensuring that records management at each university is in compliance? The DOA has the authority to periodically audit the public records management programs at UW System institutions in order to evaluate legal compliance. This refers to all records including electronic records. The integration of electronic records at the university level will only intensify the

involvement of the university information technology departments due to the fact that university business functions are digitally automated and email communications are basically electronic records whether these records are electronic forms, spreadsheets, databases, or campus activities such as faculty and staff related functions, student related functions, or campus governance related functions. University level records, whether electronic or paper based, are stored in the university archives.

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society (2007a), a map of ARCs in the State of Wisconsin with hyperlinks to each ARC can be found at http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/libraryarchives/arcnet/. One striking observation when viewing the map is the close geographic locations of the ARCs of U. W. River Falls, U. W. Stout, and U. W. Eau Claire. It is important to remember that these ARCs are regional archives and serve as a public depository for regional county offices and other local government entities. These regional archives generally represent more than one county in the region. The website of the ARC located in the library at UW River Falls (Wisconsin Historical Society, 2007c) indicates that the counties represented are Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Burnett. The UW Stout ARC website (Wisconsin Historical Society, 2007d) indicates that the counties represented are Barron, Dunn, and Pepin. The counties represented by the Eau Claire ARC are Eau Claire, Rusk, Taylor, Chippewa, Clark and Buffalo (Wisconsin Historical Society, 2007b). These regional archives are part of what the Wisconsin Historical Society refers to as the ARC Network and are a wealth of local information and history. The regional archives hold many reference books that are priceless to local history researchers, students, faculty, and local communities. Local history, records of past government related documentation, and local papers relating to

subjects of important events long ago are only a sample of holdings housed in these

ARCs.

Chapter III: Methodology

With the volume of electronic records available today and web accessible records on the Internet relating to genealogy and history, it is only logical that the ARCs of the Wisconsin Universities of Stout, Eau Claire, and River Falls will need to address the extraordinary increase in electronic records. These archives are experiencing an explosion in technology and with ever-changing technology, storage of these electronic records will create challenges in relation to categorization and quantification. These archives contain many volumes of reference books that cannot be replaced. Over the years, the use of these irreplaceable reference books relating to local history has physically worn them to a point that extreme care is needed. With the use of today's technology related to electronic scanning, many of these rare books can be digitized, preserving the original book. With web-based technologies, electronic records could be shared by all.

Subject Selection and Description

The primary purpose of this study is to research the electronic records housed in the regional archives of U. W. Eau Claire, U. W. Stout, and U. W. River Falls. This study limits the sample to the three archivists at their respective universities. These archivists are responsible for their respective archive and would be the subject matter experts for this study.

Instrumentation

The survey created consisted of an initial email to the archivists of U. W. Eau Claire, U. W. River Falls and U. W. Stout. In the initial email to these archivists, the research questions were listed. The research questions listed in the email are below:

1. What types or categories of electronic records are currently housed in the Area Research Centers of U. W. River Falls, U.W. Eau Claire, and U.W. Stout?

2. How are electronic records categorized and quantified in these archives?

3. Does the archive have electronic records related to genealogy?

4. Does the archive have electronic records available online?

The initial email survey served two purposes. The survey allowed the archivists to address the research questions of the study and it provided time for the archivists to respond. The survey response of the archivists was accomplished by replying to the original email with the information pertaining to the research questions included, or a return email with a Word document attached.

The second part of the survey consisted of a follow-up telephone interview with the archivists to clarify any information contain in the data supplied in the research questions.

The intent of the researcher in the creation of this survey was to center on data collected by the survey with respect to a specific topic: electronic records housed at these local archives. The utilization of a generic survey or a "tweaked"version of a generic survey did not seem to be appropriate for this study.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection consisted of a four question survey administered by email to the targeted study population, the archivists at U. W. River Falls, U. W. Stout, and U. W. Eau Claire. The initial email allowed time for the archivists to supply data relevant to this study. The archivists supplied data relevant to this study by returning the data addressing the research questions via email or a return email with an attached Word document. A

follow-up telephone interview was administered to clarify any data supplied in the initial

survey.

Data Analysis

Data was analyzed by using the information supplied by the archivists in

addressing the four research questions. A descriptive analysis of the electronic data

holdings in each archive relating to electronic records in concert with a quantitative

analysis of electronic holdings by comparison was used.

Chapter IV: Data Results

The purpose of this research paper is to investigate what current electronic records are available at each university archive. Has the explosion of online genealogy created a demand for increased quantities of online electronic records at these ARCs? The research centers hold a variety of records that would be beneficial to researchers of local community history. Local government records from the past often provide researchers with not only personal ancestral histories but relevant history such as court records. The research questions are listed below:

1. What types or categories of electronic records are currently housed in the Area Research Centers of U. W. River Falls, U. W. Eau Claire, and U. W. Stout?

2. How are electronic records categorized and quantified in these archives?

3. Does the archive have electronic records related to genealogy?

4. Does the archive have electronic records available online?

Research Study Findings

Question 1 was "What types or categories of electronic records are currently housed in the Area Research Centers of U. W. River Falls, U.W. Eau Claire, and U.W. Stout?" Following are participants' responses.

Eau Claire ARC. Archives Series (AS) 333 is online History Bachelor of Arts (BA) theses. The archive indexes about 60 papers per year. AS - History BA theses is being digitally archived in MINDS@ UW, 2006-ongoing. It is the hope of the archive to backfile into digital collections someday.

MINDS@UW is digital depository of electronic information focused on the University of Wisconsin's research and instructional mission. Content can be directly

deposited by UW faculty and staff. Digital categories may include research paper and reports, pre-prints and post-prints, datasets and other primary research materials, learning objects, student theses, student projects, conference papers and presentations, and other digital or digitized research and instructional materials.

Electronic archiving is occurring on campus but no systematic approach has been established. At this time, the archive has no control or custodian responsibility. An example is the Registrar's Office. This office is keeping links to its old course schedules on its own website.

It is the intent of the archive to submit a manuscript collection to UWDCC by the end of the summer. UWDCC is an acronym for University of Wisconsin Digital Collections Center. UWDCC hosts the MINDS@UW website and is responsible for all digital collections and technical support.

River Falls ARC. Very few actual university collections are available electronically through the UW River Falls ARC. The archive has university, special collections, and WHS (Wisconsin Historical Society) photographs available through the UWRF ARC webpage at: http://www.uwrf.edu/library/arc/collections.php.

Some finding aids to collections are available online through the Chalmer Davee catalog and also the UW River Falls ARC website.

During the 2006-2007 school year, The River Falls archive applied for and received a grant for a digital microform viewer-scanner. This machine will theoretically make it possible for any of our collections and publications that are on microfilm to be captured and disseminated electronically. This would include UWRF yearbooks, 1912-1969; the student newspaper, 1919-1984; UWRF student directories, 1915-1981; and 28

newspapers covering our four-county region (Pierce, Polk, St. Croix, and Burnett counties) from the mid-1800s to the present. Other frequently used materials in microform include birth, death, and marriage registrations (1852-1907) for our four-county region, and the accompanying index mentioned above;   Wisconsin and federal census records (1836-1930); Sanborn (fire insurance) maps, and dozens of unpublished county, institutional, and personal archives. The machine should be in place in Fall, 2007.

In addition, Colleen McFarland (the archivist at UW-Eau Claire) and I are in the process of putting together a joint proposal to digitize our Ku Klux Klan holdings through the UWDCC (UW Digital Collections Center). The idea is to document the activities of the Ku Klux Klan in northwestern Wisconsin. There are very few digital collections nationally, and even fewer specific to the North and Midwest. Here at UWRF we have the kind of ephemeral items (brochures, pamphlets, newspaper articles, and leaflets, a KKK robe, a master's thesis) that would lend themselves well to a digital exhibit.

Stout ARC. This ARC has searchable index to announcements related to births, deaths, anniversaries, and probate notices listed in the local newspapers for Dunn, Pepin, and Barron Counties from 1862-1930. The actual publications are housed in the University Archives.

ARC has searchable index to county records for Barron, Dunn, and Pepin Counties of Wisconsin from circa 1855 to 1955. The database includes references to circuit court records, county court records, probates, naturalizations and other county records, funeral records and indexes to biographies. The actual publications are housed in the University Archives.

The Stout archive has online access to diaries of a historic local prominent figure, John Holly Knapp. The online collection of diaries is known as the Knapp Diaries, and is accessible online in full text.

ARC has online access to historic photos of the Knapp, Stout, and Co. Currently the Stout ARC is converting to an electronic catalog consisting of 73,000 records. Progress at this point is up to the letter "L".

The success of creating electronic records is attributed to early adoption of a software program from InMagic Corporation. The archivist recalls not only having to learn the software program but learn to operate the personal computer supplied to him during the 1980's.He had to be his own technical support at that period of time.

Question 2 was "How are electronic records categorized and quantified in these archives?" Following are the archivists' responses.

Eau Claire ARC. The archivist conceptualizes three different categories of electronic records:

1. MINDS@UW collections which is just getting started.

2. University electronic records which are virtually non-existent at this point in time.

3. Using UWDCC for digitizing manuscripts, this is just getting started.

In addition, the archivist is considering archive-created electronic indexes and inventories to provide information about paper collections. This is available in the archives presently. This will eventually be incorporated in finding aids (FAs), which are archival descriptive terminology.

Progress on projects is dependent on funding which can be a main factor. The archives have a records manager currently in place other than the archivist.

River Falls ARC. The archivist stated that finding aids (FAs) to collections are available online through the Chalmer Davee Library (U. W. - River Falls) or at the U. W. River Falls ARC website.

The archivist stated that a new digital microform viewer-scanner will be a centerpiece in creating digital electronic records in the future. Funding is an issue as with the other archives as well.

With reference to categorization, the archivist stated that along with her archivist responsibilities, she will be the River Falls records manager mandated by UW System. It is in the early stages and categorization of electronic records may be addressed in the near future as it relates to university electronic recordkeeping.

Stout ARC. The categorization of electronic records is more driven by types and topics. The archive has a searchable university archive index that dates from 1891 to present time. This searchable database gives online access to folder level control of university's archive.

Question 3 was "Does the archive have electronic records related to genealogy?" Following are the responses indicated by each archivist.

Eau Claire ARC. The archivist stated that about 50% of the AS 333 deals with local history topics which could be categorized topics of interest to genealogists.

The archive has some electronic name indexes to FAs, but very few. They have a limited budget for digitizing records.

River Falls ARC. The archive has hyperlinks to indexes and databases that have been put online by volunteers at USGenWeb (a national website for genealogists). Categories include cemetery indexes, census records, land patents, and various plat map indexes.

Stout ARC. The archive has local online records such as the Dunn County Cemetery Index. This index contains headstone transcriptions of the cemeteries in Dunn County, Wisconsin, from the 1850s to 1994. This database was compiled by the Dunn County Genealogical Society and the Stout ARC. There are approximately 35,000 to 45,000 records.

The County Court Records Index is another online database of interest to local history researchers and genealogists. This database includes the counties of Barron, Pepin, and Dunn. The timeframe is from about 1855 to 1955. It includes a myriad of local government records, also additional records relating to funeral records and biographies.

Question 4 stated "Does the archive have electronic records available online?" Responses are as follows.

Eau Claire ARC. AS333 at MINDS@UW is repeated again. The archivist stated that electronic name indexes to FAs are beginning to appear in the UWDC FA database.

River Falls ARC. The archivist indicated that the website for the Wisconsin Historical Society includes many more electronically-available resources, including photographs, newspaper articles, and the all-important (to genealogists, anyway) WI Vital Statistics Index.

A filesharing system, called Xythos will be used in the near future to address email and electronic communication.

Stout ARC. UW-Stout stated that early photographs of Knapp, Stout, and Company are online. The history of UW-Stout and the history of the Stout Library is online as well.

Another issue that seems to be slowly surfacing is the additional role that the archive will take on pertaining to records management for the university. It was indicated that this is in the early stages and electronic email and additional electronic records pertaining to university business may be posted online. The archive has a records manager in place.

Another project in the early stages is collabortion with Learning Technology Services (LTS) department on campus. The multimedia area of LTS has a large database of photographs as this area is where the university photographer is located. The collaborative project would place these photographs online.

Chapter V: Discussion

This chapter dicusses the research data results, the conclusions,and

recommendations for further study. The purpose of this research paper is to investigate

the current electronic records available at each university archive. Has the explosion of

online genealogy created a demand for increased quantities of online electronic records at

these ARCs? The research centers hold a variety of records that would be beneficial to

researchers of local community history. Local government records from the past often

provide researchers with not only ancestral history but relevant history such a court

records. There may be limitations hindering the creation of more electronic documents at

these research centers which requires exploration of factors affecting the creation of these

electronic records. With the expansion of electronic records, new technology must create

challenges with respect to media storage and retrieval. Quantifying and categorization of

electronic records related to topics such as genealogy, local history, and official records

must be a challenge as well.

Population of Research Study

The population of this research study was the archivists of U. W.-Eau Claire,

U. W.-River Falls, and U. W.-Stout. There is a level of distinctiveness when looking at

this target population because they are in close proximity to each other.

Instrumentation

The survey created consisted of an initial email to the archivists of U. W. Eau

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The purpose of creating this survey was to center on data collected by the survey

with respect to a specific topic; electronic records housed at these local archives. The

utilization of a generic survey or a "tweaked"version of a generic survey did not seem to

be appropriate for this study.

Summary of Research Data

Research question 1 examined the types or categories of electronic records

currently housed in the Area Research Centers of U. W. River Falls, U.W. Eau Claire,

and U.W. Stout. Two out of the three archives have a very limited quantity of electronic

records onsite. Two archivists are collaborating on a combined effort to digitally

reproduce historic records that will in be of interest to the North and Midwest and may

have national interest. One archivist stated that there is not a systematic approach to electronic archiving at the university. One archivist chose external electronic archival storage off campus

Research question 2 asked how electronic records were categorized and quantified in these archives. One archivist conceptionized three different categories of electronic records: collections, university records, and using UWDC for online manuscripts. Two of the three are in the early stages and one is virtually non-existent. One archivist stated that the archive is getting a new piece of scanning hardware that can digitally convert to electronic records. Two out of the three archivists stated that categorization may be more defined as certain projects progress.

Research question 3 asked whether the archive had electronic records related to genealogy. One archivist stated that electronic records were put online by volunteers of the USGenWebProject. Another archivist stated that there was collaboration with the archive and the local genealogical society. The archive posts online electronic information gathered by local volunteers and society members.One archivist reiterated the use of outside entity in posting online records relating to history and electronic finding aids. Two out of three archivists stated budget reasons for the inability to create electronic records.

Research question 4 inquired into whether the archive had electronic records available online. One of three archives has posted online many webpages to address local history, history of the university, and searcheable databases related to genealogy and local history. One archivist stated one project in the early stages with another department on campus that will create more online electronic records focused on images pertaining to

the university. One archivist recommended the website of the Wisconsin Historical Society for genealogy related electronic records. UW-RiverFalls stated that a new filesharing software program was being implemented addressing online email and electronic communications.

Conclusions

Based on the data, it seems as if the availability of electronic records at these ARCs are fragmented concerning a systematic approach to categorization of electronic records. Each individual archive is basically in transition and does what it can with current funding levels. Websites like the US GenWeb Project have excelled at online data related to genealogy and history related subjects. The success of this national website is driven by volunteers contributing data for online publishing. While one archivist stated they have volunteer support in the community contributing data for online publishing, this does not appear to be the norm. It only makes sense that lack of funding is at the root of the progress of future projects. It also seems that the current condition of digital conversion hardware or lack of digital hardware at these archives is a roadblock to the creation of electronic records. While these archives abound in volumes of irreplaceable paper records, often described in cubic or linear feet, the quantity of electronic records is not so easy to ascertain. Results also indicated that the three archivists see their roles expanding with the establishment of a university records officers mandated by University of Wisconsin System. All archivists concluded it was in the early stages; one described it as "virtual" at this point in time.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it seems that the major obstacle of creating electronic records is funding. These archives are in the early stages of joining the digital age. These archives need additional funding to update the hardware technology required to convert existing records to digital electronic records. It is recommended that any expansion of roles and responsibilities of the archivists at the university level should be accompanied by an appropriate budget.

Recommendations for Further Study

The researcher found this study somewhat "pioneering" in that this study did not lend itself to tables and figures illustrating the survey and data results. The irony of this study is that these ARCs are a tropical paradise for researchers. However, when it comes to research pertaining to these ARCs, it is a desert. A recommendation for further study would be the progress of these archives in the digital conversion of existing paper records. Another recommendation would be further research relating to progress of university record management mandated by UW System and the role of the university archive related to management of electronic records on campus.

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