

PROPOSAL: Panel Session - Communities, engagement and risk: developing sustainable recordkeeping services in a changing world

Patricia Whatley: Director, Centre for Archive and Information Studies, University of Dundee

Caroline Brown: Programme Leader, Archives, Centre for Archive and Information Studies, University of Dundee

Alan Bell: Programme Leader, Records Management, Centre for Archive and Information Studies, University of Dundee

Abstract

This session will address the question of whether new forms of engagement and communication present opportunities for recordkeeping services or whether they represent a fundamental risk to the role of the archivist and records manager and to the integrity of the records themselves? As recordkeeping services adopt new ways of engaging with internal and external stakeholders and communities, and as the members of those stakeholder groups and communities adopt new ways of communication with each other, are recordkeepers losing sight of traditional users or struggling to identify the signal amongst the noise of online communications; to identify the 'record' amongst the 'data'?

Drawing on Terry Cook's emerging fourth archival paradigm, 'the community', **Patricia Whatley** will examine the professional implications arising from recordkeepers' interaction with a rapidly growing and diversifying groups of users, both within the custodial and non-custodial environments. She will consider the professional issues surrounding community involvement, ownership of archives and the means of providing professional oversight and guidance in new environments, with particular emphasis on the possibility, or even the desirability, of attempting to ensure traditional notions of integrity and authenticity are maintained in non-custodial settings when set against the desire of communities to shape their own narratives using records.

Caroline Brown will develop the themes raised by Whatley and consider the way that the digital environment has changed the recordkeeping professions' approach to the identification of stakeholder communities and the ways that recordkeepers can attempt to foster engagement. Online catalogues, digital libraries, Web 2.0, linked data and mobile technologies pose challenges in terms of learning new skills and setting priorities. She will ask whether such projects are worthwhile and argue that new forms of engagement raise fundamental issues in respect of

professional frameworks; if the digital world changes the way that collections are promoted and publicised, does it also change the way users understand and engage with them? Do users develop narratives with the records that require recordkeepers to move beyond their long-held values in respect of arrangement, description and provenance to properly understand the value of the records in their care? If that is the case, do our professional principles still matter?

Alan Bell will then consider whether the drive towards greater digital engagement introduces new levels of risk for recordkeepers, both in respect of the integrity of the records themselves and for professionals and their employers. As archivists and records managers adopt new methods of communication and as organisations and individuals view online technologies as core tools for communication rather than as ephemeral or transitory, he will ask whether current professional frameworks are sophisticated enough to cope with the implications of new technologies. Can recordkeepers continue to present themselves as their organisations' 'information experts' and attempt to take account of all organisational information? Has the profession reached a tipping point where they should adopt a more marginal role and concentrate solely on those datasets that can be defined as records by traditional standards, leaving the flood of communication conducted 'outside the firewall' to the IT specialists and corporate risk managers?

The session will conclude with a discussion involving the panel and attendees returning to the central theme; does new technology, new forms of communication and new ideas of community represent an opportunity or risk for the recordkeeper and for the record?

Speaker biographies:

Patricia Whatley is University Archivist and Head of Archive, Records Management and Museum Services at the University of Dundee. She is an archival educator and is Director and Hon Lecturer of the University's Centre for Archive and Information Studies. She serves on various professional committees including as Secretary of the International Council on Archives Section on University and Research Institutions (ICA/SUV) and is a member of the Section Bureau of the ICA Section for Archival Education (ICA/SAE). She is Vice-Chair of the Scottish Council on Archives and Chair of the Council of the Economic and Social History.

Caroline Brown is Deputy Archivist at the University of Dundee and Programme Leader and Hon Lecturer for the archival programmes offered by the Centre for Archive and Information Studies. She is Chair of the Nominations and Elections Committee of ICA/SUV and is a member of the Council of the Scottish Records Association, the committee of the Scottish Council on Archives and the Section Bureau of the ICA Section for Archival Education (ICA/SAE). Previously she was a

Councillor for the Archives and Records Association, UK & Ireland (ARA) and is previous past Chair and a current member of ARA's Education, Training and Development Committee.

Alan Bell is the University of Dundee's Records Manager and Information Compliance Officer and Programme Leader and Hon Lecturer for the records management programmes offered by the University's Centre for Archive and Information Studies. He represents the University at the Scottish Higher Education Information Practitioners Group, is the Secretary of the Forum for Archives and Records Management Education and Research (FARMER) and is a corresponding member of the Section Bureau of the ICA Section for Archival Education (ICA/SAE). He has served previously on various professional committees including the Education, Training and Development Committee and the Committee of the Records Management Group of the Archives and Records Association, UK & Ireland.