



NDSR Project Title Building Curation into Records Creation: Developing a Digital Repository Program at the American Institute of Architects

Project Summary Become an integral part of the AIA's new comprehensive digital transformation. The most effective way to preserve the born-digital records that document our cultural heritage today is to begin their curation at the time of their creation. The NDS Resident will co-lead testing and implementation of an institutional digital repository system at the American Institute of Architects to preserve the AIA's born-digital records that represent its intellectual capital and/or have permanent value for the history of the architectural profession. The Resident and AIA Archives staff will work with the records creators in each AIA department to develop appraisal and deposit workflows based on record series; will test and implement ingest procedures and preservation processing; and will establish multi-level access points to serve both immediate operational needs and be the foundation of a future access system that will enable researchers to search across digital and paper holdings together.

Specific Goals / Objectives Overview: The AIA Digital Repository is planned as several phased projects. Phase 1 is to create an appraisal and ingest system based on record series at the program level. AIA Archives staff and the NDS Resident will work with the records creators in each AIA department to develop record series and metadata, and set up designated departmental collection points from which records are harvested and ingested for preservation processing. Additional activities in Phase 1 include appraisal and ingest of legacy records and addition of metadata to existing website harvesting. Phase 2, selection and implementation of a staff-wide access system for the digital repository, may occur toward the end of the residency year. Phase 3, integration of the AIA Digital Repository with finding aids to paper-based holdings, will occur in future years but will rely on planning decisions made during Phase 1.

Goals/Objectives for Residency:

- Work with each department to identify their permanent electronic record series/subseries with appropriate descriptive, administrative, and rights metadata. Create server collection points with series directory structure for each department.
- Begin harvesting records from departmental server locations and applying preservation processing. Test and document procedures for harvesting, ingesting, tracking, and reporting.
- Configure series and access points in interim archival description software, so that processed records and their metadata will be accessible to Archives staff in the interim system and ready for migration to the full staff-wide access system in Phase 2.
- Appraise and ingest backlog records on removable media, and for groups of records in non-current server locations.
- Work with AIA's IT staff to select a staff-wide access system for Phase 2. If the system is installed during the residency year, assist in setting up the system, and transfer processed records into it.
- Share project results with the archival community. Produce a report evaluating the project's success and lessons learned. Co-author a paper for presentation or publication, discussing how the AIA Digital Repository model could be used by similar small organizations or in



collaborative relationships between private-sector organizations and archival institutions.

*Timeframe &
Deliverables*

Months 1-3: Review of preliminary series list and AIA retention schedule. Begin meeting with departments to determine series/subseries lists of the records for which that department is responsible, and their metadata characteristics. Prepare a final series document for each department, obtain departmental approval, and set up the series on the collection server and in the interim holdings description software.

Months 4-6: Continue departmental meetings. Begin harvesting records from the collection server. Develop, test, and document procedures for ingest: processing through preservation software and deposit of SIPs and AIPs in interim collection description software. Set up series and access points in interim software, so that records inherit series-level metadata when the preservation processing system deposits them into the description system. Develop and document procedures for tracking ingest and for handling out-of-series records.

Months 7-9: Finish departmental meetings. Continue ingest of records. Set up access interfaces and reports so that Archives can readily see what's in the repository and easily provide holdings information to other AIA staff. Develop, test, and document ingest procedures for records on various formats of removable media. Develop appraisal methods for groups of records in non-current server locations, and ingest those of permanent value. Participate in requirements review of Phase 2 access system.

Months 10-12: Continue appraisal and ingest of backlog records. Add metadata to website harvesting so that access points to past websites can be included in the digital repository. Finish documenting procedures and lessons learned. If Phase 2 access system is installed, set up the system with record series, and migrate all holdings to it. Finalize project report.

*Resources
Required*

Primary mentor (Senior Manager, Archives & Records), Secondary mentor (Manager, Research & Archives), Resident

Laptop computer and docking station in office workspace in AIA Archives

Use of Archives processing workstation with removable media drives; preservation processing software and interim collection description software will be installed on the workstation in first quarter of 2015

Access to all AIA staff to discuss and finalize records series

Context

The American Institute of Architects has been the leading professional membership association for architects since its founding in 1857, with over 80,000 members today. The resources in the AIA Archives document the development of the architectural profession in the United States. The AIA Archives supports the work of the AIA as its institutional memory, and is also consulted by architects, scholars, and the public. Its digitization programs make key paper-based records widely available.

The challenge for the AIA Archives today is to ensure that the born-digital records currently created by the AIA will remain accessible into the future. A consultant from Artefactual, Inc. has helped the Archives to determine stakeholder needs and to develop a plan based on capturing records at the time of their creation. Records will inherit their metadata from the series level, with series based around ongoing programs of the Institute. The AIA Digital Repository will provide long-term curation for these records. It is designed for staff access only, since it includes records containing confidential information, member-only content, and for-sale publications, in addition to unrestricted content. It will interface with the various information dissemination systems that the



AIA uses for current content. The AIA is in the early stages of an organization-wide digital transformation of its business processes, and the AIA Digital Repository will be an important element.

Participation in this project will involve the NDS Resident with both the technical and the program-building aspects of setting up the digital repository. On the technical side, the Resident will gain experience in creating a digital repository, including: appraising organizational records; identifying and standardizing their metadata characteristics; developing workflows for transfer, ingest, normalization, and preservation processing; using forensic tools on legacy records; and setting up an access system. On the organizational side, the Resident will gain experience in program-building including: engaging stakeholders; advocacy for digital preservation; developing procedures that meet the immediate needs of records creators while enabling preservation according to archival standards; understanding the role of digital curation within the entire context of contemporary organizational records production; building relationships with records creators; and change management as a digital preservation program is implemented within an organization.

At present, there is no clear model for how a small, non-academic archive can preserve the born-digital records of its own organization. This project will test the AIA's planned solution and document lessons learned, for use by other institutions facing similar issues. More broadly, the AIA's approach may serve as a model that cultural heritage institutions can use to guide private-sector organizations in collecting and donating their records. The project mentors hope to co-author a paper with the NDS Resident for presentation at an archival meeting or publication in an archival journal.

*Required
Knowledge and
Skills of Residents*

- Graduate degree in Library and Information Sciences, Archival Studies, or equivalent from an accredited institution of higher education
- Understanding of digital preservation strategies, including the OAIS reference model, archival and technical metadata standards, and normalization
- Strong organizational and analytical skills and attention to detail
- Strong oral and written communication skills
- Strong computer skills and comfort in learning new software packages

*Preferred
Knowledge or
Experience of
Residents*

- Experience in an archives or records management setting
 - Experience with acquisition and preservation of digital records
 - Familiarity with Archivematica or other preservation micro-services suite
 - Familiarity with AtoM software platform
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