EVIDENCE OF GROWTH AND CHANGE IN ARCHIVAL PRACTICE: 77 YEARS OF THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST

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The American Archivist (AA) is approaching 80 years of existence and is itself a portrait of the archives profession. Since Volume 1, Number 1 from January, 1938, the journal has provided quarterly – and since 1998 -- semi-annual coverage of research, best practices, bibliography, and news of interest to the archival and library communities.
From the perspective of this research project, AA itself becomes a primary source.
This builds on research I have about the characteristics of information science as reflected in the pages of

The *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*

American Documentation

The *Journal of the American Society of Information Science (and Technology)*
PUBLICATIONS FOUNDED IN 1938

- American Archivist
- Action Comics
- The Historian
- Nancy (comic strip)
- Journal of Investigative Dermatology
- Notes & Records” the Royal Society
  Journal of the History of Science
- Le Zombie (fanzine published “every time a zombie awakens”)

Margaret Cross Norton, AA
editor 1946-49
PROJECT PURPOSE

This project has several parts. Its intent is to rely on “The American Archivist,” (AA) the primary journal of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) from 1938 to the present, as the main source of evidence about trends in archives, trends in archives research, patterns of authorship, and practices of association management in the field of library and information science.
OVERALL METHOD

With the assistance of two RAs, data will be collected from *The American Archivist* website (1938-2012) and from the UWM Libraries digital subscriptions (2012-2015).

Data are collected and manipulated in a shared spreadsheet.

Data will be cross-checked for accuracy and consistency by one other team member.

Data will support a few research projects related to *AA* itself, but also to archives research in general when it is compared with similar data from other journals.
It is anticipated that this research will shed light on two major aspects of archives in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

First, professional and cultural changes may be reflected by changes in topics or perspectives. In the first decades, the journal focused more on issues related to the administration of archives and in specialized repositories than in later years. In more recent decades the publication has included a higher percentage of articles about archival education, intellectual property issues, digital technologies, and the social roles of archives.

Secondly, changes in authorship patterns are expected to mirror cultural and professional changes in archival practice and research.
1930s and 1940s: Microphotography; Film

1950s: Display cases; Filing devices; Copy machines

1980s: Electronic records

1990s: Automation; Internet

2000s: Social media; Information policy; Ethics

2010s: Metadata; Digitization
## DATA TYPES / VARIABLES

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<th>Record number</th>
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<td>Methods (opinion, review, description, biography, empirical, etc.)</td>
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VARIABLES: SUBJECTS

Established descriptors from LISTA or Library Literature

Author-assigned tags

Research-team-member-assigned tags
Methods are described in general ways, according to a short list of feasible methods warranted by AA:

- Opinion or editorial
- Book review
- Description of practice
- Case study
- Historical description or analysis
- Biography
- Descriptive statistics
- Empirical research
- Technology description
- Meeting report
Sample Finding: Female Authorship Change

Change in female authorship of feature articles

Year

THANK YOU!

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