What about Email?:
Advocating for Compliance, Building Relationships with OIT, and Very Experimental Workflows

Jessika Drmacich, Records Manager & Digital Resources Archivist, Williams College

Best Practices Exchange Conference, May 20 2020
Me
Collecting email
Started with a plan

- Continually cite records policy
- Connect with OIT (Gmail administrators)
- Build workflow
- Be okay with "collecting email" as a work in progress
- Guinea pigs
- Use records management appointments as a way to promote email as record
- Use presentations and trainings as a way to advocate email as record
Email as part of record policy

★ Compliance is difficult
★ Requires cultural shift
Williams Record Policy

- Passed in October 2016
- Created in consort with College Counsel
- Board of Trustees approved policy
- Includes correspondence in electronic formats as record
WILLIAMS COLLEGE POLICY REGARDING THE MANAGEMENT OF COLLEGE RECORDS

Recognizing the need to ensure the preservation and availability of its official records for legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical purposes, Williams College hereby adopts the following Policy regarding the collection and preservation of these vital papers, records and documents.

Definition of a record
Official records of the college consist of recorded information, created or received by college employees in the course of performing official functions on behalf of the institution, that is maintained to meet the fiscal, legal, historical, and administrative needs of the College. Records include evidence of College organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, and internal or external transactions. Records can be recorded in any physical form or medium, including hardcopy and electronic. Not all records will be deemed of permanent value. A glossary of records management vocabulary is included in the General Records Retention Schedule attached hereto.
General Records Retention Schedule

In support of the official policy, the General Records Retention Schedule offers guidelines

“Email is an electronic form of correspondence. As such, it is subject to the retention guidelines developed by your office in cooperation with the Records Manager.”
Ad hoc collection of email

- In past, email would come in on an ad hoc basis
- Store in Mbox format in preservation server
- Not very accessible to researchers
OIT and Email

★ Owners of Gmail
★ View email as data, only
★ Special Collections digitally preserves
★ OIT provides digital storage in proprietary system (Gmail)
Email, not only for computational access

★ Indeed, email needs to be preserved for computational access

★ But, the email as artifact needs to be preserved as well

★ Data can’t capture how emails were accessed, seen, and used
‘Given this cacophony of media, formats and mediums it becomes clear that preservation cannot be a single conceptual area of work. Instead, preservation is best understood as a kind of juggling act.. working to carry forward folkloric, informational and artefactual objects into the future.’

Trevor Owens, The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation
Outline

- Collect email
- Possibly filtered to a separate “records manager” williams email account or a folder within my own work email
- Export the email from the proprietary system (Gmail)
- For born-digital access and to preserve the integrity of the object, I want to convert the email into pdf
- Preserve Mbox
- Accession in ArchivesSpace and associate with resource record
- Move mbox and pdfs into preservation server
★ Mbox preserved for computational access
★ PDF preserved for greater accessibility and as artifact for researchers
After many conversations

- OIT decided not to grant me a records manager official @williams.edu email
- They created a Google group where I was the only member
- Email then forwarded from group to my email
- Bypasses my inbox into folders for long term preservation
Systematic collection of email as record

★ Use records policy
★ Access to All-Staff, All-Faculty, and All-Student emails
★ OIT assistance (Matt!)
★ With OIT, collaboratively develop workflow for collection
★ With OIT, collaboratively develop workflow for creation of PDFs
★ Special Collections already has digital preservation system in place
Workflow
★ Filter emails in gmail, or move to folder
★ Google Takeout
★ Email Archiver to convert to PDF
★ Accession in ArchivesSpace
★ Preserve
Broadcast emails

Maud S. Mandel <msm8@williams.edu>  
Mon, Mar 9, 11:30 AM

to WILLIAMS-ALL

Williams students, faculty and staff,

The COVID-19 virus is continuing to spread nationally, including a confirmed case in Clarksburg, MA, 7 miles east of Williams, and another in Bennington, VT. I am writing today to announce further steps to protect campus and prepare for the possibility that a case occurs here despite our best efforts. You can always find this information on the college's COVID-19 website, too.

Since activities involving heightened personal interaction, including gatherings and travel, can be a source of exposure, we are making the following changes as of today:
Exporting from Gmail: Google Takeout

- Broadcast emails easy, as they are filtered to folders
- The records contact has to organize their folders
- Cultural shift
- Best place for this to happen is in the beginning of the email’s life cycle
- Personal archiving consultations are important
Email Archiver

Work with my OIT liaison on finding a Google App to transform email to PDF

After many failures, we ended up with Email Archiver Tool which transforms Mbox into PDFs
Dear All,

There are so many of you who deserve thanks and an expression of our gratitude for your participation in this project carried out this semester by five students {insert names here} in ENVI 302 - Environmental Planning Workshop.

So, THANK YOU.

I am attaching a lightly edited version of their final report, a work that has many good suggestions for all of us in the Williams College community to consider. They have cast the report as a narrative of their semester-long exploration of parts of Williamstown and Williams College that few of them, and perhaps us, had much familiarity with before.
Accession them in ArchivesSpace

Connect with resource record using our born-digital description guidelines

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Collecting email in time of Covid-19

- **Williams Covid-19 Experience Project**
- Alumni donations like Dr. Craig Smith's
- Collection of broadcast emails is increasingly important
- Administrators organizing their correspondences proactively in new ways to increase transparency
Campus Emails

Inviting all staff and faculty: Virtual town hall
By Maud Mandel, May 11, 2020
Williams staff and faculty, With everyone working remotely or coming to campus on rotation, it’s even more important than usual that we (President Mandel and Provost Love) and our fellow administrators regularly share what’s happening at Williams. Recently, a number of people on campus have asked how decisions will be... Continue reading »

Early steps for planning our postponed commencement
By John Thomas, April 28, 2020
To the Class of 2020 and the Williams community, Following President Mandel’s April 3 announcement canceling in-person Commencement this June, I'm
Each day Dr. Craig Smith gives the Columbia Department of Surgery updates on the latest in the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dear Colleagues,

In 1977 Peter Medawar, a 1960 Nobel Prize winner, defined a virus as “simply a piece of bad news wrapped up in protein.” 42 years later the bad news was the novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2. It was having its way with us 59 days ago, when I wrote my first Update to the Department of Surgery. We were shutting down ORs and research labs. The scarcity of PPE was frightening. Information was a salad of confusing rumors, rambling emails, and pronouncements from multiple sources. I attempted to write a simplifying summary. I wrote another, then another. I sensed that people sharing such universal dislocation needed morale as much as information. I grew tired of using the phrases “fingers crossed” and “when the dust settles.” Near the beginning of Groundhog Day, the Bill Murray character says “Well, what if there is no tomorrow? There wasn’t
Records management trainings as advocacy

Best Practices for Email Management at Williams

Jessika Ormacich, Records Manager and Digital Resources Archivist
Personal Archiving

We encourage you to manage and preserve your physical and digital materials.

Here is some helpful documentation created by Special Collections staff:

- [Licensing Your Work](#)
- [Tips for Making Your Videos Usable and Enduring](#)
- [Why Archive?](#)
- "Wow, I have way too much stuff!" (presentation, April 2013)
- [Organize Your Files!](#) (training on cleaning up shared drives, 2019)
- [Should It Stay or Should It Go?](#) (email management training, 2018)
- [Declutter Your Digital Life for Libraries](#) (records management training for libraries, 2020)
- [Declutter Your Digital Life: Personal Hackathon for Digital Sustainability](#) (records management training for sustainability, 2020)
Correspondence as records series in schedules

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record Group- 002</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Record Series</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Disposition</th>
<th>Analog or Digital</th>
<th>Restrictions</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Copy of Record</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Files</td>
<td>Office</td>
<td>Office correspondence regarding policy, procedure, or historical nature</td>
<td>This series includes email, program proposals, and documentation of the history of various offices, departments, and programs at Williams. Faculty Handbook.</td>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>Transfer the Copy of Record permanent records to the archives after current year + 2 (end of summer)</td>
<td></td>
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Problems!

- My name will be associated with nearly every email preserved
- Are PDFs the best way of providing access?
- Compliance
- Is PDF the best way to emulate?
- Storing something either just as data or in a proprietary system does not preserve the historical essence of the object nor is it digitally preserved. Google will not be around 50 years from now!
- Folder structure metadata is lost with Email Archiver Pro!
Thank you! jgd1@williams.edu

WHEN THAT EMAIL ARCHIVING
WORKFLOW IS FLOWING
Questions for me?
Questions

1. Do you use policy to collect email?
2. Or how do you hope to use policy to collect email?
3. What is compliance like at your institution with email collections? With higher level administrators?
4. Is there a danger in not specifically discussing born-digital records like email in your policies?
5. Is PDF the best way to provide born-digital access?
6. If not, how does your institution provide access to email?
7. How have you utilized your relationship with the email system owners? In my case this is OIT.
8. Do you have suggestions for changing the cultural view of email as something ephemeral?
Works cited


