Case Statement for the Archives and Records Professionals for Research Data IG

***Introduction***

The objective of this group is to explore the areas where the principles and practices in the information disciplines of archives, records management, and research data curation overlap and where they diverge. Archives and records professionals serve in a range of critical roles: as experts in ensuring access, preservation, and reuse of records and archival collections; as provocateurs for good records curation practices; and as advocates for the construction of sustainable infrastructures for information sharing. Examining alignments in theoretical frameworks, practical implementations, and goals among archivists, records managers and data curators will lead to the development of a vibrant community of information professionals sharing expertise and working in a more interoperable way across different domains.

The proposed IG is explicitly aligned with RDA’s goal to build social bridges that enable the open sharing of data. Specifically, the IG will build relationships among professionals who are committed to developing data sharing frameworks and practices that are able to withstand the various challenges introduced by the passage of time: technological obsolescence, loss of contextual understanding of data, and resource constraints that make it impractical to commit to preserving all data forever. By creating a space for archivists, records management professionals and data curators to come together, this IG has the potential to act as a launching pad for RDA Working Groups that will produce recommendations addressing these fundamental challenges to research data sharing, specifically by bringing preservation, arrangement and description, and appraisal methodologies from the archives and records professions to the wider RDA community. This IG also aims to bring the skills and competencies which have long existed in the archives and records management communities into the wider RDA community - many of whom will not be aware of this existing expertise.

***User scenario(s) or use case(s) the IG wishes to address***

* Broadly, the research data community has concerns related to the vital, foundational questions about which data should be kept, by whom, for whom and for what period of time. Archives and recordkeeping professionals already have long-standing theoretical frameworks and successful practical implementations of appraisal and retention methodologies that could serve the RDA community well in this area.
* Participation in conversations about data curation that are already taking place in archives communities - for example, at the [Society of American Archivists’ 2015 meeting](https://storify.com/elisedunham/research-data-at-saa15) - has generated desire to formalize these discussions with our colleagues in archives and records management via a forum endorsed by RDA.

***Objectives***

* To provide a forum for discussion of how archives/records management principles can apply to data curation.
* To communicate and coordinate with archives/records management professionals who may be outside of RDA to foster synergies, bring them into RDA, and bring the IG and relevant WG activities to the attention of the archives/records management field.
* To advocate for record professionals within the RDA community.

This group will complement the activities of existing groups such as the Libraries for Research Data IG, the Data Rescue Interest Group, and the IG Education and Training on Handling of Research Data. Support by these groups for the proposed IG Archives and Records Professionals demonstrates that other existing RDA groups already acknowledge and support the role that recordkeeping professionals currently play in research data management.

***Participation***

The group is aimed at recordkeeping professionals: that is, trained archivists and records managers, who may have responsibility for research data management in their organisation. We intend to engage with this community via their specific professional communication platforms, for example archives- or research data curation-specific listservs.

We also intend to bring relevant archival methods and expertise to the attention of research data sharing and preservation communities.

As part of the support for this group by the Education and Training for Research Data IG and the Libraries for Research Data IG, there will be coordination of relevant activities.

***Outcomes***

Increased participation in RDA by recordkeeping professionals

* Practical recommendations to the RDA community for addressing at least the following issues:
  + appraising data
  + developing and implementing retention schedules for data
  + strategies for improving access to research data collections
  + education in good data creation practices, preservation, and reuse
* Increased impact of RDA outputs via their effective amplification across archive and record keeping professional networks

***Mechanism***

The IG will use the RDA-provided email list to share news and generate conversation, and will connect where relevant with existing professional mailing lists where already in existence. In addition, we will meet via teleconference on at least a quarterly basis to discuss projects and report on relevant initiatives taking place at our own institutions.

***Timeline***

March 2017: IG meeting at Barcelona Plenary

*Engagement*

The IG will continue to increase group membership via the Archives and Records Association (UK and Ireland), JISC Research Data Management Group, Society of American Archivists, etc. In addition, the IG has identified members who will act as liaisons to key groups (see table below).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization Name** | **Cross Member** |
| InterPARES | Darra Hofman |
| IASSIST | Laurence Horton |
| ICSU CODATA Data at Risk Task Group | Elizabeth Griffin |
| International Council on Archives | Rebecca Grant |
| Digital Preservation Coalition | Rebecca Grant |
| Digital Curation Centre | Laura Molloy |

*Activities*

At the Denver Plenary, the IG identified 4 themes on which to focus our attention. The overarching aim of the discussions in Denver was to determine activities based on these themes might evolve into Working Groups. The activities stem from a conversation on what added value archives and records management professionals might bring to RDA on existing IG/WG topics, and how these other IG/WGs might be engaged by our group.

Themes

1. Digital preservation
   * Potential outcome: creating a publication which suggests achievable levels of preservation from minimal to best practice (similar to the 5 Star Open Data principles) could be both informative and useful. This should be based on extensive research and consensus from the Archives group. The development of this document will be steered by records professionals, whose training encompasses data appraisal, the creation of collections, and metadata generation as well as preservation. These recommendations will therefore be based on a strong theoretical foundation, as well as practical experience of preservation and its related issues.
2. RDA Recordkeeping
   * Continued discussion around idea of conducting focus groups and/or interviews with RDA stakeholders to get a better sense of their recordkeeping needs. Also discussed how IG members can provide insight and feedback to the RDA/US Data Fellow who is working on the RDA Recordkeeping project.
3. Education and Training
   * Proposed an examination of the DigCurV digital curation curriculum framework in order to check its usefulness for the archive professional. The structure - (i.e. 1. Practitioner; 2.middle / programme / project manager; 3. Senior executive) would lend itself well to a structured understanding of the skills and competences for the archivist working with digital holdings. The IG hopes to find a lead on this project by the 9th Plenary.
4. Appraisal
   * Develop a community generated literature review, hosted on the RDA site. This will involve a call for literature/citations and will allow for feedback and suggestions on use from the community. The literature review could also be used for outreach into various RDA IG/WGs such as Libraries, Data Rescue, etc. for collaboration, conversations, and next steps.
   * Develop domain specific reworkings of the DCC guidelines on appraisal. The audience for the domain specific guidelines would be people/organizations with little or no access to archival professionals in their organization. Would include identifying groups to work with from RDA (WG/IG), and determining what work has already been done or already exists.

***Potential Group Members***

See list of over 80 group members on the IG page: <https://rd-alliance.org/groups/archives-records-professionals-for-research-data.html>

***APPENDIX: Existing Contributions***

The proposed IG will strive to build upon and expand work that has already been done to bridge the archives and records management communities and the data curation community. Examples of contributions the archives community have provided to research data practices, both historic and current, include:

1. The DCC in the UK provides resources specifically on how to appraise and select research data. Further, the DCC *Curation Lifecycle Model* - which explicitly describes the central importance of archival concepts such as appraisal, selection, ingest, representation information - currently functions across UK research-performing institutions as the conceptual model for much research data management policy development and capacity-building;
2. OCLC Research produced a report called “The Archival Advantage: Integrating Archival Expertise into Management of Born-digital Library Materials” which explicitly addresses research data;
3. The International Council on Archives published a paper on “Ensuring Long-Term Preservation and Adding Value to Scientific and Technical Data” and a guide on “Management and Preservation of Scientific Records and Data” in 2011;
4. Most member organisations in CESSDA (Council of European Social Science Data Archives) provide a level of research data management support through web pages and training events (online or in person);
5. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration offers a “Toolkit for Managing Electronic Records” (http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/toolkit/#list) that provides many tools and best practices to assist research data practitioners;
6. Trusted Digital Repository certification options;
7. Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide by Joan K. Haas, Helen Willa Samuels, and Barbara Trippel Simmons, 1985.