

## **Documenting Students at Colleges and Universities in the United States: Academics, Alumni, Athletics and Much More**

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### **Introduction**

Higher education in the United States is characterized by decentralization and diversification; college and university archives reflect these characteristics. Ernst Posner, who brought his knowledge of European *archivistique* and of the relationship between European and American archival theory and practice to his pioneering archival work in the United States, put it this way, "The care of the university and college archives is an archival problem peculiar to this [United States] country. It is the problem of the preservation of the record of academic education and university-conducted research in a system of unparalleled decentralization and diversification, and while in the matter of public archives American archivists had much significant European experience to draw on, there was little to guide them insofar as university records were concerned." <sup>1</sup>

The diversity of university archives has made it difficult to standardize archival policies and procedures. Posner was concerned in the 1950s with the lack of standards for university archives.

. . . the individual college or university is the sole arbiter of what should be done to guarantee the adequate preservation and administration of its records, there being no central authority that may force or otherwise induce academic institutions to accept certain standards in matters archival. . . . the great discrepancies in size, structure, and status among the many academic institutions militate quite effectively against even the development of standards. <sup>2</sup>

According to the *New York Times* of February 25, 1997, there are 3,665 institutions of higher learning in the United States including junior colleges, colleges and universities; of these approximately 1,363 are four-year institutions. Colleges are institutions of higher education of small or moderate size--perhaps 1,000 to 2,500 students--with a curriculum characterized as "liberal arts," meaning the humanities and the natural sciences. Universities in the United States have much larger numbers of students and offer a more comprehensive curriculum. Universities are composed of "schools" or

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Posner, "The College and University Archives in the United States," *College and University Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1979) 80-88.

<sup>2</sup>Posner, p. 81.

"colleges" offering not only the humanities and the natural sciences, but professional courses such as architecture, medicine, engineering, nursing, business administration, teacher training, and law, to name a few. The University of Michigan, for example, includes seventeen schools and colleges. College and university archives, as you might expect, run the gamut of size and complexity, from one-person shops with minimal space and equipment to large and diverse staffs working in state-of-the-art facilities.

All this by way of reminding the reader that this description of the documenting of students--based as it is on the University of Michigan archives--is the description of one of a great number of differing situations found in university and college archives in the United States.

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There are probably few university archivists in the United States who would put the collection of records related to students as their highest priority. Yet the documentation of the student experience found in official institutional records, in the records of student organizations or in the personal papers of students and transferred to the archives in a variety of formats: paper files, electronic files, audio and videos tapes, and visual images--is often among the most popular and compelling of the documentation held by university archives.

Rich and important as this documentation is, documenting students is an archival task fraught with problems. Those problems are caused, in part, by the enormity of the task, by the legal environment in which the task must be carried out, and by the necessity to amend archival policy and procedures to accommodate student-related records in digital format.

### **The universe of student records**

Documenting student life is a difficult task for archivists in the United States because of the numbers of students enrolled in institutions of higher education and because U.S. colleges and universities are intimately and comprehensively involved with their students. This intimate and comprehensive involvement creates varied and voluminous records. The universe of student-related records at the University of Michigan includes the following records:

#### *The official transcript*

The most important student record created, administered and preserved is the official academic record--the transcript--the document that serves as the proof that the student complied with the requirements of the university and that contains a record of courses taken, of grades received, and of the student's graduation status. At the University of Michigan, and at many other colleges and universities, the archives has no responsibility for the creation, administration or preservation of the official student record. Rather, the official student record is kept by the

Office of the Registrar. The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers publishes a guide for the retention and disposal of student records.<sup>3</sup>

*Records created by administrative and academic units*

At the University of Michigan, besides the Office of the Registrar, fifty-five other schools, colleges, and major administrative offices create and maintain student records. Only two offices have records on all students: the Registrar's office and the Student Financial Operations Office, which maintains information about charges assessed and payments made to students' accounts.<sup>4</sup>

The record creation begins when a prospective student writes to the college or university and asks for information about admission. Additional records are created or received during the admission process, including records about the student's previous scholastic achievement and about the financial situation of the student's family.

Most first-year students at colleges and universities in the United States live in dormitories provided by the institution. At colleges students will likely live in college housing for all four years of their attendance, while students at universities often elect to live off-campus after their first year. Records are created about students' on- and off-campus housing situations. The archives receives records from a central administrative office whose function it is to oversee student housing, including dormitories, co-operative houses and sorority and fraternity houses.

Class enrollment records are created when incoming students select their first-term courses. The archives holds large, handwritten enrollment ledgers from a simpler era. In the 1990s class enrollment is done electronically from the telephone in a student's room. Although the archives does not document an individual student's admission, housing or enrollment, the archives does attempt to document the activities of the offices administering admissions, housing and enrollment as they set policy, adopt procedures, and interact with groups of students.

The above records are created and kept in central university offices for all students. In addition, academic records are kept by the student's school or college and by the individual academic department within the school or college. For instance, the dean's office or the counseling office creates records related to students' academic progress: admissions application test scores, letters of recommendation, a copy of the student's

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<sup>3</sup>American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, *Retention of Records: A Guide for Retention and Disposal of Student Records*. (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 1987).

<sup>4</sup>University of Michigan. Office of the Registrar, "The University of Michigan Student Rights and Student Records" (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1987).

academic record, notes (if any) made by academic counselors, information about honors awarded and/or academic discipline imposed, and similar items. Faculty and staff may also keep informal records relating to their functional responsibilities with individual students.<sup>5</sup> Again, while the archives may not accession files for individual students, it will document the policies and procedures of the schools and colleges and their interaction with groups of students and with individual students.

*Records created in academic and non-academic service units*

Records are created when a student takes part in remedial programs such as the Reading and Learning Skills Center, or is included in a special academic program such as the Pilot Program, or when a student lives in a specially designed living-learning situation such as the Residential College. The student is covered by institutional health benefits; a patient record will be initiated at the first use of any of the campus health services including mental and substance abuse counseling. If the student is injured on campus, a file may be created by the Department of Public Safety and Security. The student may work on campus, thereby an employment record is created. The student may join the military officer training program (ROTC); that activity will generate records held by the Military Officer Education Programs. The student may need help with English and enroll in the English Language Institute.

If a student violates academic rules by cheating or plagiarizing, if the student is accused of sexual harassment or discrimination, or if the student is charged with a civil or criminal violation, special records will be created by such offices as the Affirmative Action Office, the Office of the Judicial Advisor or the Department of Public Safety and Security. Women students may seek counseling and financial help from the Center for the Continuing Education of Women. International students may have a file on record at the International Center. Before graduation, a student may visit the Career Planning and Placement Office for help in finding a job. All of these offices may create files on the students that they counsel.

*Athletic Records*

If the student is an athlete playing on an intercollegiate team, voluminous records will document the student's recruitment, special academic counseling, housing situation, summer job placement, health, and campus social involvement. Intercollegiate athletics occupy a special position in higher education in the United States; a position that is much discussed and debated. The athletic department and the sporting events it sponsors generate a great variety of records.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 1.

The importance of athletics, especially intercollegiate athletics at the University of Michigan, has had great implications for the university archives. The athletic department has funded a half-time professional archival position. The athletic archivist provides traditional archival services in extraordinary numbers: the identification, survey and transfer of records, arrangement, creation of descriptive finding aids, exhibit and publication preparation, reprography, administrative reference for the athletic department, and reference service to users worldwide.

#### *Alumni Records*

At the University of Michigan, alumni and alumni activities are very well documented. The archives holds records of the Alumni Association, of alumni clubs across the nation and papers of individual alumni. The alumni of a college or university are a great financial resource for the institution. The University of Michigan Alumni Records office tries never to lose track of a graduate. When the student fills out an application for a diploma a file is created in the alumni records office and documentation of the lives of alumni are collected by that office from the time of graduation until death.

Between 1845 and 30 June 1996, the University of Michigan conferred more than 537,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional degrees. It is estimated that the university has approximately 400,000 living alumni. The university maintains a file of active addresses on-line. As of 1993 that file contained information on 323,244 alumni. For the first 120 years, individual paper files were created for alumni. The oldest of the paper files, approximately 64,076 individual files, were recently transferred to the archives. These files document known deceased alumni who died before 1968. Included in the files are enrollment information, correspondence, photographs, general news clippings and obituaries. The archives staff alphabetized the 64,000 folders and created a name index. This record series is greatly used by both researchers and by the archives staff for general and genealogical research.

#### *Records created by student organizations: Documenting Campus life*

In colleges and universities in the United States there is often an intense involvement of students in what is called "campus life." This involvement in campus life creates rich, comprehensive and sometimes ephemeral records. Archivists attempt to capture this elusive documentation because of its importance to the student experience. As one writer on this topic put it, "Student life encompasses the social, recreational, cultural, political, religious, and all other aspects of the student experience beyond the classroom." This same author reports another study in which researchers found that "virtually every study of the impact of college on students

underscores the out-of-classroom collection of experiences as being the most potent educational force affecting the student's development."<sup>6</sup>

What constitutes campus life on the college and university campuses across the United States? At the University of Michigan a student may join the marching band, a campus theater group, a folk dancing organization or run for a student government post. Students join organizations that mirror personal proclivities as well as groups of society at large: student organizations are based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, and political and philosophical inclinations. Campus life often revolves around housing units: fraternities, sororities, co-operative houses, and dormitories. Documenting campus life includes collecting records about student government, student protests, and student involvement in community events.

*Students' personal papers*

Many student activities are documented in institutional and organizational record groups and in the personal papers of individual students. For the 19th and early 20th centuries before the university owned and administered dormitories, rich documentation about students' housing in privately-owned boarding and rooming houses is found in students' personal papers. When one adds to the institutional and organizational records, the scrapbooks, diaries, correspondence, photographs, drawings and other documentation created by individuals and donated to the archives as personal papers, one has rich and multi-layered images and texts to reveal the life of students at the University of Michigan throughout its one hundred and eighty year existence.

It is too soon to know whether "campus life" will be as well documented for the period after World War II as it is for the earlier years. If students in the last half of the 20th century recorded and preserved class notes, wrote letters home, created scrapbooks or kept diaries, they have not yet been donated to the archives in great numbers. As for the students of the 21st century, they may well keep notes of lectures or readings, but it is likely to be on a laptop computer and stored in digital format. Or, perhaps the interaction of students and teacher will be recorded as part of an electronic class conference. Tomorrow's student may write letters home but they are more likely to telephone or send an e-mail message. They may take still photographs but they are as likely to record college events on a video camera. And it will be up to the university archivists in the 21st

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<sup>6</sup>John Straw, "From Classroom to Commons: Documenting the Total Student Experience in Higher Education," *Archival Issues* 19:1 (1994): 20 and as quoted from Lewis B. Mayhew, Patrick J. Ford, and Dean L. Hubbard, *Quest for Quality: The Challenge for Undergraduate Education in the 1990s* (San Francisco: Jossey-Boss Publications, 1990), 96.

century to identify, collect, and administer this valuable record no matter what the format of the records.

### **Using student records for historical research, instructional material and outreach**

There is no doubt that student-related records are a rich historical resource. At the University of Michigan archives they have recently been used for studies on the development of the Old Northwest through its college and civic culture, on the history of John Dewey as a faculty member at Michigan, on second generation ethnicity in Detroit, on ethnic and racial diversity at the university, and on the work of Sports Information Directors.

In its academic support role, the archives staff prepares outlines identifying topics that can be researched using university and student-related records. This is a part of an ongoing effort to publicize the rich resources held by the university archives. Student-related records have been particularly useful for research topics such as: "The Development of Women's Athletics: Making a Place for Women at Michigan;" "The Black Action Movement: An Assessment of its Goals, Strategies, and Effect on University Policies and Procedures;" "The University as a Great White Parent: Changing Ideas on *in loco parentis*;" "Gender and Social Space on the University Campus, 1870-1970;" "At War at Home: The Response of the University of Michigan to World War II;" "Sports Clubs, the Athletic Association, and the Board in Control: Governance of University of Michigan Athletics, 1863-1900;" and "Michigan Athletes in the Olympics."

Student records, especially visual images of campus life, are greatly prized in college and university development publications. Development, which is the euphemistic term used for fund raising, is a growing function in private and public colleges and universities in the United States as public moneys diminish and must be replaced with private contributions. In the last decade, many university units have hired development officers. Whether it is images for development brochures or commemorative publications celebrating a unit's anniversary, student-related records are very valuable in development efforts.

The growth of public television stations has led to the production of an increased number of documentaries and to the increased use of student-related records by the national media. University archives, and the University of Michigan archives in particular, are gold mines of background film footage and still images. From 1948 through 1988, pioneering work in the production of films, videos, and television programs was carried out at the university. When the university film and video unit, Michigan Media, was disbanded in 1988, its film and photo archives, along with its administrative records, came

to the university archives. During their decades of existence, Michigan Media and its predecessor units created stock footage of campus people and events. This "archival" footage, both complete films and snippets of film, are in much demand by national television productions. The thousands of reels of athletic-related films, which is now administered by the archives, is used extensively by commercial television, especially the sports networks.

### **Problems and possibilities of documenting students**

#### *Problems: the legal environment*

Among the challenges affecting archivists in general, and university archivists in particular, is the proliferation of federal and state statutes that define records, mandate their creation and retention, limit their accessibility, regulate the ownership of their physical and intellectual properties, and describe the methods for their destruction. Most of these statutes were written without regard for archival implications.<sup>7</sup>

These statutes can be characterized as being of two kinds: privacy protection statutes (protecting the citizens' right to privacy) and freedom of information statutes (protecting the citizens' right to know). Although Freedom of Information inquiries may make headlines, for university archivists it is more often the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act that makes headaches. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, affectionately referred to as FERPA or the Buckley Amendment, is a federal statute that combines both privacy protection and freedom of information rights. This statute has the greatest impact on university record-keeping and pertains specifically to the student educational record. For the purposes of FERPA, "educational records" are defined as those which directly relate to a student and are maintained by the University or by a party acting for the University, with certain limited exceptions."<sup>8</sup> FERPA applies to every institution of post-secondary education that receives U.S. Office of Education funds.

FERPA gives the individual student the right to inspect, review, and challenge the content of her educational records, and prohibits the release of "personally identifiable records" without consent, except under limited circumstances. When information is released to a third party (such as an archives), the third party may not further disseminate the information without consent. The act provides for sanctions in the form of the loss of federal funds. FERPA does not limit the acquisition of data or its retention and it does allow for dissemination with consent and to certain bodies even without consent. Not

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<sup>7</sup>Marjorie Rabe Barritt, "Archives and the Law," unpublished paper, 1981.

<sup>8</sup>Office of the General Counsel, The University of Michigan, "Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)," interpretation sheet for faculty and staff, October 1989.

only does FERPA limit access to student records until presumed death, but it has been interpreted to apply to all student records ever created by the institution.<sup>9</sup>

The implications of FERPA on administrative and archival procedures and policies are great. For instance, the University of Michigan registrar does not allow access to the official student record of deceased students except with the written consent of the surviving kin or written permission of the executor of the estate. It is the goal of the university archives to open university records for research use, however, the "student educational record" must be closed for 75 to 80 years after the date of creation. This lengthy closure affects the appraisal of student name-related records. In general, the University of Michigan archives does not accession individual student files or name-related student records. The implications of FERPA for university archives have been: few individual student files are preserved; archives have initiated long closures for records that contain student identifiable information; and the archives have restricted access to student papers unless consent forms or releases are attached. There are, of course, many other statutes which have implications for records creation and preservation, but Freedom of Information legislation and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act are the most significant for university archives in the United States.

#### *Technology and the Student Record*

Perhaps the greatest challenge for student record-keeping, in fact for all record-keeping within university archives, is the advent of the electronic record. The Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers has issued the following advice.

Warning: "The use of computerized record-keeping systems is increasing at a tremendous rate. We can anticipate that electronic data will eventually replace most paper documents. Registrars should ensure that appropriate policies are established to protect the confidentiality of those records, educate faculty and administrators about the policies, and make sure the policies are enforced. The same principles of confidentiality must be applied to electronic data as apply to paper documents."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Marjorie Rabe Barritt, "Appraisal of Personally Identifiable Records," *American Archivist* 49 (Summer 1986): 265 and footnote 5.

<sup>10</sup>"Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA): Guidelines for Michigan Colleges and Universities," Michigan Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, 1994.

The first line of the warning is certainly true, but the second part of the warning has not yet come to pass at the University of Michigan. It will be some time before the university archives accessions more records in digital format than in paper. However, the university archives is confronted with the necessity to create new policies and procedures because increasingly, records, including student-related records, are being created in digital format. We are working on several fronts to create new policies and adopt new procedures.

*M-Pathways*

In 1995 the University of Michigan began the creation of a university-wide comprehensive data information system. This system is called "M-Pathways: Connecting People and Information." One of the major components of the comprehensive system is a Student Information System designed around processes that create student records, not structured on the provenance of records created within individual university offices. As the M-Pathways Student Information System sub-group describes the new approach:

Students don't think of their relationship to the University in terms of separate offices . . . . Their relationship with the University may even cut across schools and colleges, as more and more students enroll in multiple programs. Because administrative processes reach across functional boundaries, a project structure with accountability and responsibility for whole processes is required.<sup>11</sup>

The comprehensive system will replace outmoded information systems that are not compatible and it will be able to handle dates beyond 1999. There are many implications for the archives. Because it is important that the archival perspective be present in the development of a comprehensive information system for the university, archives staff began meeting with leaders of M-Pathway's development groups, particularly the sub-group on student records. We were interested in two things: documenting the development of M-Pathways itself and making sure that the data information system being developed could also function as a records information system, i.e., that the information databases could generate records that would document those activities that had been documented by paper records in the past and/or provide additional records.

In working with the sub-group developing the informational database "Managing the Student Relationship," we created a list of student-related documents that we traditionally accessioned and preserved on paper. We compared that list to the functions that were to be documented in the new data information system. Our highest priorities included: statistics on courses; course catalogs; course syllabi; class schedules; campus events calendar; enrollment figures; and faculty evaluations.

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<sup>11</sup>University of Michigan, "Information Digest," (November 1996): 15.

We had generic questions: In what format will the information be captured? When will the information be captured and by whom? Where will the information be maintained and by whom (on-line, disk, tape)? How long will the information be maintained? Who will be responsible for migrating the information to new hardware, software?

And we had questions about preservation and access to the information: Will there be a security copy and who will maintain it? How will the archives get access to the information? What information will be accessible by the archives staff, by the public? And what permissions will be used in accessing information?

In order to ensure the viability of an archival component to this information system, we knew that it was important to re-educate ourselves about electronic records. To that end we initiated staff readings and discussions, with particular focus on the writings that were relevant to the M-Pathways project.<sup>12</sup> Even with re-education, the members of the archives staff by themselves could not solve all the problems or meet all the challenges relating to the archival management of electronic information systems. We recognized a need to work with M-Pathways administrators, information specialists and archival theorists.

*Working with individual units to transfer electronic records*

M-Pathways is the big picture at the University of Michigan on the electronic records front, but there are many pieces tangential to the big picture. The archives is working with individual units to develop procedures to transfer documentation in digital format to the archives. For several years we have been accessioning electronic records from five or six university units, mostly student organizations. These organizations want to transfer, e.g., their e-mail, their newsletters, their posters and flyers, and their engineering drawings in digitized format. We are working to create procedures to appraise, process, describe and preserve this electronic documentation and we have to be able to facilitate researcher access to digital records whether we have custodial care of the records or not.

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<sup>12</sup>David Bearman, "Record-Keeping Systems," *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 16-36; David Bearman, "Playing for Keeps: the Proceedings of an Electronic Records Management Conference hosted by the Australian Archives, Canberra, Australia, 8-10 November 1994," added to the Australian Archives web site, 6 September 1996; David Bearman, DRAFT of "Item Level Control and Electronic Recordkeeping 1" on-line version of paper given at the Society of American Archivists Meeting, San Diego, California, August 19, 1996; University of Pittsburgh, "Functional Requirements for Evidence in Recordkeeping," on-line document at <http://www.lis.pitt.edu/~nhprcprog1.html>, version last modified 9/18/96; Indiana University, "Transaction: Faculty Assigns a Grade to a Student for a Course," on-line document dated DRAFT - July 26, 1996; and University of British Columbia, "Template 5 When is a Record Created in the Electronic Environment?" on-line document dated 10/25/96.

*Documenting electronic conferences*

Electronic records related to students offer some exciting possibilities to capture documentation that was difficult to capture in the past, for instance the teaching-learning experience. Electronic conferencing has been a part of the University of Michigan community for at least a decade. Some years ago, the archives staff explored the possibility of capturing electronic conferences set up by faculty for their courses. We contacted selected faculty who were using electronic conferences to communicate with students. By capturing the conference, the archives could document the course syllabi, reading lists, assignments, tests, and class discussions. Permission was sought to retain selected course conferences either in digital or paper copy. Such electronic conferences are considered a part of the student educational record and need to be accompanied by permissions or releases from all of the students in order to comply with FERPA.

Several years later, a grant-funded project carried out by Bentley staff explored whether computer conferencing had the potential to document the intellectual, cultural, and social environment of colleges and universities. As the introduction to the study stated,

"College and university archivists . . . have long realized that, while the administrative aspects of their institutions tend to be well-documented through organizational records, intellectual discourse, pedagogy, and student culture are not." . . .Almost no administrative records are created that capture the discussions and interactions underlying the genesis and transfer of ideas and opinions in the many disciplines, professions, and ways of life present on the typical college campus."<sup>13</sup>

The study included recommendations regarding the archival appraisal and accessioning of such materials.

*Home pages and electronic mail as student-related records*

There is even an electronic version of the student scrapbooks so valued in the documentation of earlier student life. In 1994, two graduate students in the University of Michigan School of Information wrote a paper on "Using Electronic Manuscripts to Document Student Life." They report on a study of home pages created by graduate students at the University of Michigan to determine whether these home pages would be a useful medium for

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<sup>13</sup>Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, Gregory T. Kinney, and William K. Wallach, "Uses of Electronic Communication to Document an Academic Community, Final Report to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission on Grant No. 91-113," (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1992) 2; also reported in Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland and Greg Kinney, "Uses of Electronic Communication to Document an Academic Community: A Research Report," *Archivaria* 38 (Fall 1994): 90.

documenting student life.<sup>14</sup> Focusing on the difficulty of documenting Helen Samuels' function "fostering socialization," which "includes the informal learning that takes place outside the classroom in a planned and unplanned manner through residential life, extracurricular activities, and personal counseling," the researchers looked at the "publicly displayed documents that students create to let people on the Internet know what they are up to."<sup>15</sup> The researchers concluded that home pages are analogous to old-fashioned scrapbooks. Some enduring archival issues arose such as privacy, copyright and long-term preservation. And the authors addressed a new issue: the option to use either the traditional custodial model and accession the electronic files into the archives, or to use the non-custodial model of storing the files outside of the archival repository in the Institutional File System set up by the University of Michigan to enhance electronic collaboration and file sharing on campus and beyond.

Two other graduate students studied the challenges and possibilities of documenting student life through electronic records. In their paper, "The Personality of Electronic Records: The Impact of New Information Technology on Personal Papers," the authors argued that new digital media provide opportunities to document the lives of individuals who use them, but that archivists will need to come to an understanding of the changes in personal materials to effectively actualize these possibilities."<sup>16</sup> They note that the relative ease with which one can save e-mail messages provides an opportunity to regain documentation of perhaps intimate exchanges, which had been lost when conducted over the telephone. They go on to describe the contextual preservation advantage of e-mail with its automatically embedded metadata such as author identity, delivery path, date, time, and even subject. "The ease with which one can route e-mail to named folders also makes it simple for people to impose their own organization on their material, further personalizing not only the message itself, but the manner of storage."<sup>17</sup>

We can benefit greatly by the research and study on the problems and possibilities of electronic record-keeping that is being conducted by faculty and students in the various graduate archives programs and by the studies and evaluation of "best practice" that is an integral part of many academic archival institutions.

### **Conclusion**

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<sup>14</sup>Caryn Stein and Weston Thompson, "Using Electronic Manuscripts to Document Student Life," unpublished manuscript, 20 June 1994.

<sup>15</sup>Helen Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press Inc. and the Society of American Archivists, 1992), p. 20 and Stein and Thompson, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Tom Hyry and Rachel Onuf, "The Personality of Electronic Records: The Impact of New Information Technology on Personal Papers," unpublished paper, 1996, 9 pp.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3.

This article presents some generalities about documenting students while underscoring the complexity and diversity of the task. Identifying and collecting student-related records is a task central to the mission of college and university archives, yet it is not the highest priority for academic archivists. Documenting students is a comprehensive task if one attempts to record not only academic activities but also the activities of campus life. The legal environment in which archivists carry out this task is problematic and puts great restrictions on access to the student educational record. The advent of electronic record-keeping offers the possibility to document the learning-teaching environment in new and comprehensive ways. The implications of administering records in digital format requires archivists to rethink archival theory and redesign archival procedures. With all of its problems and possibilities, the task of documenting students is an exciting and rewarding one. When adequately carried out, it can fill the archives with rich and diverse documentation of great value to a variety of researchers.

**Abstract**

The author presents a generalized overview of the universe of student records held by college and university archives while acknowledging that university archives in the United States are characterized by great diversity and a lack of standardized archival policies and procedures. This universe includes the official transcript, records created by administrative and academic units, records created in non-academic units, alumni and athletic records, and records documenting "campus life." Student-related records are of value for historical research, as instructional material, for outreach and development purposes and are used by the national media. Two general problem areas related to student records are discussed: the legal environment which restricts access to the "student educational record" and the advent of electronic record keeping by university units. Electronic records, while requiring a rethinking of archival theory and a redesign of archival practice, offer the possibility of capturing documentation on the teaching-learning process and hold out the prospect of insight into "campus life" through electronic conferences, home pages, and electronic mail. The author concludes that with all of its problems and possibilities, the task of documenting students is an exciting and rewarding one. When adequately carried out, it can fill the archives with rich and diverse documentation of great value to a variety of researchers.

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