

Email Archives

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Description

Emails are materially different from correspondence of the pre-digital age, but their significance as traces of the past is substantial, especially for organizations, where email is not only used as a form of correspondence but also as an informal mode of record keeping (Moss, 2012). We proceed from the assumption that the preservation of a meaningful, relatively complete email archive is one plausible pathway to supporting scholarly research on organizations (Kirsch, 2009). Preservation is only one part of the problem, as the way these materials may be accessed and ultimately used for research is also critically important.

This workshop will (1) introduce “digitally curious” historians to the use of email collections as contexts for research (Talboom & Underdown, 2019), (2) orient scholars to the issues inherent in using email collections, and (3) provide a forum for scholars to share and learn from each other about emerging best practices in the use of email as a context for research.

Resources

(post links to useful primary sources here, including documents could examine)

Search functionality for Enron Email Archive:

- <http://www.enron-mail.com/>
- <http://archive.enron.email/>

The Linguistic Data Consortium:

- Oard, D., Webber, W., Kirsch, D. and Golitsynskiy, S., 2015. Avocado research email collection. *Philadelphia: Linguistic Data Consortium*. Available at <https://catalog ldc.upenn.edu/LDC2015T03>

Annotated References

(list some key references that are useful and a sentence or two on why)

- Decker, S, Kirsch, D, Kuppili Venkata, S, Nix, A, (2021) Finding light in dark archives: Using AI to connect context and content in email, *AI & Society* (advance online).
Describes the principles of a search tool for emails.
- Jaillant, L. (2019). After the digital revolution: working with emails and born-digital records in literary and publishers' archives. *Archives and Manuscripts*, 47(3), 285–304.
- This provides an archivist's perspective on the difficulties of making accessible email and other born-digital records in publicly available archives. She reflects on using email as a historical source, the ethical considerations for researchers, and the implications of GDPR and copyright legislation on limiting researchers' access to some of the most useful materials. Importantly, it provides a useful primer on how digital materials came to be considered worthy of preservation, and how this has shaped what is accessible and in which form. Kirsch, D. (2009). *The record of business and the future of business history: Establishing a public interest in private business records*. *Library Trends*, 57(3), 352–370.

This paper introduces the idea of the “record of business” as a necessary input to scholarly understanding of business and management research and practice. As digital business records become more valuable, firms will invest more in the maintenance and exploitation of the record of business, but this may come with a trade-off: the almost default, informal preservation of paper records that characterized the pre-digital era may give way to a regime under which the new default is to destroy rather than preserve the Record of Business once their value to the firm has been exhausted. Implications for research and policy are considered.

- Nix, A., & Decker, S. (2021). *Using digital sources: the future of business history? Business History*, Ahead of print, 1–23.

This article introduces some techniques for digital research to business historians and highlights both their relevance, but also some of the issues with using these approaches in qualitative, in-depth, historical research. It also engages with digital history concepts that are relevant to understanding the unique characteristics of digital sources, and how this relates to historical

authenticity. The examples presented in the article are of relevance to management research (digital company records and media archives), as are the research approaches outlined.

Further references:

- Decker, S., Foster, W., Giovannoni, E., (Eds.) *Handbook of Historical Methods in Management*. Edward Elgar. Forthcoming in 2023
Chapter on archival research in the digital age.
- Moss, Michael. 2012. "Where Have All the Files Gone? Lost in Action Points Every One?" *Journal of Contemporary History* 47(4):860–75. Highlights the impact that email has on records management within large organizations.
- Benke, G. 2018. *Risk and Ruin: Enron and the Culture of American Capitalism*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. This provides an example of a recent piece of research that makes use of email as a primary data source.
- Prom, Christopher J., Kate Murray, Fran Baker, Matthew Connelly, and Wendy Gogel. 2018. *The Future of Email Archives: A Report from the Task Force on Technical Approaches for Email Archives*. Washington DC.
- Talboom, Leontien and David Underdown. 2019. "Access Is What We Are Preserving': But for Whom? - Digital Preservation Coalition." *DPC Blog*. Retrieved July 30, 2020
(<https://www.dpconline.org/blog/access-what-we-are-preserving>).

Participants

Name	Country	Stage	Primary Field
		Emerging	
Adam Nix	UK	Scholar	Management and Organization Studies
Alfred Reckendrees	Denmark	Univ faculty	Business History and Economic History
Andrew Meade		Emerging	
McGee	United States	Scholar	History

Assaf Amit	Israel	Emerging Scholar	Innovation and entrepreneurship
Christoph Viebig	Denmark	PhD Student	Entrepreneurship
David Kirsch	US	Univ faculty	Capitalism studies; entrepreneurship and industry emergence
JoAnne Yates	USA	Emeritus/Retired	business history
Jussara Pereira	Brazil	Emerging Scholar	Organizational Memory Studies
Ken Ogata	Canada	Univ faculty	Organization Studies
Marta Villamor	USA	PhD Student	Strategy and Entrepreneurship
Matthew Hollow	United Kingdom	Univ faculty	Business History
Rory Miller	UK	Emeritus/Retired	History
Shane Hamilton	United Kingdom	Univ faculty	History
Stephanie Decker	UK	Univ faculty	business history
Valeria Giacomini	Italy/USA	Univ faculty	Business History

Convenor Bios

Name	David A. Kirsch
Affiliation	University of Maryland, College Park
Short bio (up to 30 words)	David A. Kirsch is Associate Professor at the Robert H. Smith School of Business and the College of Information Studies (by courtesy) at the University of Maryland, College Park.
Social media accounts	@darchivist

Name	Stephanie Decker
Affiliation	University of Birmingham, UK

Short bio (up to 30 words)	Stephanie is Professor of Strategy at Birmingham Business School (UK) and co-editor-in-chief of <i>Business History</i> and Co-Vice Chair for Research & Publications at the British Academy of Management.
Social media accounts	@deckersteph , https://orghist.com

Name	Adam Nix
Affiliation	University of Birmingham, UK
Short bio (up to 30 words)	Adam is an Assistant Professor in Responsible Business. His research focuses digital-era business history, organizational email, and understanding misconduct and corruption as organizational issues
Social media accounts	@adamjnix

Name	Shubhangkar Girish Jain
Affiliation	University of Maryland, College Park
Short bio (up to 30 words)	Shubhangkar Girish Jain is a student in the Masters of Information Science (MSIS) program at the University of Maryland, College Park.
Social media accounts	@jshubhangkar

The chair of this session is **Christoph Viebig** (Copenhagen Business School)