

# Open-Access Publishing and the Transformation of the *American Archivist* Online

Paul Conway and William E. Landis

## Abstract

In the process of transforming the *American Archivist* (AA) into a digital journal, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) confronted the political, economic, and intellectual tensions inherent in the complex environment of open-access publishing. This article establishes the framework within which SAA made the transition from print only to a combination of print and electronic publication and contextualizes this transformation within the intellectual evolution of the longest-running archival journal in the world. It uses this transformation to a print-digital hybrid as a jumping-off point for consideration of future possibilities for the Society's digital publishing endeavors and concludes by considering a set of unresolved issues for the *American Archivist* posed by the open-access publishing movement, which itself is coming to terms with broad-based economic and preservation challenges.

The *American Archivist* is the oldest continuously published journal on archival theory and practice in the world. The first issue appeared in 1938, with an editorial policy "to be as useful as possible to the members of the profession."<sup>1</sup> In its opening announcement, the first Editorial Board recognized the need of a growing professional association to make the transition from distributing mimeographed meeting minutes by mail to publishing a journal by the Society's membership, in whose hands "rests the ultimate fate of the publication." Today, nearly seventy-five years after that first issue, the journal of the Society of American Archivists remains the labor of love envisioned by its founders, subsidized by dues and subscriptions, and now manifest in digital form. The transformation of the *American Archivist* from print to digital publication is related to a broader and more significant movement to provide free and



Paul Conway and William E. Landis. This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 United States License.

<sup>1</sup> "Announcement," *American Archivist* 1, no. 1 (January 1938): v-vi.

unfettered access to scholarly and professional literature. The creation of an online edition of the *American Archivist* may be most usefully viewed as a first important step toward re-imagining the publication of peer-reviewed and edited writing in the context of a nonprofit professional association. The question remains open as to whether *American Archivist Online* is simply a mechanism for saving printing and mailing costs or a more fundamental shift in the stake that SAA has in an evolving scholarly communication environment.

### Open-Access Journal Publishing

Open access (OA) is a sociotechnical vision that imagines the entire published output of scholarly communication freely and widely available throughout the world. The open-access movement has taken shape within universities in the past decade, partially in reaction to the increasing costs of commercially published scholarly journals, and partly as an alternative to scholarly content restricted by international intellectual property laws and regulations. Some open-access publishing is also speeding and broadening the dissemination of research, making peer review more democratic and transparent, and tempering the authoritarian gatekeeping of editorial boards. The development of open-access publishing is intimately tied to advances in information and communication technologies, particularly the emergence in the 1990s of the World Wide Web,<sup>2</sup> where ethical principles favor unfettered access to information. The technologies that make possible the wide and free exchange of new knowledge also stimulate new and flexible uses of this knowledge in digital form. The increasing deployment of database-driven digital repositories with relatively easy-to-use contribution tools creates an alternative technological foundation for acquiring, maintaining, and distributing scholarly publications.<sup>3</sup>

At its core, the open-access movement is largely oriented toward empowering authors to take direct responsibility for the distribution of their intellectual property and encouraging universities and scholarly societies to develop the technological tools and policy frameworks that provide incentives for authors to embrace the open-access publishing model. In the extensive literature on alternatives to the commercial publication process, two forms of open-access publishing co-exist in uneasy partnership. "Green" OA focuses on coupling innovative technology tools to an incentive system that empowers authors to deposit their publications in Web-accessible digital repositories, administer their own intellectual property rights, and place few limitations on the use and re-use of

<sup>2</sup> *Open Access Directory*, "Timeline of the Open Access Movement," <http://oad.simmons.edu/oadwiki/Timeline>, accessed 18 October 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Oppenheim, "Electronic Scholarly Publishing and Open Access," *Journal of Information Science* 34, no. 4 (2008): 577–90.

the publications. Variations on the Green model allow for technical support for author-deposits, legal support for managing property rights, and flexibility on the re-use of published findings. The business model for Green OA publishing calls for the reallocation of funds from licensing commercial content to subsidizing digital repositories. Although Green open access emerged as a sociopolitical stance on scholarly communication that placed authors in opposition to commercial publishers, open access today is more nuanced and focused on reinventing scholarly communication itself.<sup>4</sup>

An alternative form of OA gives more attention to access to journal content than to the author's role in distribution. "Gold" OA publishes articles in open-access journals that allow free-of-charge access to the articles within them. Business models for Gold OA focus on the economic sustainability of the journal itself and include such mechanisms as author publication fees and the e-marketing of supplemental products. Raym Crow and Howard Goldstein outline nineteen possible strategies for supporting open-access journals through a combination of self-generated income and internal or external subsidies.<sup>5</sup> In shifting attention from author to journal, Gold OA preserves the status quo of academic superstructure, editorial board control, administered peer review, and the hierarchical information structures of the traditional print journal. Although some contend that a hybrid Green-Gold approach may ease the transition to open access for publishers, Stevan Harnad argues that the solution to open access is clearly a Green one: give authors the right to self-archive and then set up technological systems to receive the results of those individual authorial actions.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, the issue of author imperative versus journal imperative is in a state of flux, confronting barriers that range from inadequately developed legal and business models, to limitations imposed by indexing and abstracting services, and the academic reward system.<sup>7</sup>

Advocates for open-access publishing often claim to be neutral about the relationship between print and digital publishing, arguing in part that OA models are flexible enough to accommodate a slow transition from paper to online

<sup>4</sup> Dan Cohen, "Cooperative Web Tools and User-generated Content for Cultural Heritage: Advantages and Limits," in *Proceedings of Cultural Heritage Online: Empowering Users: An Active Role for User Communities*, ed. Chiara Cirinnà and Maurizio Lunghi (Florence: Fondazione Rinascimento Digitale, December 2009), 28–32, <http://www.rinascimento-digitale.it/eventi/conference2009/proceedings-2009/Proceedings-part1.pdf>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Raym Crow and Howard Goldstein, *Guide to Business Planning for Converting a Subscription-based Journal to Open Access*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Open Society Institute, February 2004), Open Society Foundations, [http://www.soros.org/openaccess/oajguides/business\\_converting.pdf](http://www.soros.org/openaccess/oajguides/business_converting.pdf), accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Stevan Harnad, "Fast-Forward on the Green Road to Open Access: The Case against Mixing Up Green and Gold," *Ariadne*, no. 42 (2005), <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue42/harnad/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Bo-Christer Bjork, "Open Access to Scientific Publications—An Analysis of Barriers to Change?," *Information Research* 9, no. 2 (2004): paper 170, Hanken Library, <http://hdl.handle.net/10227/647>, accessed 25 April 2011.

access. Richard Quandt pointed out in 2003 that the debate on publishing formats took place in the absence of hard data on costs and use. "It is a fact that no rigorous studies seem to exist as yet of the cost structure of paper versus electronic journals and most of the 'data' adduced by partisans on one or the other side are based on personal experience in a limited number of fields or with a limited number of publications."<sup>8</sup> John Willinsky writes that scholarly societies considering a move to open-access publishing must face the print versus digital issue head on. "What is clear is that any reduction in publishing costs requires phasing out the print edition, and eliminating the expenses related to the handling of the associated paper manuscripts."<sup>9</sup> These may indeed be separate issues, and "costs" must be evaluated in terms of the impact of the editorial review process on content currency, as well as those associated with the production and distribution of print.

Nonprofit societies oriented toward scholarly disciplines have benefited from open-access publishing; nonprofit professional associations less so. The Association of Research Libraries, for example, through its Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC) initiative, provides explicit guidance for scholarly societies, including planning templates and a suite of comprehensive arguments to support their shift to open-access publishing.<sup>10</sup> The publishing paradigms of professional associations, such as the Society of American Archivists, have largely been left out of the open-access debate. Charles Bailey's near-comprehensive bibliography of the open access and scholarly publishing literature contains fewer than ten articles that discuss professional associations and open access directly.<sup>11</sup> Heather Morrison appeals to principle rather than prudent business practices in her editorial addressed to library professional associations: "If the aim of library professional publishing is library practice enlightened by theory, research, and experience, then open access is the most effective means to this goal."<sup>12</sup> Conscious of the economic challenge of the transition to open-access publishing, Chen Chi Chang identifies four critical factors for sustaining open-access initiatives within small organizations: 1) conscious efforts to reduce the cost of publication; 2) increased income through multiple avenues (subscriptions, advertisements, association membership subsidy, and author reprints); 3) adoption of innovative technology

<sup>8</sup> Richard E. Quandt, "Scholarly Materials: Paper or Digital?," *Library Trends* 51, no. 3 (2003): 370.

<sup>9</sup> John Willinsky, "Scholarly Associations and the Economic Viability of Open Access Publishing," *Journal of Digital Information* 4, no. 2 (2003), Texas Digital Library, <http://journals.tdl.org/jodi/article/view/104>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Crow and Goldstein, *Guide to Business Planning for Converting a Subscription-based Journal to Open Access*.

<sup>11</sup> Charles W. Bailey, Jr., *Scholarly Electronic Publishing Bibliography*, version 79 (13 December 2010), Digital Scholarship, <http://www.digital-scholarship.org/sepb/sepb.html>, accessed 25 April 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Heather Morrison, "Professional Library and Information Associations Should Rise to the Challenge of Promoting Open Access and Lead by Example," *Library Hi Tech News* 21, no. 4 (2004): 8.

to improve cost-efficiency of publication; and 4) keeping intellectual quality high to increase supply (from authors) and demand (from readers) for the journal. Chang's model adds up to an outline of risk in the transition from print to online publication, regardless of whether access is open, restricted to membership, or some combination of the two.<sup>13</sup> An extended period of hybrid paper and electronic publication creates uncertainty about the degree of success that an organization can have in addressing these critical factors.

### Limitations of Open Access for Nonprofit Publishers

Even in its broadest manifestation as an alternative to the commercial journal publishing model, open access is not a panacea for all of the publishing world's ills. In particular, we assert that open-access publishing is neither designed nor intended to resolve the following five tensions.

1. ***Open access is not open source.*** The term *open source* pertains to the community-based development of computer software code. Unlike commercial or proprietary software, the source code for open-source software is fully open to the development community, which regulates changes to the source code and the redistribution of subsequent versions.<sup>14</sup> Open-access publishing may be, but is in no way required to be, built on open-source technology platforms. Open access depends, instead, on the open availability of the contents of document databases that may be managed with commercial or proprietary tools. An electronic journal can open its content widely while managing that content using proprietary or commercial tools.
2. ***Open access does not automatically protect the rights of authors.*** Open access alone is only one approach to scholarly communication that favors open and unrestricted access. OA publishing encourages but does not mandate that authors manage directly the distribution of their intellectual property. When coupled with a Creative Commons license, however, open-access publishing gives authors the flexibility to specify the terms of re-use of openly distributed content. For example, an author may allow only noncommercial uses of a published article without further permission from the author.<sup>15</sup> An electronic

<sup>13</sup> Chen Chi Chang, "Business Models for Open Access Journals Publishing," *Online Information Review* 30 (2006): 710–11.

<sup>14</sup> Eric S. Raymond, *The Cathedral and the Bazaar: Musings on Linux and Open Source by an Accidental Revolutionary* (Sebastopol, Calif.: O'Reilly Associates, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> Maureen O'Sullivan, "Creative Commons and Contemporary Copyright: A Fitting Shoe or 'a Load of Old Cobblers'?", *First Monday* 13 (January 2008), <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2087/1919>, accessed 20 November 2010.

journal publisher can choose a stance on intellectual property that is consonant with its goals for sustaining publication.

3. ***Open access is not necessarily paperless.*** Today, nearly all publications begin their lives as digital documents, even if their distribution is through the medium of print. Advocates for open access pin their aspirations for author-controlled distribution on the fact that authors possess the knowledge that feeds the publishing industry, regardless of distribution medium. The most sophisticated economic models that support the logic of open access point to the savings that may accrue through the abandonment of print publication in favor of direct or modestly mediated digital distribution.<sup>16</sup> The economics of print-based journal publication turn on, to a much greater extent, the size of the subscription base and the demands of libraries and personal subscribers for paper-print output. An electronic journal publisher can make the transition to digital publication while continuing to satisfy what may become a diminished demand for paper copies.
4. ***Open access is not digital preservation.*** Digital repositories that support open-access publishing in a university or scholarly society context fulfill a preservation function to the extent that their host universities build their repositories with a sensibility for digital preservation.<sup>17</sup> Such sensibility encompasses adherence to emerging preservation standards, the adoption of preservation metadata frameworks for tracking changes to digital files over time, and the administrative vigilance required to anticipate technological obsolescence and prepare contingency plans for system migration. Economically and technically sound approaches to preserving electronic journal content are emerging, including Portico, CLOCKSS, JSTOR, and HathiTrust.<sup>18</sup> An electronic journal publisher can deliver content digitally while relying on one or more of the emerging digital preservation models to convey trust and confidence to readers.
5. ***Open access is not free.*** Open-access publishing shifts the cost of publishing from subscribers to some combination of authors and those who subsidize them. The typical professional association or scholarly

<sup>16</sup> Bo-Christer Björk and Turid Hedlund, "Two Scenarios for How Scholarly Publishers Could Change Their Business Model to Open Access," *The Journal of Electronic Publishing* 12, no. 1 (2009), <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/3336451.0012.102>, accessed 14 May 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Yakel, Soo Young Rieh, Beth St. Jean, Karen Markey, and Ji Hyun Kim, "Institutional Repositories and the Institutional Repository: College and University Archives and Special Collections in an Era of Change," *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 323–49.

<sup>18</sup> Portico, <http://www.portico.org/digital-preservation/>; CLOCKSS, <http://www.clockss.org/clockss/Home>; JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/>; HathiTrust Digital Library, <http://www.hathitrust.org/>, all accessed 20 November 2010.

society depends on publication sales, including journal subscriptions, for core operating expenses. Additionally, professional associations market the privilege of exclusive access to published journal content as a primary benefit of membership. Without the economies of scale enjoyed by commercial publishers, the fixed costs of journal production are high regardless of delivery medium, including reviewing and refereeing; online submission and review systems; and editing, graphic design, layout, and proofing, as well as marketing.<sup>19</sup> Professional associations committed to publishing as a core service to members, such as the Society of American Archivists, face severe pressure in the changing access marketplace to balance their requirement to add editorial value to the work of the authors who write for the journal with the responsibility to deliver member benefits, preserve operating income, and maintain the overall quality of their publication programs.

The moral imperative of open access—most compelling in a university setting—is an insufficient argument to motivate scholarly societies and professional associations to commit to the free distribution of their published products. A middle way between the Green path of author rights and the Gold path of journal persistence is required—a path that is not a hybrid of the two approaches but rather is a flexible alternative to both. Such an alternative must cede rights to authors while creating a sustainable economic model for the journal itself. The transformation of the *American Archivist* from a print-only to a print and electronic publication is a case in point.

### Seventy-Five Years of the *American Archivist*

A review of published assessments of the evolution of the *American Archivist* between its first issue in 1938 and the early 1990s provides an instructive framework in which to consider possible transition scenarios in a move toward an open-access middle path.<sup>20</sup> Richard J. Cox, in his 1987 study, outlines “three distinct phases in the development of archival literature in the U.S.,” the second of which begins with the founding of the National Archives in 1934 and the

<sup>19</sup> Oppenheim, “Electronic Scholarly Publishing and Open Access,” 580.

<sup>20</sup> The assessments considered for this article, listed chronologically, include Karl L. Trever, “The *American Archivist*: The Voice of a Profession,” *American Archivist* 15 (April 1952): 147–155; Richard J. Cox, “American Archival Literature: Expanding Horizons and Continuing Needs, 1901–1987,” *American Archivist* 50 (Summer 1987): 306–23; Mary Sue Stephenson, “The *American Archivist*, 1971 to 1990: A Demographic Analysis of the Articles,” *American Archivist* 55 (Fall 1992): 538–61; and Richard J. Cox, “An Analysis of Archival Research, 1970–1992, and the Role and Function of the *American Archivist*,” *American Archivist* 57 (Spring 1994): 278–88.



establishment of SAA in 1936 and the first publication of its journal in 1938.<sup>21</sup> Cox argues that this phase ends and the third phase begins with the influential report of SAA's Committee for the 1970s, published in the *American Archivist* in 1972. Among its recommendations, which were to have a sweeping impact on SAA's publications program, the report called for strengthening and expanding the scope of the *American Archivist*, publishing a bimonthly SAA newsletter, publishing pamphlets on "practical archival and technical problems" aimed at beginning archivists, and publishing manuals and other materials to meet the needs of SAA's members.<sup>22</sup> The first of Cox's phases precedes the founding of SAA and publication of its journal, so it is not considered here.

The *American Archivist* in its first three decades heavily reflected the nascent National Archives, which was established only four years before the *American Archivist*. After the first two editors, Theodore Calvin Pease (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1938–1946) and Margaret Cross Norton (Illinois State Archives, 1946–1949), completed their terms, seven staff members of the National Archives served sequentially as editor until 1981.<sup>23</sup> Cox notes that "in addition to providing crucial support for SAA's quarterly journal," many among the National Archives staff, "cognizant of creating a new institution and profession, . . . endeavored to establish both through writing."<sup>24</sup>

According to Cox, from 1938 through the early 1970s, the mere existence of the journal "revolutionized archival writing and the archival profession, providing a forum for archival writings that, prior to 1938, had had little chance for publication, as well as giving considerable space for reviews and news."<sup>25</sup> *American Archivist* articles provided practical guidance on administration of archives and basic processes such as arrangement, classification, records programs, conservation, microreprographics, disposal, and establishing services aimed at the scholarly researcher. Many of these were presented through the lens of specific repositories, frequently the National Archives. Reports on the growth of state records and archives programs and numerous essays on archival practice in other countries were also included. Cox characterizes this as a period dominated by "finding aids and reports of institutional activities" and notes that

<sup>21</sup> Cox, "American Archival Literature," 307.

<sup>22</sup> Cox, "American Archival Literature," 312. For the committee's report, see Phillip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970's," *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 193–217.

<sup>23</sup> See the list of editors of the *American Archivist* maintained as part of the *Council Handbook* on the SAA website, [http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app\\_f.asp#AAEditors](http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_f.asp#AAEditors), accessed 8 November 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Cox, "American Archival Literature," 310.

<sup>25</sup> Cox, "American Archival Literature," 310.



though “archival practice showed a gradual movement toward common practices, these practices did not constitute standards or theory.”<sup>26</sup>

For a newly established profession and professional society, the quarterly *American Archivist* in its early years served as journal and newsletter, essentially the only regular SAA channel for society-to-member and member-to-member communication. Articles tended to be short, on average about ten pages, with roughly forty-eight pages of articles per issue. The rest of each issue comprised book reviews, shorter notices, news notes, presidential pages, technical notes, obituaries, and reports and minutes detailing the business of SAA’s governing council and major committees. These latter sections averaged thirty-three pages per issue, making them almost as substantive a part of each issue as the articles.<sup>27</sup>

Nearly two decades after the emergence of the World Wide Web, it is easy to forget (and for some in the profession to even recall) the communication challenges archival professionals faced before email, bulletin boards, listservs, Web pages, and social media tools. Karl Trever, one of the National Archives staff members who served as *American Archivist* editor (1949–1956), characterizes the primary function of the journal as providing “the essential bond of union” in a profession struggling to create, both internally and externally, a unified conceptualization of what it was. Trever opines that “it is the peculiar obligation of the *American Archivist* to provide this basic literature to the archival profession, and to keep alive and meaningful for every member of the profession the importance of the archivist and his work in modern society.” He further notes the tensions between theory and practice in the journal’s functions to “clarify for [the archivist] the philosophy of his profession, and assist him to understand and put into effect the standards of modern archival practice,” on the one hand, and the need “to supply him with practical suggestions for use in his daily work” and a venue in which to “discuss questions of policy and practice that may be troubling him, and advertise his program, his co-workers, and the research values of the records in his custody,” on the other. Trever contends that the *American Archivist* in the early 1950s “is a good magazine,” but bemoans the paucity of contributions that “forces your editor to use what materials he has at hand” in a “catch-as-catch-can fashion.”<sup>28</sup>

Mary Sue Stephenson effectively analyzes articles published during Cox’s third phase of the *American Archivist* (1972–1990). She notes that, during this

<sup>26</sup> Cox, “American Archival Literature,” 311.

<sup>27</sup> These data constitute a somewhat superficial effort to characterize the content of the *American Archivist* during this period for readers who have not looked at early issues of the journal. The *American Archivist Online*, <http://archivists.metapress.com>, accessed 16 December 2010, was used as the source of this data, which resulted from an informal sampling of the third issue of each year between 1938 and 1970.

<sup>28</sup> Trever, “The *American Archivist*,” 148–53.

period of maturation, the journal continued to act “as a clearinghouse for information on significant archival activities and publications from throughout the world, providing a forum for archivists to express their opinions on matters of common interest, and communicating information on the activities and positions of the Society.”<sup>29</sup>

In comparing topical coverage of *American Archivist* articles from 1972 to 1990 to Cox’s analysis of the pre-1971 period, Stephenson notes an increasing consideration “of the profession itself, including the concepts of professionalism, research needs, and SAA and other professional associations.” Stephenson also finds a decline from the earlier period in articles on arrangement and description and those focused on specific repositories and their collections, but she detects a gradual increase in articles on the topic of appraisal throughout the two decades. She credits this to “an increase in the number of articles concerned with general theoretical issues, rather than from an increase in the number of articles concerned with descriptions of particular appraisal projects.”<sup>30</sup>

Stephenson analyzes length of articles and number of articles per volume to create a statistical snapshot of the *American Archivist* between 1971 and 1990, finding an average of 19.5 articles per volume and 11.1 pages per article. Although Cox did not generate similar descriptive statistics for the pre-1971 period, a cursory review of these earlier issues suggests only a negligible difference in the averages between the two periods.<sup>31</sup> Stephenson convincingly documents a significant shift in authors away from the Washington, D.C., area during the two decades of her study. From 1971 to 1980 “Washington-based authors accounted for 64 (31.8%) of 201 authors,” while from 1981 to 1990 “they represented only 38 (19.6%) of 194 published authors.” She attributes this to the 1981 move of the journal from Washington and the severing, based on a “‘cease and desist’ order from the administrator of general services,” of the joint publication of the *American Archivist* by SAA and the National Archives, a continuous arrangement since 1949.<sup>32</sup>

In the post-1990 period, we find some interesting extensions of the trends documented by Cox and Stephenson. During its most recent two decades, while the number of article “chunks” per volume has stayed at a relatively consistent 19.4, the number of pages per *American Archivist* article has jumped from 11 to 17.9. More interestingly, broken down by decade, the number of

<sup>29</sup> Stephenson, “The *American Archivist*, 1971 to 1990,” 539.

<sup>30</sup> Stephenson, “The *American Archivist*, 1971 to 1990,” 547–49.

<sup>31</sup> As noted by the authors in footnote 24, a superficial review of the third issue published each year between 1938 and 1970 yielded a rough average of 10 pages per article and 19.2 articles per annual volume. The salient point here is that while Stephenson notes some shift in coverage between the pre-1971 period and her 1971 to 1990 timeframe, the size of articles and volumes proved to be relatively static.

<sup>32</sup> Stephenson, “The *American Archivist*, 1971 to 1990,” 555–57.

pages per article averaged 15.9 from 1991 to 2000, but 21.7 in the decade since 2000. Analysis of article authors for the post-1990 period also confirms the continuing shift toward a less Washington-centric base of authorship. In the decade from 1991 to 2000, Washington, D.C.-based authors accounted for 11.9 percent of 269 authors, and in the most recent decade for a mere 2.7 percent of 188 authors.<sup>33</sup>

We have steered away from the topical analysis undertaken in Stephenson's research, mainly because grouping articles into broad categories seems overly subjective and lacking in meaningful nuance. Just one example from the most recent decade illustrates the challenge of *a priori* article categorization: is the article exploring processing effort by Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner an arrangement and description article, or is it really about archival administration and resource allocation decision making? It seems less than useful to attempt to pigeonhole this article into a single topical category.<sup>34</sup>

Individual editors during the past two decades have left their mark on the *American Archivist*, mainly in terms of how the journal is organized. For example, the wide array of article types (e.g., research articles, perspectives, case studies, literature reviews, international) evident from scanning the title pages produced under the editorships of Richard Cox (1991–1995) and Mary Jo Pugh (2006–2011) was reduced almost solely to research articles and review essays under the editorship of Philip Eppard (1996–2005). The focus on archival research that Richard Cox brought to the journal was an important catalyst for debate and discussion,<sup>35</sup> and the delayed results of that work may arguably be seen in steadily increasing article sizes since the beginning of Cox's editorship. Nonetheless, editors today remain beholden to members of the profession to write well on relevant topics, just as they were during Karl Trever's editorship in the early 1950s. Although circumstantial evidence from the annual reports of the current editor, Mary Jo Pugh, suggests a robust flow of submissions at present, the topical breadth of each issue's content is serendipitous, and the editor has little recourse beyond cajoling to initiate content.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to the uncoupling of the journal from copublication with the National Archives, the appearance of a more frequently published newsletter, and the efforts of individual editors, the alternative distribution channel

<sup>33</sup> Every *American Archivist* article from 1990 through 2010 (73:2) was included in this assessment, with the exception of the special A\*Census section in volume 69, number 2 (Fall/Winter 2006).

<sup>34</sup> Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208–63.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Cox, "An Analysis of Archival Research, 1972–1990," 278–88.

<sup>36</sup> See cursory information about this topic in SAA Council minutes posted online, <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/>, accessed 28 April 2011. Full reports of the *American Archivist* editor, received by the authors as members of the Editorial Board, are not currently posted online. See also Table 1, "From the Editor," page 384 in this issue for more information about submissions.

represented by the Internet since the mid-1990s has had a significant impact on the journal. Over the course of the past two decades, annual published bibliographies of archival literature have completely disappeared from the pages of the *American Archivist*, and reviews of websites have begun to trickle into the space previously devoted to traditional book reviews. The current review editors have launched an ambitious agenda for taking advantage of the Internet to augment the reviews section of the journal.<sup>37</sup> A recent decision by SAA Council has resulted in the move of the record copy of Council minutes from print publication in the *American Archivist* to the SAA website.<sup>38</sup> Web-based developments continue to have the potential to drive even more profound changes to the journal in the coming years. The remainder of this article reviews some of these impacts to date and advances an argument that actively embracing open-access publishing in some form will position both the *American Archivist* and SAA's publishing program more generally for continued success and future growth.

#### **American Archivist Online**

In 2006, the Council of the Society of American Archivists charged the *American Archivist* Editorial Board with developing a plan for delivering the *American Archivist* in digital form to its membership, to subscribers, and to the general public. The board established two working groups to prepare a business plan<sup>39</sup> and work through technical issues associated with a choice of hosting service.<sup>40</sup> These working groups included board members as well as those who had been involved in authoring previous reports on the general topic of providing online access to SAA publications.<sup>41</sup> The board established a framework for an initial launch of already-digital content and the digitization and release of the entire back file of printed volumes. The framework also addressed an article embargo policy, the challenge of potentially copyrighted content in already-published volumes, the format of the online version, and the choice of

<sup>37</sup> See "Calling All Reviewers!," in the 2010 SAA news and press releases online, <http://www2.archivists.org/news/2010/calling-all-reviewers>, accessed 8 November 2010. See *American Archivist Reviews* at <http://www2.archivists.org/american-archivist-reviews>, accessed 8 September 2011.

<sup>38</sup> See the minutes of the 27–30 January 2011 SAA Council meeting, <http://www.archivists.org/governance/minutes/min0111.asp>, accessed 28 April 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Business Plan Working Group: Paul Conway, chair; Jeannette Bastian; Dennis Meissner; Robert Spindler.

<sup>40</sup> Technical Issues Working Group: William Landis, chair; Susan Hamburger; Christopher Prom; Mark Shelstad.

<sup>41</sup> Dennis Meissner had previously served on and Robert Spindler had chaired SAA's Task Force on Electronic Publications (2001–2002). Christopher Prom and Mark Shelstad had served on the TFEP's successor group, the Electronic Publications Working Group (2003–2006).

a hosting service. In making its recommendations, the Editorial Board considered and rejected a number of alternative scenarios for access.

The plan of action for online access had its antecedent in the work of the SAA Task Force on Electronic Publications (TFEP), which submitted its report to the SAA Council in late 2002.<sup>42</sup> Because it had such a clear mandate from the Society to transform the journal into an online publication, the Editorial Board did not make a complete rationale for action, other than to reiterate that online journal content is rapidly proliferating; that many researchers decide that what cannot be found online either does not exist or is irrelevant; and that it is a profound disservice to educators and students (and to scholarship on archival issues generally) to provide only published print access to the deepest and longest running river of archival content.

Three assumptions shaped access options for the electronic edition of the *American Archivist*. First, as with the print journal, SAA members and subscribers obtain exclusive first access to the *American Archivist Online* as a fundamental benefit of membership. Second, SAA retains or even augments its income stream from journal subscriptions. Third, SAA sustains journal content in both paper and digital versions for the foreseeable future. These three issues have been open for debate and discussion since the journal launched the online edition in August 2007.

A rolling embargo is perhaps the most common strategy that journal publishers pursue to maintain the revenue stream for the publishing enterprise. At its launch, the *American Archivist Online* established a limited embargo on newly published articles. All older content is freely available online and represents an unambiguous commitment by SAA to the widest possible dissemination of journal content over time. Access to newer content is limited to SAA members and subscribers for up to three years, in recognition of the membership value of the journal's articles. The embargo is implemented at the beginning of a given volume-year. For example, when articles in the first issue of volume 75 are published online, the digital contents of the entire volume 72 will be opened to free public access, while access to volumes 73, 74, and 75 (six issues) remains limited to SAA members, subscribers, and those who purchase individual articles. Reviews and front matter (such as tables of contents, advertisements, Council meeting minutes, etc.) are open to all readers immediately upon publication; only article content is embargoed.

The Editorial Board rejected the two discrete forms of open-access publication. The Gold open-access model (free access to all journal content) is economically unsustainable at the present time without a large increase in membership dues committed to journal publishing. The Society's commitment to the

<sup>42</sup> *Final Report of the Task Force on Electronic Publications* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 10 December 2002), [www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/tfep-finalreport.pdf](http://www.archivists.org/governance/taskforces/tfep-finalreport.pdf), accessed 1 July 2011.

concept of an “assembled” journal with a hierarchical structure (volume/issue/article) led it to set aside the Green (self-archiving) model as well, with the observation that not all of the authors of *American Archivist* articles have direct access to institutionally supported digital repositories. As a matter of policy and advocacy, SAA embraces a version of the Green model that permits and encourages authors to retain their copyright, assign a Creative Commons license, and deposit their content in open-access institutional repositories.

The Editorial Board considered and rejected a number of other access options. First, the board rejected providing content through a separate commercial subscription service, most likely bundled with similar journal content because it would force all readers to pay a separate fee for access to the online edition of the journal. Second, it rejected the option of making older content available by separate subscription through a journal aggregator, such as JSTOR,<sup>43</sup> while making newer content available to SAA members and subscribers directly through the SAA website. The latter approach bears all the disadvantages of the commercial distribution model with none of the advantages of wide access and marketing support. The Society of American Archivists embraced JSTOR as an ideal secondary access and preservation mechanism for the journal but rejected commercial subscription services in general, and JSTOR in particular, as a sole-source access platform.

The board considered but rejected options for delivering journal content that would entail delivering disambiguated journal content through third-party aggregators, such as the ACM Digital Library.<sup>44</sup> The board also rejected the option of reformulating the journal or its individual articles as full-text content, along the lines of peer-reviewed Web journals such as *Ariadne*<sup>45</sup> or *First Monday*.<sup>46</sup> Finally, the report rejected the option of treating *American Archivist* journal content as an interchangeable mix of text and images, along the lines of monograph content delivered through digital library sites, such as Making of America<sup>47</sup> or Documenting the American South.<sup>48</sup> The net result of these decisions was to preserve the intellectual structure and physical appearance of the print journal, while migrating the content into tightly structured units through a unified Web-accessible hosting service. Readers see the online version of the *American Archivist* as ordered page images and can search the full text of all content and use

<sup>43</sup> JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/>.

<sup>44</sup> ACM Digital Library, <http://portal.acm.org/dl.cfm>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>45</sup> *Ariadne*, ISSN: 1361-3200, <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>46</sup> *First Monday*, <http://firstmonday.org/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>47</sup> University of Michigan, Making of America, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/>, accessed 1 July 2011; Cornell University, Making of America, <http://digital.library.cornell.edu/m/moa/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>48</sup> University of North Carolina Library, Documenting the American South, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/>, accessed 1 July 2011.



browseable indexes that reflect but do not exactly mimic the structure of the source journal.

The Society of American Archivists adopted the “Cornell Model” for handling copyright for already-published *American Archivist* content.<sup>49</sup> SAA had obtained copyright from its authors since 1964. Under the Cornell Model, SAA asserts its copyright ownership for article content and the right to make a digital facsimile version of the journal online. For content in textual form, SAA posts a statement on the *American Archivist Online* front page asserting that the copyright agreements that authors signed for their original publication in the *American Archivist* cover the electronic version as well, since it is an exact page image of the print publication. For illustrated content, two separate conditions prevail. First, if SAA negotiates an agreement with a copyright owner specifying one-time use, the contract supersedes copyright; SAA must obtain permission from the copyright holder to reproduce. Second, when there is no prior contract in place, SAA treats illustrations in the same manner as text and asserts the right to make a digital facsimile version. During the print collation process, SAA identified illustrations in the published edition whose copyright may not have been held by the author and sought permission from the rightful copyright holder, or redacted illustrations (including cover art) in the online version of the *American Archivist* if it proved impossible to resolve copyright issues. After receiving advice from the SAA Intellectual Property Working Group chaired by Peter Hirtle, the Editorial Board considered but rejected two other approaches to article-level copyright, including 1) seeking and obtaining full clearance for all article content prior to posting online, and 2) exercising due diligence in attempting to contact authors, accompanied with a posted notice to that effect on the online *American Archivist* site.

Once the Editorial Board established models for the *American Archivist Online* regarding open access, the structure of the online journal, and prior intellectual property, the Editorial Board addressed the contract with a journal hosting service. A hosting service, whether a nonprofit or a commercial enterprise, is neither an electronic journal publisher (e.g., Elsevier Science),<sup>50</sup> nor an abstracting and indexing service (e.g., Wilson Library Literature),<sup>51</sup> nor an e-journal aggregator (e.g., OCLC First Search).<sup>52</sup> A hosting service has four capabilities essential to the dissemination of online content. First, a hosting service provides a single-source Web server (and associated backup and security

<sup>49</sup> Cornell University, Copyright Information Center, “Resources,” <http://copyright.cornell.edu/resources/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>50</sup> Elsevier, “Information Solutions for Science and Health,” [http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/homepage.cws\\_home](http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/homepage.cws_home), accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Wilson, “Library Literature and Information Science Full Text,” <http://www.hwwilson.com/ast/liblit.cfm>, accessed 1 July 2011.

<sup>52</sup> OCLC, “First Search,” <http://www.oclc.org/firstsearch/>, accessed 1 July 2011.



services) for digital content. Second, a hosting service has the capacity to accept digital content from a variety of sources (SAA, publisher, digital conversion vendor, etc.) and then can normalize that content for a consistent look and feel. Third, a hosting service can administer a rolling content embargo if it has access to membership data that enables the authentication of users. Fourth, a hosting service can ensure that article-level metadata is accessible to search engines such as Google and Yahoo and can transact purchases of embargoed articles by those who are not members or subscribers.

In choosing a hosting service for the *American Archivist*, the board narrowed its investigation to services that could provide SAA with maximum independence as a content provider, maximum flexibility to customize the reader gateway to the journal, and minimum upfront and ongoing costs. Eliminated from consideration were hosting services that would require SAA to cede any control of intellectual property to the service or that would require an exclusive license to deliver digital content. Finally, the board sought to engage a hosting service with a track record of success working with nonprofit organizations. The Editorial Board's recommendation of EBSCO MetaPress<sup>53</sup> was unanimous and enthusiastic.

### Building Online Content

With the selection of a hosting service in place, and with significant support and contributions from SAA staff and volunteers, the Editorial Board completed the three-phase process of creating and releasing the online edition of the *American Archivist*. The board envisioned a unified, complete online version of the journal created from original source files (born digital or digitized paper). The term *unified* refers to delivery of the complete online edition of the *American Archivist*, beginning with volume 1, number 1 (1938) and continuing into the future. The term *complete* means that the already published volumes of the *American Archivist* would be made available for digital use in their entirety, including covers, front and back matter, internal indexes, and advertisements. To ensure the highest quality product, the printed back file of the *American Archivist* would be converted to digital form from original hard copy volumes, rather than from microfilm.

The first phase of online publication consisted of journal content already in a digital format that could be loaded by the hosting service without significant technical transformation. The digital files used to produce printed volume 63, number 2 (Fall/Winter 2000) through printed volume 70, number 1 (Spring/Summer 2007) were compatible with the formats accepted by MetaPress. This

<sup>53</sup> MetaPress, "E-content Hosting Solutions," <http://www.metapress.com/home/main.mpx>, accessed 1 July 2011.

content was uploaded, normalized, indexed, beta tested, and made available on 15 August 2007.

The second phase of online publication involved ongoing provision of online content utilizing the digital source files used to produce printed volumes. Simultaneous publication of print and online editions of the *American Archivist* has continued from volume 70, number 2 (Fall/Winter 2007) through the present.

The third phase of online publication encompassed the digitization of the print-only journal from volume 1, number 1 (1938) through volume 63, number 1 (2000). SAA staff member Teresa Brinati, working with a number of prominent archivists and archival programs, assembled a complete set of the print-only journal. This full set of the journal was “sacrificed” to a destructive disbinding process to create high-quality digital images of every single page, including covers and advertisements. SAA negotiated a contract for back-file conversion with OCLC, which then subcontracted the work to Back Stage Library Works (BSLW) of Provo, Utah.<sup>54</sup>

For the vendor, the major steps in the conversion process were the creation of digital images, postprocessing and product quality control, the creation of searchable PDF files for each “chunk” of the journal, and the transfer of files and associated metadata to SAA. Decisions on the units, or chunks, for packaging issue content were necessitated by the fee structure in place for many hosting services, including MetaPress, for uploading and delivering journal content. Based on specifications determined by the Editorial Board, the vendor delivered digital content in a sequence of PDF files, along with source files in the tagged image file format (tiff). Each file represents either a discrete article from the *American Archivist* or journal content clustered in logical groupings. The major groupings are 1) front matter beginning with the cover and ending with any material prior to the editor’s introduction, including the printed table of contents; 2) articles, regardless of type or origin, including press releases, republished documents, and other items that can be assigned authorship; 3) a single cluster of book reviews; and 4) back matter, including official SAA Council minutes, volume indexes, advertisements, and other materials published separately from the core content of the journal. The vendor supplied metadata for each file sufficient to tie the file to the appropriate volume, number, and page range of the *American Archivist*.

Back-file conversion was completed in four phases. The final load of back-file issues was completed in September 2010. Support for the uploading of nearly twenty years of early *American Archivist* content was provided by a grant of

<sup>54</sup> Backstage Library Works, <http://www.bslw.com/>, accessed 1 July 2011.

\$12,000 from the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation.<sup>55</sup> DVD transfer media, which included the source files, PDF documents, and associated metadata, were retained by SAA pending future decisions about commitments to preserve the digital files separate from the MetaPress hosting service.

### One-Time Production Costs

The one-time costs required to create a complete and unified online version of the *American Archivist* totaled approximately \$90,000. The costs fall into three categories: 1) charges levied by the hosting service (MetaPress) to establish a dedicated journal site and uploading, indexing, and integrating digital content at the site; 2) digitization of sixty-two years of the print back file of the journal; and 3) administrative time of SAA staff contributed to manage the project and the *American Archivist* Editorial Board to develop a recommended course of action and provide oversight for the project.

Table 1 provides a breakdown of costs by year for the components of the project. The table illustrates the flow of the project from planning to implementation and from initial efforts to bring already-digital volumes (2000–2010) online through the conversion of print issues (1938–2000). The total one-time cost to convert and deliver seventy-three years of *American Archivist* content was about \$1,228 for each year of the journal's existence. Back-file digitization and hosting service upload fees for journal content account for approximately 63 percent of the cost of the project. The table does not include ongoing fees for hosting aggregated journal content or the costs of uploading future issues of the *American Archivist*.

### Unresolved Issues for Open Access to the *American Archivist*

Following a concerted four-year effort by a group of committed archivists and staff at their professional organization, the entire contents of the *American Archivist* are now available for online use. The prospect that the journal will thrive in a competitive digital environment is quite high, even when allowing for at least three important issues that the Society of American Archivists has yet to address.

First, if the membership of SAA demands that the organization continue to produce a print version of the journal, the organization must establish an economic model that makes transparent the price that members pay to sustain

<sup>55</sup> Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, <http://www.delmas.org/>, accessed 1 July 2011. See also "Feeling Groovy?: Journal Issues from the 70s and 80s Now Online," *Archival Outlook*, March/April 2010, 24, <http://www2.archivists.org/sites/all/files/AO-MarApr2010.pdf>, accessed 9 December 2010.

print publishing. Underlying such a model is a series of judgments about the intellectual value of reading journal articles in the print form supplied by SAA, as opposed to reading online or on paper produced on demand by the readers themselves. This is an open question that all journal publishers face as reading preferences and styles shift. The increasing prevalence of portable access devices may tip the present balance from read-on-paper to read-on-screen. Over time, SAA may have to shift the costs of producing a print edition of the *American Archivist* to a shrinking audience of readers dedicated to print on paper.

Second, SAA must understand and come to terms with the actual benefit to its members and subscribers of delivering exclusive access to the most recent three years of content. By expecting privileged access to recent content, SAA members deny access to the broader community of archivists. Perhaps more important, a rolling embargo limits access to the most recent thinking of archivists and archival scholars for nonarchivists who may benefit from knowing more about professional practice and its underlying theoretical constructs. It is an open question whether an access embargo provides a meaningful incentive to join SAA or renew membership, especially given the intellectual cost to a wider community. More iterative, interactive methods of article production for some parts of the journal may mitigate the limitations on access of a continued production embargo; nonetheless, the impact of new processes needs to be explored purposefully by the Editorial Board and the SAA staff to determine their effect on the value members assign to the ongoing content embargo.

Third, SAA needs to assess the benefits of supporting multiple, redundant paths for access to and preservation of the digital content of the journal. As of this writing, the *American Archivist* is available through the MetaPress hosting service in a mix of open and restricted modes, through the JSTOR subscription service, and in part through the HathiTrust Digital Library, which determines access strictly through the application of appropriate U.S. copyright law. The appearance and functional capabilities of the journal vary with each form of access. Each of the three modes of access presents a different approach to long-term sustainability. Throughout the history of research libraries, redundant acquisition of books and serials helped guarantee the preservation of published output. It is an open question, however, whether redundant delivery systems for the online version of the journal will provide the same level of preservation assurance to archivists whose very professional identity is tied to the preservation of cultural heritage. SAA will likely need to undertake an explicit assessment of the preservation requirements of its digital journal and determine the best approach to ensuring its digital longevity.

**Table I.** One-Time Costs for American Archivist Online

		Calculation Basis	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
MetaPress Hosting Charges								
1a	Site setup	Contract		\$3,500				\$3,500
1b	Upload 2000 to 2007	Contract		\$2,574				\$2,574
1c	Upload current year	Contract			\$1,248	\$1,296	\$1,344	\$3,888
1d	Upload 1938 to 2000	Contract			\$702	\$7,668	\$21,474	\$29,844
Digital Conversion of Print Copy (1938–2000)								
2a	Assemble complete run	Hourly Staff			\$1,581			\$1,581
2b	Digitize back run	Contract				\$9,917	\$10,422	\$20,339
2c	Review quality of digitization	Hourly Staff				\$858	\$570	\$1,428
Estimated Administrative Overhead								
3a	SAA staff	400 hours @ \$40		\$2,000	\$4,000	\$6,000	\$4,000	\$16,000
3b	SAA Editorial Board	350 hours @ \$30	\$900	\$4,500	\$2,100	\$2,100	\$900	\$10,500
	<b>Total Cash Outlay</b>							<b>\$60,145</b>
	<b>Estimated Labor Cost</b>							<b>\$29,509</b>
	<b>Total</b>		<b>\$900</b>	<b>\$12,574</b>	<b>\$9,631</b>	<b>\$27,839</b>	<b>\$38,710</b>	<b>\$89,654</b>

### Opportunities Presented by Online Access

The *American Archivist* has clearly changed over the course of its seventy-three year publishing history. A variety of factors have impacted the structure and content of the journal in the past and will continue to do so as current and future editors, editorial boards, staff members, membership needs, organizational realities, and technological contexts shape its evolution. Among the most important change factors are the emergence of other archival publication venues over the decades following 1938, the general maturation of the archival profession in the United States, the implementation of recommendations regarding its publishing program that emerged from the report of SAA's Committee for the 1970s, the move of the journal's editorship and production from Washington in 1981, and the growth of the Internet as a communication and distribution venue for SAA since the mid-1990s. The primary lesson for all involved in assessing past and implementing future change is that the *American Archivist* of our most recent memory must not become a straightjacket for envisioning possibilities. The end of one process, in this case establishing an online publication and providing digital access to its entire print back file, serves as the beginning of another. *American Archivist Online* is not an end point, but should provide a foundation for SAA for re-envisioning the genesis of and access to archival literature and the collaborative effort of re-inventing its professional publication program and processes more generally.

Determining how to proceed to meet evolving demands in ways that are organizationally sustainable is a challenge. One of the previously cited critical factors identified by Chen Chi Chang, the adoption of technologies to improve cost-efficiency in the publication process, may help address other important needs for the *American Archivist*.<sup>56</sup> One of these is dramatically reducing the current submission-to-print timetable so that ideas and research, especially those relating to fast-moving technological changes impacting archivists, circulate more quickly in the conversation embodied by the journal's content. The biannual schedule for fixing and distributing the contents of an *American Archivist* issue introduces a lag time that becomes less acceptable as online publications increasingly adopt rolling publication practices.<sup>57</sup> The fixity of the biannual publication schedule is a legacy from the print-only past; abandoning it and instituting a process for publishing articles as they are ready would be a relatively low-barrier way to mitigate the timeliness issue and take advantage of the technology currently in place, perhaps providing SAA members and others

<sup>56</sup> Chang, "Business Models," 711.

<sup>57</sup> In a survey of *American Archivist* readers conducted online in spring 2010, 57.9 percent of those who answered the question indicated they would prefer a rolling publication cycle, while only 42.1 percent of respondents said they would not. This result indicates that timeliness of content may be a relatively important area for the *American Archivist* Editorial Board to explore. See the report of the survey in this issue.

with incentives to begin consulting the online edition of an issue more frequently. In a rolling publication process scenario, biannual issues can still be fixed, printed, and delivered to members as long as that service remains in demand. One potential way forward in exploring this area may be for the Editorial Board to undertake a survey of strategies employed by other publishers who have made this leap. Adopting a rolling publication model may necessitate changes in the look and pagination of the secondarily fixed, printed issues, but this may be a worthwhile tradeoff acceptable to the membership. It would be unfortunate if print-based publication traditions continue to dictate a lengthy submission-to-publication timeline that will likely increase in potency as a factor inhibiting the submission of content exploring a variety of fast-moving issues currently facing the archival profession.

Investigating the viability for SAA of backend technological support for managing the editorial process, including submissions, editorial functions, and peer review, is another aspect of innovating to improve efficiencies that the *American Archivist* Editorial Board plans to explore.<sup>58</sup> The challenge for SAA will be in finding solutions that have a price point and technology profile that meet the organization's needs and capabilities. Adopting a more innovative technological infrastructure for managing the *American Archivist* and other SAA publications will likely provide a catalyst for defining and supporting active interaction with readers through the use of social network technologies. SAA's evolving website and its annual Research Forum<sup>59</sup> are two emerging models that combine interaction with membership and the fixing of outcomes as digital publications. Preprints are common in many academic disciplines, and an infrastructure that supports discussion and interactivity as a potential prelude to a published scholarly article may be one worthwhile avenue in the evolution of SAA's publications program.<sup>60</sup> The logical next step in organizational support for research relevant to archival practice may well be a melding of the forum and SAA publications through a more iterative, interactive publishing program utilizing this type of innovation.

<sup>58</sup> There are many of these technology solutions being marketed by vendors. See, for example, Berkeley Electronic Press, "Editkit Back Office Solutions," <http://www.bepress.com/editkit.html>; Aries Systems, "Editorial Manager/Preprint Manager," <http://www.editorialmanager.com/homepage/home.htm>; and HighWire, "Welcome to Bench>Press," <http://highwire.stanford.edu/publishers/benchpress.dtl>, all accessed 8 December 2010.

<sup>59</sup> For more information on the Research Forum, see <http://www2.archivists.org/proceedings/research-forum>, accessed 8 December 2010.

<sup>60</sup> The *Scholarly Communication Glossary* maintained by the University Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign defines a *preprint* as "a scholarly article that has not yet passed the peer review/refereeing process," <http://www.library.illinois.edu/scholcomm/glossary.html#p>, accessed 8 December 2010. Cornell University Library, "arXiv.org," <http://arxiv.org/> and the media repository maintained by the Society for Political Methodology, "Papers, Posters, and Syllabi," <http://polmeth.wustl.edu/media.php>, present two very different examples of how a preprint archive might work; both accessed 14 May 2011.



The intersection of formal and informal writing by professional association members holds promise for the emergence of new forms of publication. Common Web-based delivery technologies can support the production of formal publications, such as peer-reviewed and edited journals and books, as well as the creation and distribution of the more informal, yet immensely useful and often-cited gray literature generated by professional associations such as SAA.<sup>61</sup>

The *American Archivist* in its current online/print hybrid remains an important quality end point for peer-reviewed works on important issues in archival research and practice. In the past, such print-based journals have generally treated all content the same way in terms of their editorial and production processes. As primary access to the journal shifts from print to online, and with investigations into innovative technology solutions for improving a variety of production efficiencies, the time has perhaps come for a complete re-evaluation of how the production process is managed for the various types of content sought by the journal.<sup>62</sup> Currently the same editorial infrastructure is responsible for research articles, case studies, and perspective pieces. The structure of having a separate reviews editor is perhaps one that might profitably be applied to other existing or newly imagined sections of the journal, especially if clear audience-based needs can be identified (through experimentation, feedback mechanisms, and so forth) that argue against a one-size-fits-all editorial process. For example, one can readily imagine that the types of audiences and mechanisms for interactivity revolving around a practical case study of an electronic records, instruction, or appraisal issue would be vastly different from an experimental research project exploring a similar topic. A willingness to experiment with structures, processes, and technologies is the best way for the *American Archivist* to continue to evolve to meet the needs of archival thinkers, practitioners, and researchers in the future.

## Conclusion

Open access is a fundamentally transformative concept that alters the landscape of academic publishing. The ideal of open access restores to authors control over the distribution and redistribution of their work while vesting them with responsibility to maximize sharing and minimize the cost of scholarly production. Open access also requires a sociotechnical infrastructure that is no less

<sup>61</sup> *Gray literature* has been defined as “information produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in electronic and print formats not controlled by commercial publishing.” See *Wikipedia*, s.v. “Gray literature,” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray\\_literature](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gray_literature), accessed 8 December 2010.

<sup>62</sup> For the *American Archivist* editorial policy, see <http://www2.archivists.org/american-archivist/editorialpolicy>, accessed 8 December 2010.

sophisticated and complex than the one that underlies the commercial publishing enterprise. The new open-access infrastructure depends upon explicit partnerships among authors, editors, and content distributors—such partnerships in the academic sector increasingly taking the form of new relationships between scholars and libraries. In its ideal form, open access finds the sweet spot where unfettered access and cost-effective production intersect—a nexus that helps guarantee that nonprofit organizations can support a publishing enterprise for the nonexclusive benefit of their primary community. Along the way, open-access digital publishing provides a malleable mechanism for re-inventing scholarly communication. And, yet, such re-invention may only be feasible for nonprofit associations when a sound publishing business model coincides with an embrace of innovative new information technologies. In an era of technological transition such as the one we are experiencing, past practices ultimately yield to new opportunities.

As a professional association, the Society of American Archivists is simultaneously a part of and apart from this landscape of access transformation. A long-term, successful commitment to open-access publishing will require SAA to adopt the ethical foundations of scholarly communication, which now values easy and effective information sharing, while implementing a business model that supports both ongoing production and the costs of long-term digital preservation. At the end of the day, open-access journal publishing turns on the quality of its written and visual content. The only way that the dual mission of preservation and access can be achieved in the digital environment is for the intellectual content of the journal and its associated publications to remain relevant, vital, and necessary for the archival community to grow and thrive.