TESTIMONY
OF
MARTHA MORPHY

ASSISTANT ARCHIVIST FOR INFORMATION SERVICES

1NFORMATION POLICY, CENSUS, AND NATIONAL ARCHIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM COMMITTEE

2154 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2009
2:00 P.M.

"NATIONAL ARCHIVES: ADVISORY COMMITTEES and their

EFFECTIVENESS"

Chairman Clay; Ranking Member McHenry, Members of the Subcommittee, I am

Martha Morphy, Assistant Archivist for Information Services and the Designated Federal

Officer for the Archivist's Advisory Committee on the Electronic Records Archives. I

appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today on National Archives and Records

Administration's (NARA) use of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and,

specifically, the Advisory Committee on the Electronic Records Archives (ACERA).

ACERA was established by the then Archivist of the United States, Allen Weinstein, in

2005. This committee meets twice a year in April and November and information about

the meeting and the meeting minutes are available at http://www.archives.gov/era/acera/ .

The last meeting was held on April 29-30, 2009. The costs for that meeting were $9,285

which includes travel, per diem, catering, and supplies. Since its creation this committee has scheduled nine meetings and met eight times (the ninth meeting will be held November 4-5, 2009).

Archivist Weinstein established the Committee to "serve as a deliberative body to advise the Archivist of the United States, on technical, mission, and service issues related to the Electronic Records Archives, known as ERA. This includes, but is not limited to, advising and making recommendations to the Archivist on issues related to the development, implementation and use of the ERA system."[1] ERA is an IT system being built to support the preservation of and access to electronic records that are complex by nature, diverse in format and exponentially increasing in volume. The challenge that NARA faces in the area of electronic records is one that is shared throughout government and the private sector. The original ACERA membership consisted of 18 members considered to have particular expertise, knowledge, and interest in electronic records. Today's membership consists of 17 recognized experts and leaders with active interests in records management, electronic records, information technology; and research in federal and state governments, academia, and the public and private sectors.

The meetings serve as a forum for the discussion of issues relevant to NARA and the Electronic Records Archives, and are therefore not strictly structured to only provide formal recommendations or findings. The meetings are also an opportunity for NARA to communicate to, and to seek feedback from, the Committee on NARA's strategic plans, the state of the Electronic Records Archives, the newest releases and developments in the

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[1] Charter of the Advisory Committee on the Electronic Records Archives filed August 31, 2005.

ERA system, and any electronic records challenges encountered since the previous meeting. Committee members often add value to the meetings by discussing their own projects and activities that are relevant to electronic records and information technology.

Over the Committee's four-year history, it provided informal recommendations and advice, on:

- ERA Architecture and Design – an overview of the ERA system architecture and design, concentrating on the hybrid approach being used for ERA where incoming data is held in a Data Storage instance that enables us to check for viruses and other problems, check classification levels, and perform other assessments of the incoming records.

- Open Architecture Approach – a means to leverage innovation and promote evolution in a multi-vendor environment.

- Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) and Content Object Repository Discovery and Registration Architecture (CORDRA) – the ADL Initiative provides the Department of Defense personnel access to high-quality education and training, tailored to individual needs and delivered cost effectively, whenever and wherever it is required. CORDRA is a metadata[2] repository that provides information on how to find context and use it across Learning Management Systems (LMS). These initiatives were discussed in looking at how to provide ERA training.

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[2] **Metadata** is descriptive informatioin about the data held in a system. An item of metadata may describe an individual record or content item, or a collection of data including multiple content items and hierarchical levels, such as a database schema. .

- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Processing of Presidential E-Records – tools to assist archivists in processing electronic records created by office applications that could be used for processing Presidential records.

- The Hitachi Content Archive Platform (HCAP) – the HCAP tool allows for the rapid ingest and search of data.

- Global Digital Format Registry (GDFR) – an initiative to develop an architecture that will support a distributed global registry for file format information. Once deployed, the GDFR will provide services for the centrally-organized collection of format representation information, the distributed storage, discovery, and delivery of that information, and a basis for related services such as format translation.

- Federated Electronic Records Management (ERM) Model – the history of the Federated model[3], the pros and cons of various ERM models and how NARA can use this model to do business.

- Interagency Working Group on Digital Data – this group was established to develop and promote the implementation of a strategic plan for the Federal government to cultivate an open interoperable framework to ensure reliable preservation of and effective access to digital data for research, development, and education in science, technology, and engineering.

- Public Access to ERA – the functionality and design of ERA's online public access interface within the context of NARA's Web presence and the Internet.

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[3] A Federated model is a system architecture that does not require all of the records to be in one (1) central repository and can support search of and access to records regardless of their physical location.

- ERA System Architecture and Evolution – the long-term view of ERA system development and the elements that drive the ERA system's design.

The November 2009 meeting agenda includes:

- Overview of NARA's Center for Advanced Systems and Technology (NCAST),

- Presentation on use of ERA in Presidential Libraries,

- Strategies for communicating ERA progress, and

- Discussion of NARA's Conceptual Framework for Digital Preservation.

In my letter of invitation to this hearing, you also asked for my views on this advisory committee and if there is anything that should be done to improve its service to NARA. It is my opinion that this advisory committee is useful and necessary to the Archivist of the United States at a time when preserving and providing access to the growing volume of government electronic records is made even more challenging by the rapid changes in the technologies that create those records. Government does not have all of the answers to these challenges, but, thankfully, with ACERA, we have a diverse group of experts who are willing to give their time to help us stay focused on feasible, cost-effective, and, most importantly, farsighted solutions. I am personally thankful we have ACERA and I do not see the need for any changes to its charter. It is my hope that the new Archivist will find this a useful forum as well.

Thank you. This concludes my statement. I will be pleased to answer any questions the Committee may have about the Advisory Committee.