

Testimony of  
Dr. Christopher L. Greer  
for the  
Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee  
of the  
House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
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Good afternoon. My name is Chris Greer and I am a member of the National Archives and Records Administration's (NARA) Advisory Committee on the Electronic Records Archive (variously referred to as ACERA and the Committee below). I thank Chairman Clay, Ranking Member McHenry, and members of the Information Policy, Census, and National Archives Subcommittee for the opportunity to meet with you today.

I am here today representing myself as an individual member of the ACERA. I have been a regular member of ACERA since 2007. The professional experience that allows me to contribute to the ACERA mission includes the following. I'm a scientist by training and was a faculty member at the University of California, Irvine for more than 18 years before joining the Federal government. I've been an employee of the National Science Foundation (NSF) since 2003. I am currently on assignment from NSF to the Office of Science and Technology Policy where I serve as Assistant Director for Information Technology R&D. Prior to this assignment, I have served as Director of the National Coordination Office and Co-Chair of the Networking and Information Technology Research and Development (NITRD) Subcommittee of the National Science and Technology Council's (NSTC) Committee on Technology. I am currently Co-Chair of the Interagency Working Group on Digital Data of the NSTC's Committee on Science.

The materials provided by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform asked witnesses to describe ACERA's purposes, uses, and effectiveness. I describe each of these in turn below.

#### Purposes

The ACERA is charged with serving as a deliberative body to provide advice to the Archivist on technical, mission, and service issues relevant to development, implementation, and use of the Electronic Records Archive (ERA). The operative word in this charge is "deliberative". The Committee's central function is to analyze ERA issues, weigh options, and evaluate solutions. The Committee membership is diverse, providing a breadth of perspectives and the range of technical expertise to match the spectrum of ERA issues. The Committee's deliberations are typically intense and engaging.

#### Uses

The Committee is used to air ideas and opinions on strategic, technical, and implementation issues relevant to the Electronic Records Archive and to evaluate those ideas and opinions. My experience is that NARA uses the Committee to probe the full spectrum of ERA issues. Recent topics have ranged from design concepts for the ERA reference architecture, through standards adoption and supported formats, to details of the project timeline and work status.

#### Effectiveness

In my opinion, five factors have allowed ACERA to be effective.

- (1) NARA places a high priority on ACERA. The Archivist (or Acting Archivist) and ERA project leadership attend nearly the entire two-day meeting and actively participate in debate and discussion.
- (2) ACERA is consulted at each major project phase. The Committee meets twice each year, a frequency that is about right for this multi-year project. The interval is not so frequent that ACERA meetings devolve into details and not so infrequent that major transitions happen without an opportunity for input.
- (3) ACERA is given the opportunity for full deliberation. Each meeting is conducted over two days, providing the time needed to tackle complex issues in a thoughtful manner.
- (4) ACERA is given the information it needs to provide informed advice. Briefing materials are complete and candid. ACERA gets an honest and balanced look not just at the things that are going well but also at things that are difficult, as is inevitable for a project of this scope.
- (5) ACERA is used to address questions of substance. Issues are brought to the Committee before a decision must be made. Briefings focus on challenges, options, and implications rather than on defending a preferred choice. NARA leadership and staffers alike engage in honest debate and demonstrate a willingness to change course in response to a compelling case.

Because of these factors, I have found ACERA membership to be valuable and rewarding. I hope these comments are helpful to members of the Committee and I would be glad to answer any questions you may have.