

**Statement of Caryn Wojcik
before the
Subcommittee on Technology, Information Policy,
Intergovernmental Relations and the Census**

Testimony: July 8, 2003

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries to testify at this hearing. I am honored to be speaking to you today about the management and preservation of our government's records, particularly electronic records. I especially want to thank Congresswoman Candice Miller for inviting us. My name is Caryn Wojcik, and I am the Electronic Records Archivist for the State Archives of Michigan.

The Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries is committed to enriching the quality of life for Michigan residents by providing access to information, preserving and promoting Michigan heritage, and fostering cultural creativity. The **Division of Archives and Records Management** within the Michigan Historical Center is responsible for ensuring that Michigan's government records are properly managed and preserved throughout their entire lifecycle.

Public records are essential for protecting our legal rights, for documenting the actions of our government, and for understanding the society in which we live; and therefore **it cannot be sufficient to have our history preserved by accident**. As a general rule, we estimate that less than 5% of all government records possess permanent historical value. Professional archivists and records managers have worked for years to develop **systematic processes** that identify which records possess historical value, and to provide for their preservation. Unfortunately, many **government agencies** do not follow these procedures, and they **fail to protect** the irreplaceable items in their custody. In the traditional paper-based world, valuable records have managed to survive despite neglect. However, **electronic records will not survive** long enough to be used by future generations without active investments in their ongoing preservation and access.

Computer technology and electronic records create many challenges and opportunities for the records management and archival professions. This technology is a **moving target**, and we need long-term solutions. Certainly, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has served as a leader in this field of research.

The Michigan Division of Archives and Records Management¹ began discussing electronic records issues more than 25 years ago. With the advent of desktop computing we became particularly concerned about how we could manage and preserve e-mail and word processed documents. The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) issued the first version of its standard 5015.2 for **Records Management Applications** (RMAs) in 1997, and several commercial products are on the market that comply with this standard.² We wanted to test RMA software in state government offices to determine if it would address the record retention problems we were trying to solve.

We decided to apply for, and we received, a **two-year grant** (beginning May 1, 2000) from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to conduct a **pilot project** using a DoD-certified Records Management Application.³ At the time, the State Archives was an agency within the Michigan Department of State, led by Secretary of State, now Representative, Candice Miller. The project had three goals: (1) to assess the ability of an RMA to classify and manage electronic records and execute retention requirements, including the identification and segregation of archival records; (2) to analyze the cultural impact that RMAs have on agency staff, information technology personnel, records managers and archivists; and (3) to conduct a business process analysis and evaluate the potential for RMAs to be used in an enterprise-wide setting.

Our pilot project demonstrated that RMA software works. Electronic records that are created by common desktop programs can be organized and stored in a centralized repository that automatically implements the appropriate retention period for the records. However, we found that people will resist changing the way they file and access their electronic records, because less than a third of our project participants adopted the RMA software as their primary tool for storing their electronic records. RMA features need to evolve to make the filing and retrieval of electronic documents appear transparent to users. We also learned that business process improvements can be derived from using RMA software—especially when the business process change involves the transformation from a paper-based process to an automated process. When these improvements are adopted by the agency, RMA use and satisfaction increases. This project demonstrated that management support for change is essential

¹ The Records Management Services recently joined the State Archives of Michigan as part of the Department of History, Arts and Libraries, Michigan Historical Center. The two programs will be merged into a single Division of Archives and Records Management.

² The DoD 5015.2-STD and the list of certified RMAs can be found at <http://jtc.fhu.disa.mil/recmgt/>.

³ For more information about the project, visit the project website, <http://www.michigan.gov/hal> (suggested search term “records management application”).

to the success of an RMA. Managers must establish expectations and consequences for not following established procedures for electronic recordkeeping. Encouragement by management needs to focus on the positive benefits to the individual and the agency. The Department of History, Arts and Libraries is continuing to support the limited use of the RMA software. This way, we will be ready to make sound recommendations to Michigan government agencies when they are ready to use these products.

However, RMAs are record retention tools, not preservation tools. The electronic records that are stored in the RMA's centralized repository remain in their native format. The RMA is not capable of ensuring that they remain accessible as underlying technology changes. Therefore, a methodology must be developed for preserving archival electronic records and those with long-term retention requirements. This is why the NHPRC initiated a partnership between the San Diego Supercomputer Center (SDSC) and the State of Michigan to address the long-term and permanent preservation of electronic records that are captured and managed using RMA software. In November 2001 we were awarded a two-year grant from NHPRC for the "PERM Project". This collaborative project is developing functional requirements for preserving electronic records that are stored in an RMA repository so they remain accessible. These functional requirements were published in January 2003, and currently the researchers in San Diego are developing a prototype that will test these functional requirements.⁴

The Michigan Division of Archives and Records Management appreciates the support that the National Archives and its grant-making body, the NHPRC, have given us as we seek to find practical tools to ensure that electronic records are properly managed and preserved. These, and other projects, are essential for ensuring that our documentary heritage remains accessible to future generations.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify before you today.

⁴ The PERM Project website is <http://www.sdsc.edu/PERM/>