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Subject: Peggy Adams

Interviewer: Jessie Kratz

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MS. JESSIE KRATZ: All right. Well, let me get the metadata started for this. My name is Jessie Kratz. I am the Historian of the National Archives and today I'm interviewing Margaret "Peggy" Adams in the Washington Room of the National Archives Building in Washington, DC. Today is Monday, January 29, 2018. And Peggy, thank you for joining me today. We are just going to start by talking about your career and your education before you came to the National Archives. Could you talk a little bit about that?

MS. PEGGY ADAMS: Okay. Well, I'm just thinking. You said January 29. I believe that's my anniversary date of coming to NARA in 1987.

MS. KRATZ: Wow.

MS. ADAMS: Yes. There was a snowstorm and so I started later than I was supposed to but I think it was January 29th. If not, just right around there. And that was '87, so that would be 31 years ago, right?

MS. KRATZ: Yes, 31 years ago.

MS. ADAMS: 31 years ago that I came to NARA. Now before that, well before that, I had done a master's degree in history at the University of Wisconsin and taught for a year in a small college outside of Chicago, Rosary—it was then Rosary College. It's now Dominican University. Just world history. And then I was getting married so coming back to Madison and I had to find a job and I interviewed for a variety of things and ended up being hired to be the founding data librarian for what was called the Social Science Data and Program Library Service, DPLS, which was University of Wisconsin's effort to create both an archives and a library for the machine readable data that was being generated by faculty and students at the University of Wisconsin so that it could be preserved and reused. So, I sort of fell into the full area of data archives. Just lucky because I was hired because I had had graduate work at Wisconsin and knew the research process. That's kind of what I was told. Because there weren't these kinds of organizations anywhere else. And that was in 1966.

So, I was there for several years and then my husband had a Fulbright and we went to France and came back and I did some part time work associated with the data library. But then we moved on to Kansas and we had small children and I wasn't employed for about seven years although I did some teaching in there, some secondary teaching and some college. And then we moved to Kentucky and I had a position in what was called the Center for Business and Economic Research at the University of Kentucky where I managed an online numeric database system on the state's economy and a variety of related research activities. And that took me to the end of the 80s.

So, I had done all of that. In the course of the work at Kentucky—and I was just talking with Nancy Melley about this. I don't remember what my title was but I had been on an electronic records in an HPRC, electronic records project for the State of Kentucky. I mean, I was their consultant on electronic

records, basically hired because of the work that I was doing at the University and I was familiar with that work. So, I did as part of my job at the University of Kentucky and so when we moved to the DC area, well, we moved to the DC area after I had gotten the position with the National Archives and my husband got a position at NEH. So, we were both in the same place at the same time, which we hadn't been because of the history of the job market at that point. So, and then I came to NARA.

MS. KRATZ: What made you apply for the job at NARA?

MS. ADAMS: Well, what made me apply really was Lew Belardo had originally been in charge of the electronic records project at Kentucky and I talked with him shortly before he was leaving Kentucky for a position he took in Georgia and it seemed to me at the time that the position he was taking in Georgia was taking him away from electronic records and so I asked him something to that effect and he told me no, I turned down a position at the National Archives in the machine readable project, the machine readable branch. And so, ding-ding, my husband and I were looking to be able to move to the same place, to the same city and have professional jobs.

Obviously, data work is a fairly small little universe and when Lew mentioned the National Archives was looking to rebuild their machine-readable project, it seemed an obvious thing for me to contact them. And I had some contacts from my days in Wisconsin at the Census Bureau and I called that person and talked with her for some time and she then got in touch with somebody at NARA—it was not—no, it was NARA by then. And I got called and the rest is history.

MS. KRATZ: Okay. And that was in 1987 you started?

MS. ADAMS: I started in 1987 but all of those conversations were taking place in '86. But, yeah.

MS. KRATZ: And then what was your impression of the National Archives when you came here?

MR. ADAMS: Well, I had an interview with Trudy Peterson and Bill Cunliffe in Trudy's office which had a nice big Wang computer. They sold me on being part of the rebuilding of the machine-readable project. The machine-readable branch, I'm sorry. But when I arrived and was assigned to my office the 21st floor, 21st stack and had a wooden desk that didn't have any drawers and I was given an old upright typewriter as my personal piece of equipment, and I was coming from Kentucky, right? So, all of your stereotypes but I had had my own PC and for several years. There was an IBM plant in Kentucky and they made sure that the university was well supplied. And to be given a manual typewriter as my personal piece of equipment to help rebuild the machine-readable records program was quite a shock. And what I got introduced to was how under resourced the National Archives really was. And that comes out in the articles of some of my colleagues in the 30 years book.¹ How under-sourced it was. And so that was a major shock.

MS. KRATZ: So, what was your first order of business then if you're sitting there with a typewriter trying to--

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] I wrote a memo. [Laughing]

MS. KRATZ: What did your memo say?

¹ *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*. Edited by Bruce I. Ambacher. Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2003.

MS. ADAMS: Something to the effect that I don't believe this.

MR. KRATZ: Give me a computer [laughing].

MS. ADAMS: I don't believe that I'm expected to help rebuild the machine-readable records program and have as my personal PC equipment a manual typewriter. There was a dial up computer, it was call a DECwriter, which accessed the computer at NIH which the staff commonly used and then that Wang system that I had seen in Trudy's office and so therefore had been blindsided to the fact that this didn't, you know, was in a few of the offices including in the machine readable records branch, but there was one and it was only used there, well, it was primarily used there, for accounting purposes for the Trust Fund's system for handling reproductions of records and the cost recovery for that.

So, effectively the staff did not have equipment and the staff at that point as part of the rebuilding was being trained in using this DECwriter to communicate with the NIH computer and was learning to do some forms of programming that were then sort of the default processes at the NIH Computing Center, which was we were using for our data services.

MS. KRATZ: And who were your colleagues when you first started at the machine-readable branch?

MS. ADAMS: The head of the branch at that point was Edie Hedlin. And Tom Brown was down in an office that was off of Trudy Peterson's—he was on her staff. And I had actually known him through other professional activities from when I was in Kentucky. In fact, it was he who my contact at Census called when I was looking for a job. So, he was a colleague but he was not in the machine-readable branch at that time.

Others in the machine-readable branch then were Russ Cameron who has just recently retired, Bruce Ambacher, Chauncey Jessup, Mike Meier, and Fynnette Eaton, and Nancy McGovern had just been brought in from other offices. What Edie was doing generally was trying to build up the staff by getting people detailed from other places. I was an outside hire but most of the others were building up from inside.

MS. KRATZ: And in those very early years, what was like a typical day like?

MS. ADAMS: Well, very shortly after I came on—well one of the other colleagues was Mario Lopez Gomez who left the Archives about '89 or '90 and went to Justice but he was very much involved in the reference program. And shortly after I came on, I got assigned basically to take over the reference program. So, my work started trying to get a handle on what the holdings of the branch were at that point and how the National Archives was making those records available and how it was making known that it had those records.

MS. KRATZ: And what were the electronic records in—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Well, the records that were in most demand and that to some extent still are, are the casualty records from Vietnam and North Korea. So I found myself having been—and this was a very conscious thing on my part having been at the University of Wisconsin during the Vietnam War and active in the anti-war movement, coming to the National Archives 30 years later and dealing with reference questions from veterans about that war, and initially I found that quite a shock because if people that I had worked with in the anti-war movement had been more successful, those guys would never have been there. And it occurred to me not long into the whole thing when you hear the stories

and all the rest of that, that well the least I could do is provide service to them. And that really drove that reference program for a very long time were the casualty records from the Vietnam and Korean Wars. Which came to the National Archives in the early 80s.

And then other records that were here at this time were the records from the Securities and Exchange Commission from the former Civil Aeronautics Board. Well, I'd have to look at the list now to remember when was what. But the Vietnam collection was very definitely and it was also the most unique kind of thing. It was a collection that, or a series of records, that none of the academic data services had. That wasn't the kind of data they had. And so not only was I not familiar with it but it was the only place in the country you could get those records. And for the Vietnam and Korean casualty records, the reference service was to provide as much record level response as possible. But for all of the other holdings, copies of files is the way records were made available.

MS. KRATZ: Can you walk through the process that a researcher would go through to access the Vietnam records?

MS. ADAMS: It would be a veteran calling and saying I need—among other things—I need to document that I was exposed to a stressing event and the buddies that I served with died. Can I have their casualty records? So, I would be working with them to try and pinpoint sufficient information to try and get down—

MS. KRATZ: [Interposing] And you would actually go find—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Right.

MS. KRATZ: They couldn't access the—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] They couldn't access. We had full printouts of those records and one practice that the Department of Defense had started even before they transferred the records to the National Archives, was to create state lists of casualties which are extracts from the whole database which organized casualties by their state of home record and those were very much in demand, the state lists for memorializing purposes. In addition to the individual veterans who were seeking records of buddies in order to document their post-traumatic or their stressing event, you had all of the people trying to memorialize. And that was also during the period where there was a lot of emphasis on the people who were at that point still considered to be missing or prisoners, well, not prisoners of war but missing in action. Which really were people whose bodies had never been recovered.

MS. KRATZ: Can you talk about as time progressed and your career with the archives, the kinds of things you were involved in and how your career changed?

MS. ADAMS: Well, let me just get back to the Vietnam casualty just very briefly.

MS. KRATZ: Okay.

MS. ADAMS: This, although it dominated, the collection was continually growing and the big goal was to make known the existence of these files. But in the course of that, I had only been here a couple of years when one day I got a call from a veteran who said he had been at the wall the night before talking to the ranger and he said to me "I lost my legs but not my life and the ranger said you could help me." So, I started going through the casualty records and it was at that point that we were becoming aware of the

fact that there were a lot of errors in the data, especially in the data from the Army. And the folks who built the wall had used as many sources as they could find for information to honor casualties and since there were errors in the data, they picked up errors in some of the names that they put on the wall. Turns out there were 13 people whose names were on the wall who were in fact living and this gentleman was one of them. And so we worked with him to find that his record was erroneously coded in the Army database and that's how he got up on the wall. But we were able to find that and also provide sufficient information that that that was corrected in the databases by the creating agencies.

So news of that kind of support clearly traveled among veterans' organizations and there was a fair amount of publicity about that particular incident and we then started getting a lot of requests from like a veterans' group someplace in Chicago there was one guy who came in and he came in with all kinds of information and he physically came in. And he had been assigned by his veterans' group to come down to DC and see what he could find out about all the different people that all of these people had dealt with.

So, it sort of morphed that way. Among the other Vietnam error records are the records of all of the air sorties. And so among other things, we were in contact with a reporter, a CBS reporter, who was doing a story on the unknown soldier from Vietnam. And we were able to work with him not only to find—he had enough information about somebody he thought was the unknown. And we were able to find that gentleman's casualty record that conformed to what the family had known. But we were able to find the air sortie record which then convinced the military that he was no longer unknown, that they had identified this person. So that was working with the media.

So, it was Vietnam driven but took on many ramifications. At the same time as the holdings themselves were growing substantially, I mean, because every agency in the federal government had data that undergirds their systems and those were beginning to be transferred to NARA and so we were expanding in terms of getting on top of—we had something that we called the Title List of Holdings of these files that we kept maintaining and made available. We did it through the NIH computer so once BitNet came about, we were able to make it available through BitNet and then through FTP. So, we were putting a lot of emphasis in description as well as in service to the extent—I mean, but limiting the individualized service to the Vietnam records because you could never—

MS. KRATZ: [Interposing] Do it for all agencies.

MS. ADAMS: No, I mean, there's just no staff to do that.

MS. KRATZ: Right. And about how big was the staff?

MS. ADAMS: Well, when I started out, I was doing that work and there was, I said Mario Lopez Gomez who was handling all of the reproductions of records and all the sort of building the databases and helped us increase the Title List and so forth. And then we had a technician and then we hired another technician not too long later. And then gradually a professional. But it never was more than three or four people. And even now the reference staff, electronic records, is only, I would say five or six people. But a lot more material is available on line now.

MS. KRATZ: Right.

MS. ADAMS: But like with anything technological, you evolve and you provide new services and those new services generate demand for even more services. So, but still very understaffed. And it was an era when machine readable records or electronic records as it came, as its next identity, for all intents and purposes still meant digital data. The whole business of all of the office automation records and email and all the rest of that didn't come until later.

MS. KRATZ: Yeah. So, I was going to ask, how did the advent of the internet change your work processes or was it something that came like much later? Because agencies weren't transferring their emails until—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] I don't understand that.

MS. KRATZ: Yeah, exactly.

MS. ADAMS: I mean, I am removed from the program for the last five years. I don't know what they've done. But the focus on email of course came with the White House email. I would say it was a slower evolution, when it, I mean, we had BitNet before we had the internet and BitNet was just in universities and government agencies. But that provided a mechanism for people being able to get information and having FTP, file transfer protocol, meant that people could download like the Title List and so forth. So, at each stage, technology enhanced the services that could be provided and we tried to keep up as much as we could, resources, et cetera. But we had a presence on the web in a sense before the push of the internet.

MS. KRATZ: In like the early 90s?

MS. ADAMS: Mm-hm, mm-hm. Right. And unfortunately, the PROFS² case ate up most of NARA's resources for electronic records, handling the demands of that litigation. So although the branch, by then it was the Center for Electronic Records, had developed a computerized capability to validate the data files that agencies were transferring which created metadata which the intent from the very beginning was that that metadata could be used to make records available and assist researchers. Because of PROGS case, all development on that ceased until the PROFS case was basically done with and so we had a long period—and that's covered in the 30 years book. Where we were doing what we could to continue, I mean, the reference department was pretty isolated from the PROFS case—

MS. KRATZ: [Interposing] Okay, I was wondering if you were involved at all.

MS. ADAMS: No, not directly, no. And Ken Thibodeau was very prescient in doing that so that the program could at least still survive, I mean it was certainly being taxed very heavily to have so much of its resources handling that case. But what we could do didn't involve a sort of building what had gone before with the intention of it affecting reference and access until the late 1990s which is when NARA was finally in a position and let the contract that led to the development of the Access to Archival Databases.

² A lawsuit (*Armstrong v. Executive Office of the President*, 1 F.3d 1274 [DC Cir 1993]) filed by Scott Armstrong, American Historical Association, the American Library Association, the Center for National Security, and others, relating to access to and the disposition of email records. The case takes its name from the IBM PROFS (Professional Office System) email system used in the White House.

MS. KRATZ: The AAD

MS. ADAMS: Which is still up.

MS. KRATZ: I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about the development about the AAD and your role in that.

MS. ADAMS: Well, I was very directly involved in that. And we worked with contractors using this metadata that is produced as a result of processing to then develop a capability for a selection of the holdings, those which really lend themselves to individual record level access to be available for search and retrieval on an individual record level. So those would be records that identify specific identifiable persons, places, institutions. A large proportion of the holdings which are research files that agencies produce are not appropriate for record level access. So AAD only deals with files that are appropriate for record level access and we use that metadata from the processing to then have the metadata that could be displayed as the codes and values for the data that is record level accessible and that's where AAD shines. And I'd like to see it get some expansion. But that hasn't been in the cards for a long time.

MS. KRATZ: For those who are listening who don't really know about AAD, could you kind of describe a little bit about what kind of researcher would use that?

MS. ADAMS: Well, now the holdings of AAD have not only casualty records but the passenger lists that - are computerized and donated to the National Archives in electronic form. There are World War II records of Army enlistees which the Army had digitized, I mean, not digitized, had created on punch cards during the war and then those were migrated to tape. So, the World War II enlistees, there's about 9-million of those records. There are similarly records for all the internees of the War Relocation Authority camps where the War Relocation Authority had also captured that information on punch cards originally which were later migrated to tape.

So those are the kinds of records that have individual personal meaning to people. So if you sort of think of researchers as those who are seeking information from records and people who are seeking information to create new knowledge, the folks who are looking for information from individual records are the kinds of folks who would best use AAD whereas those who are looking to analyze data get copies, now they get copies through downloading them. But for the longest time, and continuing to this day, copies could be made available on removable media on a cost recovery basis. And that, although people who were unfamiliar with the phenomenon find that a very backward way of providing access to records, it is in fact the type of access that analysts want. The fact that they can now download the whole file is obviously better than having to get it on removable media. But they're still looking for the whole file so they have the whole file to analyze. Whereas people who are looking for information from that one record want to use something like AAD to retrieve it. And it's on the Archives' website going in through the research page and so forth and there are a whole bunch of different categories of records. I just named some of the obvious ones.

MS. KRATZ: So, were you in the same unit the entire time you were here?

MS. ADAMS: Yes, I was. The unit itself changed to many different identities but yes. That's what I came to the Archives to do. That's what, I mean, I had had this opportunity that was really very unique and, you know, my work with the University of Wisconsin and then at Kentucky doesn't fit any kind of real career path nor, even now is there really training for that kind of career path. So, I very deliberately was

coming to the National Archives to be a part of what was then called machine-readable branch and which now is the electronic records division, I guess.

MS. KRATZ: Yeah. So, did the Archives offer additional training opportunities for you?

MS. ADAMS: Well, yes. I took a bunch of courses at NIH, well, so it was NIH, I mean the government sponsored them. But that's primarily what I did. And then of course from time to time there would be a variety of management courses and that kind of thing.

MS. KRATZ: And did the change in the Archivist and Acting Archivist and the new Archivist change your work at all? Did they implement any changes or ask you to make changes or did you basically have a constant mission the entire time and didn't really deviate—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Me personally?

MS. KRATZ: Well, I guess you personally and then also the machine-readable/electronic records programs.

MS. ADAMS: I think that mission has stayed pretty much the same. Has it been understood by the rest of the agency? Not always. And any time you have new people who have no previous experience with, then you've got a big learning curve for them to have an understanding of how this fits into the rest of NARA. Given that the digital universe now represents to such a large extent office automation and social media and all the rest of that, that's very known to people because it's something that they've had experience. So, the challenge always is you—people's understanding of what electronic records are depends upon where in their lifetime they first started interacting with them. So, the challenge the staff always is to meet people wherever that is and then try to bring them forward to an understanding of how this kind of documentary material, primary source material fits into a traditional archives.

In many countries, especially in Europe, the way research is funded by those, in those nations, leads to the creation of national data services or national data archives in a way that is different in the United States. Or the centralization of statistical production in many European especially countries, does not exist in the United States. We have a very dis-aggregated statistical system where you've got many, many different agencies.

MS. KRATZ: And they're not—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] And it's not one central place. So that diffusion means that there's also not one obvious federal agency other than the Archives which does have a government wide responsibility to be the host for that kind of service. So, it's very—I mean, as the 30 years shows, I mean, in Meyer Fishbine's work and others at the time and since, using the computer or before, basic machines, was an expansion of the way in which primary source documentation is created. So, if the Archives is responsible for all primary source documentation that has long-term value that the government produces and is responsible for. But it's still always kind of a stepchild.

MS. KRATZ: Yes. [Laughing] Well, I do want to go back to the beginning when you mentioned you didn't have a computer. When did you get your first computer?

MS. ADAMS: I couldn't put a date on that. There was a point at which—and the reference staff moved down to the 18th tier. I mean, obviously it's not—

MS. KRATZ: [Interposing] Yeah, where you originally?

MS. ADAMS: On the 20th or 21st tier, I'm not sure. The machine-readable branch was on 20 and then there were a few people who had offices up on 21 that's just a stack entry. And then there was a biggish room on 18 which was opened up for the reference staff of machine-readable. And I know we were in there when we got the PCs but I couldn't tell you for sure when we moved down there. But we moved out to College Park in '90, let's see. Clinton was elected in?

MS. KRATZ: '92.

MS. ADAMS: 92. So, the PROFS case began in—so he became President in '93 and that's when all hell broke loose in '93. So, my guess is it must have been '94 that the machine-readable branch, then the Center for Electronic Records moved to College Park. Before that there had also been expansion when Ken Thibodeau came on as director of the Center. His office was down on the 5th or 6th tier, someplace else.

MS. KRATZ: And it doesn't exist probably.

MS. ADAMS: No. I'm sure none of this exists anymore. But all of this was better than the stories I always heard from the folks who were—Trudy Peterson's article in the 30 year book, when they were down on 14th Street in some offices on 14th Street when 14th Street was not where anybody wanted to be.

MS. KRATZ: So, then you moved to College Park in '94.

MS. ADAMS: And so it was sometime before that that we got computers. Probably at least two years before that so it—but I mean it was a goodly while, I mean, we got pretty adept at using the Wang and there was also the NCR machine for the Trust Fund and Wang to do a little bit of word processing. And then the DECwriter interactive terminals, typing terminals. That's what we used for interaction with NIH and the maintenance of the Title List such as it was that we had then.

MS. KRATZ: So, when you moved to College Park, were you provided new equipment?

MS. ADAMS: Yes.

MS. KRATZ: And how did things change with that move?

MS. ADAMS: I don't think a whole lot. But, you know, you forget an awful lot. It's like with any kind of pain [laughing], you forget it. I mean, compared to the facility, the kind of physical environment, it was really nice being downtown, but the physical environment was really lacking. And those of us on the 18th tier actually had nice digs. So many of our colleagues in the then expanded Center for Electronic Records, were in space that was just unbelievable. So, it was very positive change that way.

MS. KRATZ: And you were all brought together into one office space?

MS. ADAMS: One—yes, yes, one large office space. Well, two large office spaces but they were just across the corridor from each other.

MS. KRATZ: Were they on the sixth floor?

MS. ADAMS: Fifth. And then at some point later we also moved down to the fourth floor.

MS. KRATZ: Okay. And then you continued to work in reference.

MS. ADAMS: Right.

MS. KRATZ: While you were--well, I guess your whole career?

MS. ADAMS: Right. And after Tom Brown retired as the head of the Archival Services branch of the Center, I took his responsibilities and eventually was hired into that position. So, for the last five years or so of my career, I was managing the Archival Services program more generally but up until that point I was doing just the reference part of it.

MS. KRATZ: And did you—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] I was like his assistant branch chief and my responsibilities were the reference program until I then became the chief of archival services.

MS. KRATZ: And how did you enjoy that, being the branch chief?

MS. ADAMS: Well, it was just a lot more work, with, you know, that kind of thing is always an opportunity to try out things that you thought about for some time. But I had worked very closely with Tom or about a decade so it was not that much of a change really. Except that I got a lot more workload.

MS. KRATZ: What other sorts of projects did you work on?

MS. ADAMS: I mean, all the various developments to make known the holdings which as I said started out as the Title List and then that graduated, morphed into, I mean, when the staff started putting things into the Archival Research Catalog. But that didn't occur until the early 2000s. So, all that time we were developing our own ways of getting in touch with researchers and informing them—writing informal reference papers, focusing on things about which we were getting a fair demand. So, trying to capture something in a brief, just leaflet. Not a formal RIP but just a casual two pager or so.

And then AAD was a full other range and then what we started doing was—and I did not do a lot of this work myself but I directed it—the work to making the records available on line for download. And that's a whole additional process of getting the documentation so that it can be in shape to be scanned, so that it can be downloaded, because you can't use the data without the documentation. And most of the documentation that we received, at least up until the era of the internet, was all print on paper. So that all had to be—

MS. KRATZ: I can imagine. That's a lot of paper.

MS. ADAMS: Right. Getting it scanned so that it can be downloaded. But we were involved. I mean, obviously we were involved in the planning and implementation of the original ERA and, but since there was a separate program for that, our division, although we had a fair amount of input, had its regular work to do and, you know, our reference demand is continually growing. What we were doing was moving from providing the removal media in which we provided copies of files—analytical researchers wanted copies of files. Initially we were providing copies on tape and then as the various kinds of tape, the densities of those tapes increased and so we were having to sort of keep up with the changes in the media, then making files available on diskettes, then making them available on CD-ROM, so I mean, there was a lot of evolution and all that's pre-making it available online. It's all very evolutionary really.

MS. KRATZ: Yes.

MS. ADAMS: But it was more than a full-time job.

MS. KRATZ: Oh, sure. Yes, the new media comes out. It's almost like, awe, another one. So, can you talk about some of the awards you received for your work?

MS. ADAMS: I've been fortunate to receive some recognition both from the Society of American Archives, being named a Fellow and from the IASSIST, the International Association of Social Sciences Information Service and Technology, which has sort of been my home professional organization since, well, it didn't exist when I was in Wisconsin, but since I was in Kentucky. And so that's a small organization. You could look up their home base is IASSIS data, I-A-S-S-I-S-T D-A-T-A. It's an organization of people like ourselves whose primary job is to identify, preserve, and make available social science data and most of what the National Archives holdings in electronic form are things which can be used for social science research. So, and IASSIST named me a, what do they call it, a lifetime achievement award or something like that. And a couple of our publications, -guest edited a volume of *The American Archivist* in which I had an article on the history of punch cards and how they are the predecessor to electronic records. Tom Brown had an article, Linda Henry had an article, Bruce Ambacher had an article. I mean many of the people had authorship in the—

MS. KRATZ: [Interposing] 30 year book.

MS. ADAMS: 30 years book. And that *American Archivist* issue received an award.

MS. KRATZ: I know you said you do reference but are there certain aspects of reference you really enjoy doing?

MS. ADAMS: Oh, I mean, people always think they have found something that nobody else has found. Sometimes that's true. Sometimes NARA will have preserved some record for a very long time that no researcher has really ever exploited and for a researcher to find those records is always very exciting. And to help them do that. But I would say helping the guy who said "I lost my legs but not my life," helping the media find, identify the unknown soldier, those are real high points. But having the rest of the world understand that the United States is committed to preserving its digital data has always been a high point too. So, all my opportunities to participate in various professional associations were, I could carry that message.

MS. KRATZ: Can you talk about some of the challenges that you faced while here?

MS. ADAMS: Well, yes, the major challenge I would say is the stepchild role. The fact that because the first electronic records were only data. And most people don't grow up knowing anything about data like you do about words or other documents. They don't grow up analyzing data and the numerical quality or the quantitative quality to data makes data kind of off putting to a lot of people. And it's not something they think of as a primary source that they should use.

I have an old friend, historian, who I used to get on his case because he wasn't exploiting the data sources for his subject and he would say to me well, you make it easy to use and then I'll use it. Well, I guess, I mean, the Archives certainly has a role to play in making its holdings as accessible as possible but learning how to analyze data I think goes beyond that. So, for that kind of user, the development of AAD seems to answer what he's looking at. Except the kind of work he was doing, he should have been

doing analysis, I thought he should have been doing analysis of some of the data files for which individual access isn't going to give him anything.

The other kind of thing that you come to realize is that the documentation that accompanies data files, which is essential for the use of the data files is also primary source documentation in and of itself. As an example, and I have this in some article, the Army kept very extensive records of casualties during the Korean War. They, among the things that they coded, was country of casualty, another was cause of casualty. I think there were a couple of different kinds of cause of casualty codes. In the place of casualty, there were codes for almost, and you can look at it, I don't remember exactly but for many East Asian countries, obviously nobody is coded except Korea. But whoever put that documentation together at the outset of the Korean War apparently thought that there might be. So that's some of the mentalities view that you don't—I don't know if it's documented anywhere else. The cause of casualty codes, and there were two different kinds, but they included chemical warfare, they included gas, they included something else like that. None of those codes show up in any of the records. But again, somebody thought that they had to prepare for that.

Likewise, and this you would find I'm sure also in census records of the period, you had race for the Army casualties. Coded Caucasian and Negroid and Malayan and something else. But then you had Puerto Rican-Negro and Puerto Rican-White. So, you begin to get a glimpse of the mentality of the time documented sufficiently to say hey, the Army had these—and in the case of the race, people are coded all those various races. Things that are very different than we've evolved, our understanding has evolved for. So, the electronic records need to be understood in their totality not just the digital bits and bytes but everything that goes with them and the programs from which they came. And that's where I think there's a lot of work to be done in educating everybody.

The other kind of thing you learn is the way in which our society—there has been tremendous evolution in the concept of privacy and confidentiality. There's been change in the law and regulations but there's also been a personal change. That has happened very significantly now with social media. But social media is just the current stage of a long evolution. So, it used to be that the military used the social security number as the military ID. And that meant that people who were deceased and whose records were therefore very open, their socials were available too. And because that was their serial number.

Well, for the longest period of time, that was not a problem. But then as various governmental programs of various kinds came to use those numbers, then the deceased person's privacy may be no longer protected but parts of their record may affect the living and you need to think of that. So, I think a consciousness—and there I think technology has played a very real role because getting at individual records like people expect to do from digital records, was a fairly remote activity prior to the computerization of information. And so there's just been this evolution.

The other area where we've evolved is for the longest time we worked hard in applying the concepts, the regulations, the everything else that evolved during an analog era to the digital as part of the discussion of it being, the digital being accepted as primary documentation. But there's a downside to that. And that is not, we wouldn't necessarily come to all the same decisions if we were starting afresh.

So, you see, I mean, all of the discussions now about the abuses of social media certainly highlight, we're still working off of mentalities and consciousness, regulations, law, you know, everything that was

developed for an analog era. Does it all apply? I think that's still to be determined. So those are the kinds of things you learn in the course of doing this kind of work.

MS. KRATZ: Right. And can you talk a little bit about your decision to leave the Archives?

MS. ADAMS: Oh, I was getting on [laughing]. I worked until I was 70. So, I think that was time for me to move on. New people could do it and I needed to just step back.

MS. KRATZ: And that was in 2013?

MS. ADAMS: Yes.

MS. KRATZ: Do you miss it?

MS. ADAMS: I don't miss the commute.

MS. KRATZ: Where did you live?

MS. ADAMS: I live in DC, upper northwest.

MS. KRATZ: Oh, yeah.

MS. ADAMS: I don't miss the commute and I think the day-to-day grind after a while, just get tired. It was time to move on. But I did not want to do other contract work in this field partially because I think the government should hire people directly. But of course, I miss it. I mean, it's been a part of my life always. And I keep up on line with as much as I can in terms of evolution, things that are important in SAA and I've done some writing and I did add a volume for IASSIS after I retired, of articles and I have an article that theoretically was supposed to be out some time ago that I had asked to do a year or so ago.

MS. KRATZ: So, you're still active?

MS. ADAMS: Still a little bit, yeah. And I do other volunteer work. Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Okay. Well, I know I said it would be an hour and we're about 10 minutes over but I was wondering, is there anything else you want to share?

MS. ADAMS: No, not really. You know, I keep talking about the stepchild. When I retired for the first time in the early 1970s because we had children and we moved someplace else, I really thought we were at the cusp where digital data as we call it now would be mainstreamed and you wouldn't have to. I mean, it would be just a part, it would be accepted as a primary source resource just like all other primary resource.

After all, I had trained as the historian and primary source documentation is the key to that. When I came back into doing professional work at the end of that decade and I found that libraries had computerized its catalog, there had been an adaptation to technology but data were still not mainstreamed and even as we talk about the era of big data, I don't believe that the electronic records program here is yet really mainstreamed. And so I used to say I was going to work 'til 85 or we win. And the we winning was that we were going to get at that point. Well, I was disappointed in the 70s and I guess, you know, after a certain point I think a lot has been accomplished and there's a very, very important volume of electronic records that have been preserved and are available and will live. I would like to see them more understood and I would like to see the people who work with them more

resourced. But the National Archives' pie keeps getting cut up into many, many pieces so there's a constant fight for resources and then of course the National Archives has got to deal with the universe government records.

MS. KRATZ: Right. But we're all moving towards electronic—I mean, eventually that's the business we'll be in.

MS. ADAMS: Yes, but what kind of electronic business are you going to be in?

MS. KRATZ: Can you see, I mean, you worked here, do you think the Archives is—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] You see, my soft spot is still with the data, right?

MS. KRATZ: Yes.

MS. ADAMS: Okay. Will the Archives as a whole really—I mean, do the research reference staff here in this building as well as the ones at Archives II think of digital data as a primary source when they're working with people? They do if they know about a particular file or they know—I mean, I think there's a fair amount of use of resources that are on AAD but does primary source documentation to them incorporate that kind of resource? I mean, it's not unlike, you probably would find some people challenged by thinking of photographs, still photos, digital photos now. Well, the historical record is very word based. Data is not word based. Data is not word based. So yes, I think we're going electronically but I think but the data are going to continue to be created because that's what runs agencies.

MS. KRATZ: And that's what's really—I mean, I think the data, because you can study and you can find trends and you can point out things that are wrong—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Right. Yeah.

MS. KRATZ: Especially since the agencies don't talk to each other, we really need to keep that information.

MS. ADAMS: Right.

MS. KRATZ: And make it available.

MS. ADAMS: Right, and make it available and preserve—well, have to identify first what's valuable and then, I mean, for the longest time, and I don't know what the policy is right now, but for the longest time the policy of the National Archives was to only accept digital data that was in a software independent format. Now I know that's gone by the by but the logic behind that was that it was through having software independent records that you could preserve their long term preservation and the ability to use those records with whatever software and hardware gets developed down the road because we know this is never going to end. And it's never going to be the case that something happens out there that's going to solve the problem and you're not going to have to keep migrating or whatever it is we're now doing. I think an understanding of technological innovation says that that's not going to happen. So, I would just like to see us move a little bit more to, you know, integration of mentalities about the value of digital data as a primary source.

MS. KRATZ: Well, thank you so much—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Well, you're welcome.

MS. KRATZ: —for sharing with me. This was great.

MS. ADAMS: But, I mean, it was an exciting afternoon to have a chance to work on this, all those years and from the punch card era to the online.

MS. KRATZ: Yeah. That's quite a change when you think about punch cards to, I mean, you probably, I probably, couldn't even envision the internet. I don't know, it must have been a huge technological advancement while working with these electronic records, having this created and—

MS. ADAMS: [Interposing] Oh, yeah, it was marvelous. I mean, you know, you could see how technology was going to take us down the road. The advantage I had by starting with punch cards is I also could visualize what it is to store bits and bytes and so I had a mental picture. So, I'm not unlike what I'm critiquing here saying the people are only going to go with what they understand, I mean, so I could understand how information was being stored and so when we migrated to tape, it was still organized the same way but I could understand it in a way that somebody who didn't have that opportunity had to learn it differently.

MS. KRATZ: Right. That's great. Thank you so much.

MS. ADAMS: Well, you're welcome. It's always fun to talk about what you do.

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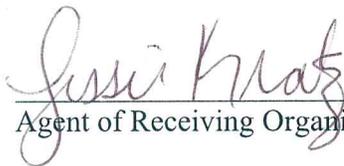
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