Digital Preservation and Access Workgroup: Initial Recommendations

Background

The Digital Preservation & Access workgroup (DP&A) was formed in early 2020 to coordinate the long-term curation of digital collections at The Ohio State University Libraries (University Libraries). The DP&A's purpose is to guide University Libraries' policies, strategies and tactics for managing, preserving and providing access to its digital collections. It brings together key individuals from across the organization to improve our efforts related to the processing, management and preservation of and providing access to our digital collections and assets; and to ensure that information sharing, standards and best practices are reflected throughout the organization. As its first task -- the Workflow Analysis Project, and its subsidiary work on prioritization and governance -- comes to fruition, gaps and opportunities have been identified, and we now provide these initial recommendations.

The work of the DP&A over nearly the past two years has allowed us to begin to bring transparency to our processes and facilitates a shift in our focus from our individual silos to a more wholistic, University Libraries-wide systems point-of-view. Given the current fiscal climate, we understand University Libraries will need to apply a "triaged first aid approach" to address some of our gaps, while working to apply systemic, permanent changes where possible.

Key Gaps, Implications and Recommendations

Processing

Gap and Implication

With the workflow analysis process maps near completion, there are several key conceptual processing gaps that have surfaced.

- Lack of organizational prioritization process and governance (see Prioritization & Governance below for more detailed articulation of this gap and recommendations to remediate it).
- Lack of cohesive approach to the end-to-end process and project management throughout the organization, and a means to identify and address bottlenecks within our processes (see Process Management below for more detailed articulation of this gap and recommendations to remediate it).
- Lack of formalized born digital processing workflow. Currently all born digital processing is conducted in an ad hoc manner due to lack of developed, articulated workflow and resource allocation. Further, the organization does not have staff with the dedicated skills or time to routinely process our born digital acquisition for preservation and access. With no defined

workflows or capacity for the processing of born digital records, University Libraries has historically accessioned materials without fully understanding the amount and extent of the digital materials acquired.

- Lack of fully-realized digitization processing workflow. While University Libraries has made strides in designing workflows for digitized materials and has begun to invest in filling the metadata gap, we continue to add to the backlog of files on the K-drive and elsewhere. Our capacity to digitize still outstrips our capacity to ingest content into the Digital Collections system for preservation and access. This is exacerbated by the lack of clear criteria for prioritization (see Prioritization & Governance below), and the audiovisual materials and copyright moratoriums outlined below. This is true for both our project-oriented work, as well as digitization that is part of our day-to-day operations.
- Audiovisual preservation and access. With the loss of our temporary audiovisual media specialist, our audiovisual preservation and access program has been put on indefinite hold.
- Copyright and risk assessment. On November 4, 2020, University Libraries placed a moratorium on uploading copyrighted works into the Digital Collections platform (DC) unless Ohio State has documented permission from the copyright holder or unless Ohio State is the copyright holder. There is a moratorium exception approval process for collections that potentially fall into one of the three DC moratorium exception categories (works determined to be in the public domain in the United States, works in which the copyright owner has granted permission, and works in which Ohio State holds the copyright), but University Libraries does not have a risk assessment process in place for the digitization and sharing of copyrighted material, nor does it have the expertise capacity to implement a process.

Recommendations

- Organizational prioritization process and governance: see Prioritization & Governance.
- Process and project: see Process Management.
- Born digital processing workflow:
    - University Libraries needs to develop and/or implement standards and guidelines for good-enough born digital accessioning and processing workflows.
    - University Libraries should commit to a more equitable level resource allocation and prioritization for the identification and processing of born digital and at-risk audiovisual materials in our collections.
    - Recognizing our current human resource allocation limitations, and in conjunction with re-engineering of our workflows for optimization, University Libraries need to develop/provide coordinated training for the organization's archival and curatorial staff/faculty in basic digital and audiovisual preservation theory and techniques.
- Digitization Processing Workflow: The recommendations for improvement are inextricably linked to the completion of Prioritization and Governance Workgroup's recommendations, Preservation and Digitization workflow design, the workflow analysis documentation process and the identification of bottlenecks that need to be re-engineered and optimized.
- Audiovisual preservation and access:
    - We need to clear up the backlog of already digitized audiovisual content that languishes in the K-drive and Dark Archive. This too is inextricably linked to the completion of Prioritization and Governance Workgroup's recommendations, and the workflow re-engineering.

- o In lieu of hiring a full-time, permanent media specialist, we should establish a new workflow to optimize the preservation of and access to at-risk audiovisual materials, via digitization, that have already been identified by the former audiovisual media specialist.
- Copyright and risk assessment:
    - o University Libraries should establish a process for risk assessment for digitizing and sharing copyrighted materials.

Prioritization & Governance

Gap and Implication

University Libraries has no formal organizational process for prioritization and governance of digitization activities and born digital materials processing across the organization. Inefficiencies and confusion result as each unit works without a shared understanding of priorities and sequencing, factors for decision making, and resources allocation.

Recommendations

In November of 2020, the DP&A created sub-workgroup, the "Planning for Sustainable Change: University Libraries Digital Content Policy & Governance" workgroup to address this gap. The workgroup is nearing completion of its work towards filling this gap. It adopted a change management process to establish a prioritization methodology with an associated governance framework.

- Identify a Problem Statement: COMPLETE
- Identify the Current State ➜ Envision the Future State: COMPLETE
- Define the Change: COMPLETE
- Identify the desired Benefits: COMPLETE
- Articulate the Process to achieve the change: IN PROGRESS
    - o Definition of "Project": COMPLETE
    - o Prioritization Factors and Rubric: IN PROGRESS
- Establish a process for Measuring Progress: TBD

Process Management

Gap and Implication

University Libraries lacks a cohesive approach to the end-to-end process and project management throughout the organization. This leads to and/or reinforces our silos vs. systematic methodology in conducting our work. We have many capable people within University Libraries who understand their roles and duties but may not be fully aware of how their actions impact the efforts of others within the organization.

Recommendations

The goal is to develop permanent solutions to address our processing gaps, while acknowledging some gaps may be initially treated with a "triaged band aid." In improving our process management, we will need to fill gaps via resource allocation and process re-engineering and optimization, but more likely through latter in combination with resource re-allocation. To achieve this latter goal:

- Based upon the workflow analysis, we need to re-engineer processes, especially the bottlenecks—optimizing the whole system, not just individual silos.
    - Identify a targeted demonstration project to analyze all of the workflows and make very specific recommendations related to process optimization.
- Backlog, new projects and day-to-day work must all be considered as part of the process and workflow.
- Provide appropriate University Libraries personnel training in effective process/project management techniques. This would include an examination of systems vs. silos thinking.
- Development of standardized best and good-enough practices for process and project management.

Resources

Gap and Implication

Some of the aforementioned gaps can be addressed by policy, process and procedural improvements; however, there are others that can only be addressed through appropriate resource allocations. While University Libraries is under-resourced in most areas compared to our peer institutions, there is a further imbalance of resources expended on physical objects as opposed to digital objects.

- Capacity: University Libraries has a backlog of digitized and born digital content that is not appropriately described, processed, in an acceptable preservation environment, and/or accessible to our users. Nor do we have the current human resource capacity to remediate this situation. This is further exacerbated by a lack of capacity for copyright risk assessment and archival processing necessary to facilitate the digitization and ingest processes.
- Expertise: University Libraries has deficits in expertise capacity across under-resourced areas for archival processing, processing born digital and audiovisual content, copyright risk assessment, metadata creation and remediation, and process/project management.

Recommendations

Considering the current fiscal climate, creating and filling new positions, as well as backfilling lost positions are the less likely implementable recommendations at this moment; that is not to say they are any less important to the overall health of the organization. Process re-engineering to compensate for the lack of these resources is really just a "band aid" solution. Therefore, we need to develop alternative pathways to success.
- To expand our capacity to adequately handle our backlog, new projects and day-to-day work, as we begin to re-engineer our processes for efficiency, effectiveness and equity, we need to go

beyond just the process, and consider the human resource implications for potential re-allocation and career growth.

- University Libraries needs to develop internal expertise and skills related to processing born digital and audiovisual content, metadata creation and remediation, and process/project management. This can be accomplished in conjunction with process re-engineering, position re-imagining/re-allocation, targeted training and mentoring.

Documentation

Gap and Implication

University Libraries has documentation that articulates standard operating procedures, standards and guidelines, and best and good-enough practices in regards to digitization, digital preservation and providing access to our digital assets. However, there is no commonly understood and accepted central repository or portal for making these transparently available throughout the organization.

Recommendations

Undergirding transparency and knowledge management within an organization is an understood and accepted means for which personnel can store and locate documentation.

- In conjunction with University Libraries' Intranet project, a place should be identified and/or established for the deposit of digitization, digital preservation and digital objects processing standard operating procedures, standards, guidelines and other pertinent documentation.
- In conjunction with process re-engineering and optimization, we need to develop a dashboard tool for the management of our digital assets.

Next Steps

The work of the DP&A thus far has shed light upon and articulated a myriad of recommendations for organizational improvement. Just as one of the recommendations addresses the need to prioritize the work that we do, we need to prioritize the list of recommendations. To that end we have categorized the recommendations as immediate impact and long-term impact projects.

Immediate Impact Projects

- Digital Content Policy & Governance sub-workgroup rubric and governance process
- Inventory of known projects and activities
- Kaizen event(s) to address bottlenecks and recommend process re-engineering steps
- Documentation repository

Long-term Impact Projects

- Process re-engineering, which is dependent upon aforementioned Kaizen event(s) outcome(s).
- Expertise and skills development
- Development, articulation and implementation of standardized best and good-enough practices and workflows for process and project management
- Digital asset management dashboard