Alternative Publication Model Proposal

Version 5, January 21, 2016

By the Born-Digital Access Research Team:

Rachel Appel (Special Collections, Bryn Mawr College Library)

Alison Clemens (Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University)

Wendy Hagenmaier (Georgia Tech Archives)

Jessica Meyerson (Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin)

Table of Contents

The SAA Research Series:

An Innovative Publication Format and
a New Model of Interactive Digital Publishing

Overview

To publish our findings of **Born-Digital Access in Archival Repositories: Mapping the Current Landscape**,[1] we propose a hybrid publication model that would reflect the jointly theoretical and practical nature of research in the archives field. This model could be termed the "Research Series." The goal of the Series, and our publication within it, would be to foster transparency about the research process, explore emerging issues and areas of practice, and facilitate a public conversation among archivists about how research can fuel practical progress. In keeping with the traditional role of the professional association, the Research Series encourages professional interaction, discourse, and publication, and represents an opportunity for SAA to define an innovative, unique publication format that is equal parts narrative and toolkit. It also offers a chance for SAA to test and launch a sustainable model of interactive, flexible digital publishing.

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[1] For preliminary report, see: http://bit.ly/hackbdaccess-report

The aims of each publication in the Research Series would be to openly share a body of knowledge, interrogate research purposes and methods, and outline reusable models of how archivists, librarians, and museum practitioners can conduct qualitative and quantitative research studies to explore issues faced by cultural heritage professionals. Predominant themes of the Series would include a) the changing role of archives in the broader information environment and b) the applicability of archival principles to rapidly evolving areas beyond the traditional boundaries of archives, such as research data curation, scholarly publishing, data science, community archives, etc. The overarching goal of the Research Series would be to coalesce consensus-level recommendations about previously undefined issues. These recommendations may, in turn lead to the development *Trends in Archives Practice* modules or other 'best practice' resources as appropriate. .

Structure

The Research Series model would both reflect the research conducted by the authors and kickstart future works of a similar nature. It would thus resemble a hybrid of an article/short monograph and a toolkit. The publishing platform could be used as a writing tool during the project (perhaps supported by the integration of some kind of commenting engine), and also as a means to get early feedback and/or peer review feedback. The final publication would be a more or less fixed object, but one people can still comment on/interact with. Or, if the nature of the research project is not suited to using the platform as a writing tool during the project, publications in the series could be written after the research project is completed, so as to encourage thoughtful analysis of the process.

The model would begin with a narrative. The introduction to the narrative component would frame not only the research topic at hand but also the reasoning behind the research design. In the vein of a Digital Preservation Coalition *Technology Watch Report,*[2] it would also include a literature review of any works written on the emerging topic. The methods section of the publication would explore the researchers' local context and process. The results section would be enriched by references to the raw data set itself, which would be provided and scrubbed based on ICPSR standards for published data. The discussion section would examine the research questions and the successes and failures of the research methods. Reflections on the research process would be woven throughout.

And where traditional publications might end here with a conclusion, Research Series publications would push forward into a practical, inventive second half: a toolkit full of curated, reusable templates, blueprints for action, and practical tools created from or uncovered through the research, such as survey instruments, activity handouts, project planning worksheets, etc. (see outline below). The components of this toolkit would be referenced throughout the publication and would set this model apart from existing publication formats such as the aforementioned *Technology Watch Report*s. In order to underscore the shared importance of both the narrative and the toolkit and to encourage readers to view the toolkit as an integral piece of the publication rather than an appendix, the conclusion and discussion of

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[2] See: http://www.dpconline.org/advice/technology-watch-reports

areas for further research would be located *after* the toolkit. The conclusion would reflect on both the narrative and the toolkit and identify paths forward.

The length and specific elements of each instance of the series will be reflective of the nature of the particular research project it describes. We expect that most instances in the series would be the length of a long journal article or short monograph (circa 7,000-12,000 words); the toolkit and templates would be additional.

Establishing an Interactive, Open Access Digital Publishing Model for SAA

Because we committed to providing our anonymized data to the profession, it is important to the Born-Digital Access Research Team that the data set be freely available and open access. And because the aim of the Research Series model would be to inspire future work, we believe this publication model could offer a fitting opportunity for SAA to experiment with an alternative publication funding strategy, such as inviting a sponsor to fund the publication (e.g. Artefactual, DuraSpace, Mellon, etc.), crowdsourcing the cost through a Kickstarter model, requesting donations upon download, or asking the author's institutions to cover an open access publishing fee.

In keeping with the themes of reflection, inspiration, participation, and iteration, Research Series publications would encourage interactivity in both their content and their structure: for example, perhaps the publication format could allow for moderated comments on the text, social media content analysis, hosting a series of virtual discussions about the publication, etc. The audience for the Series would be a wide range of readers -- from Ph.D. students who want to mine the raw data to busy archivists who want to benefit from a digestible narrative.

Although the Born-Digital Access Research Team has identified potential interactive digital publishing tools, platforms, and publishers that could possibly be utilized for the "Research Series," this is an area of ongoing exploration within the Team and within SAA. We remain open to additional options depending on future research and input from potential partners. Identified possibilities currently include:

- MediaCommons Press (http://mcpress.media-commons.org/)
  - Example publication built on this platform: http://mcpress.media-commons.org/borndigital/
- Digress.it WordPress plugin (https://wordpress.org/plugins/digressit/)
  - Example publication built on this platform: http://rbms.info/digress/competencies/guidelines
- Debates in the Digital Humanities (http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/about; https://github.com/castiron/didh)
- University of Michigan Press (http://www.publishing.umich.edu/publications/#digital-projects)
  - We note that they have an iSchool, are pioneers in library publishing, and have created many digital publication projects -- they might be a logical partner for SAA

- ● Matrix publication platform from Michigan State University (http://www2.matrix.msu.edu/)
  - ○ Example publication built on this platform: http://publicphilosophyjournal.org/about/; we note that upon completion of the Mellon grant, the platform will be available on SourceForge
- ● MLA Commons (https://commons.mla.org/)

The Research Series of publications would thus function as a library of documentation about conducting research that advances practice. The overarching aim would be for authors to reflect on their process -- both the process of research and the process of practice -- and to ask: What is the impact of research on our profession? How can we use research to begin defining emerging or previously unexplored issues and to scaffold solutions? How can we make research doable for busy practitioners?

Abstracted Outline of the Research Series Publication Model

I. Narrative
   A. Introduction
      1. Overview of the research questions
      2. Reflection on why the researchers chose particular methods to study their particular research question(s)
      3. The practical impact the researchers aimed to make
      4. Literature review
   B. Methods
      1. Detailed examination of the researchers' methods, context, and process
   C. Results and Research Data
      1. The raw and intermediate data from the study; this data could be mined and reused by other archivists to create additional scholarly and practical projects
      2. Research data summaries presented through charts and visualizations
   D. Discussion
      1. Detailed analysis of the researchers' findings
II. Toolkit
   A. Generalized templates and tools that could be reused by other archivists seeking to design and implement other studies
      1. Templated, reusable artifacts and products of the research process, such as survey instruments, interview scripts, codebooks, software, log sheets, workflow maps, etc.
      2. Instructions for implementing the templates and tools and adapting them to fit other local contexts
      3. If they are available and if researchers have solicited them from research participants, the toolkit could also include practitioners' templates, checklists, solutions, etc. for addressing the topic of the research, which readers could adapt to their own context. These templates could also

move the content towards a potential Trends in Archives Practice
　　　　　module.
　　III.　Conclusion and Further Research
　　　　　A. Reflections on the research process: what worked, what did not
　　　　　B. Reflections on how the research explores the changing role of archives in the
　　　　　　 broader information landscape and the applicability of archival principles to new
　　　　　　 areas of work and study
　　　　　C. Pathways forward:
　　　　　　　1. Ideas for ways other archivists could use the templates
　　　　　　　2. Specific ideas for future research studies they could do: suggest a few
　　　　　　　　 concrete calls to action as a way to generate knowledge in collaboration
　　　　　　　　 with, but also for, a community

Outline of Our Instance of the Series, Specifically

Within the Research Series, our publication would sketch out the beginnings of a
consensus-level recommendation about born-digital access issues so that a *Trends in Archives
Practice* module could be written. Our publication would focus on our uniquely participatory
research model and why we chose this technique for our study. According to the SAGE
Encyclopedia of Action Research, Participatory Action Research (PAR) "is a research paradigm
within the social sciences which emphasizes collaborative participation of trained researchers
as well as local communities in producing knowledge directly relevant to the stakeholder
community."[3] According to a historical review of trends within the PAR research community
written by Billies et al., PAR "puts an ethic of responsibility in the forefront of research and
knowledge production."[4] PAR serves as an umbrella term for more specific participatory
methods including ethnographic charrettes and design research. PAR has increased
dramatically in popularity since the early 2000s and has broad application in fields ranging from
information studies to public health.

The structure of our specific Research Series publication might look something like this:

　　I.　Narrative
　　　　A. Introduction
　　　　　　1. Overview of the research questions:
　　　　　　　　a) We sought to determine current born-digital access practices in
　　　　　　　　　 cultural heritage institutions. We investigated institutional
　　　　　　　　　 background information, staffing and training, and access
　　　　　　　　　 activities.

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[3] Pant, M. (2014). Participatory Action Research. In D. Coghlan, & M. Brydon-Miller (Eds.), *The SAGE encyclopedia of
action research.* (Vol. 16, pp. 584-589). London: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi:
http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.4135/9781446294406.n220.

[4] Participatory Action Research: Our Methodological Roots Author(s): Michelle Billies, Valerie Francisco, Patricia
Krueger and Darla Linville Source: International Review of Qualitative Research, Vol. 3, No. 3 (Fall 2010), pp. 277-286
Published by: University of California Press Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/irqr.2010.3.3.277 .
Accessed: 30/11/2015 13:45

2. Why we chose our specific research methods for our particular study
   a) We chose a mixed methods approach for this study, as we gathered both qualitative and quantitative data via the survey and interviews.
3. The practical impact we aimed to make
   a) We hope to facilitate the development of best practices for born-digital access by documenting existing practices that are working well, practices that are not working, the types of organizations that are making the greatest strides, the range of job titles assigned to doing this work, and the largest barriers to providing access.
4. Literature review

B. Methods
   1. Detailed examination of our research methods, context, and process

C. Results
   1. The raw and intermediate materials of our study, which could be mined and reused by other archivists to create additional scholarly and practical projects
      a) Anonymized data set
      b) [Our preliminary report](#)
         (1) We noted several areas of gaps, including gaps in tools and systems; gaps in business analysis, resource allocation, and advocacy; gaps in skills for archivists, sharing information, and training each other; gaps in understanding users; and gaps in research and policy. We also noted several areas associated with high rate of planning activities, including reading room, remote, and online access; metadata for access and processing; and the creation of copies and images.
   2. Deep dive into our data

D. Discussion
   1. Focus on our findings in the context of the SAA session and the session's outcomes, both in Phase I and Phase II
      a) From the results noted above, we developed four topics for a hackfest session at SAA 2015. These topics were: understanding users, advocacy, agile methods, and an archivist training bootcamp. We planning that members of the hackfest would break into teams to develop polished proposals for projects that would confront each of the above areas and have significant practical impact on archivists who are working to providing access to born-digital materials.
      b) Our complete report will also reflect on the hackfest model and suggest additional steps forward.

II. Toolkit

A. Generalized templates that could be reused by other archivists seeking to design and implement other studies
   1. Templated, reusable artifacts of our research process, such as our Google Drive directory structure for our research group, meeting notes templates, email scripts, survey instrument, interview templates, codebook, etc.
   2. Templated, reusable products of our research process, such as the interactive research/practice session templates used for Phase I and Phase II, which were informed by our data (handout templates, role definitions templates, notes templates, proposal templates, blog post templates, etc.)
III. Conclusion and Further Research
   A. Thoughts going forward: what worked, what did not
   B. Ideas for ways other archivists could use the templates; specific ideas for future research studies they could do (suggest some concrete calls to action as a way to generate knowledge in collaboration with, but also for, a community)

Outline of Another Possible Theoretical Publication in the Research Series, With a Different Research Method and Focus

Research Series publications could cover cutting edge topics such as Community Archives, Data Management, Digital Scholarship and Archives, or any area that invites further initial exploration before a Trends in Archives Practice publication can be written. To help define the Research Series publication model, the following is a theoretical example of a publication idea that could be written by another research team. For the purposes of demonstration, the structure of a Research Series publication about a two-phase, two-month-long observational study of patrons using born-digital materials in the reading room at a mid-sized special collections library might look something like this:

I. Narrative
   A. Introduction
      1. Overview of the research questions
      2. Why the researchers chose an observational method to study their particular research question
      3. The practical impact the researchers aimed to make
      4. Literature review
   B. Methods
      1. Detailed examination of the researchers' methods, context, and process
   C. Results
      1. The raw and intermediate materials of the study, which could be mined and reused by other archivists to create additional scholarly and practical projects
         a) Anonymized logs created by the researchers
         b) Anonymized observed data, such as eye tracking data and web analytics

        c) Recruitment and interview/activity scripts
        d) The researchers' preliminary report
    2. Deep dive into the researchers' data
  D. Discussion/Conclusion/Further Research
    1. Focus on the researchers' findings
    2. Thoughts going forward; what worked, what did not
        a) Feedback from participants directly
    3. Ideas for ways other archivists could use the templates; specific ideas for future research studies they could do (suggest some concrete calls to action as a way to generate knowledge in collaboration with, but also for, a community)

II. Toolkit
  A. Generalized templates that could be reused by other archivists seeking to design and implement other studies
    1. Templated, reusable artifacts of the research process, such as observation log sheet templates, interview/activity templates, etc.
    2. Templated, reusable products of the research process, such as a second round of interview/activity scripts, which might have been informed by data from the first round of observational research

III. Conclusion and Further Research
  A. Thoughts going forward; what worked, what did not
  B. Ideas for ways other archivists could use the templates; specific ideas for future research studies they could do (suggest some concrete calls to action as a way to generate knowledge in collaboration with, but also for, a community)