

I undertook the Jump In survey project initiated by the SAA Manuscripts section as a way to force my hand – to provide an incentive to get started on doing something about the electronic records already in our care. My repository is an archives, museum, and special collections library at a small religious college, but it is also the regional repository for a non-profit corporation covering fifteen Southern states and the District of Columbia. And I am a lone arranger. Finding time for working on, much less planning projects, in the midst of day-to-day management and user needs is very challenging. The SAA's DAS certificate program has been a professional development activity of mine and this initiative fits with the beginning goals of that program. During my survey I was also participating in two webinar series that I would recommend to anyone just getting started with digital preservation. One is through the Connecting to Collections Online Community and can be found here: <http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/caring-for-digital-materials/> and the other was through ASERL and can be found here: <http://www.aserl.org/archive/>

To set up the survey I had to decide on the scope of the survey, what types of media to seek, what to record about the media, and where to search for the media. In the OCLC Research report by Ricky Erway, which inspired the survey, the term “physical media” was not rigidly defined. But the survey tool was targeted to “born-digital materials that have been stored along with other collection materials.” In keeping with this, and to make an achievable goal for me, workstation hard drives (fixed or mobile), servers, shared drives, and cloud storage spaces were excluded from the survey. Files of digitized materials created by the repository were excluded. Media was defined as magnetic (floppies and cassettes), optical (CD or DVD), or solid state (flash and/or device cards).

To further pare down the subjects and reduce the maximum size considerations, digital audio tapes, digital video tapes, computer tapes, and commercial CD and DVD disks were excluded. If these latter media were found, their location was noted for additional description and/or potential re-housing and duplication later. I struggled with defining the commercial material, attempting to base it on media type (replicated versus duplicated disks) or estimating how many copies were made, or on whether we had rights to the material via contract, which was not easily determined. A large quantity of this type of media was recorded by outside vendors during conferences and events. My approach was to these items was mixed and definitions were difficult to keep consistent during the survey, so this is the area that will need the most attention going forward with future surveys.

For each piece of media the following data was recorded in the Item Inventory, which was kept much like the sample survey provided for the project participants: location in repository, inventory number, media type, label information, other notes, and accession number. A paper form was created to make notes in remote storage locations and this data was then added to the spreadsheet. For each location area, or container, a summary of the number of media and the maximum storage capacity was calculated.

The survey results surprised me somewhat. I did not find any magnetic cassettes, large format floppies, flash media, or device cards in the collections. I only found a comparative handful of 3.5" floppies. The great majority of media, 96%, were CDs and DVDs. Of those, about one-third were commercial, one-third data files, and one-third in the ambiguous area of audio or video that may or may not be content that we have rights to. There were digital audio and video tapes that will be surveyed again in future projects on audio and video. And I did find a couple of computer tapes that will be surveyed at some point with the hard drives. About 80% of the media had already been segregated from the collections into media storage or were collections that were all media of the same type. Comparatively few items were found to still be within paper-based collections. Excepting the audio-visual materials and the ambiguity concerning some of the CD and DVD media from conferences, I think we have the resources to preserve the data on removable media. In order to match this effort to the quantity of born digital material on hard drives will require additional time, resources, and infrastructure that we currently do not possess.