

Sam Houston State University Jumps In

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Here at Newton Gresham Library on the campus of Sam Houston State University, we have never had an electronic records program. Most of our digital materials come from digitization projects and are managed in our ContentDM system. We saw an opportunity to begin managing and providing access to digital material in our collections, but understood that we would have to gain intellectual control first. There is no dedicated electronic records manager in the Library so we formed a committee to approach and carry out the Jump-In Initiative, bringing in stakeholders from each department (Special Collections, University Archives, Digital Resources, and the Library Director). We agreed that our digital materials on physical media needed to be inventoried and managed and that the Jump-In Initiative was a great way to start. Using the materials provided, we discussed the scope of the project. We also tailored the sample inventory to meet both the Initiative's and our needs. Because of a lack of an electronic records program, the Special Collections and University Archives departments had collected a limited amount of digital material. It was agreed that each division would be responsible for inventorying their entire collection of digital material on physical media. The Digital Resources Librarian coordinated the process, outlining the project goals and answering questions as they arose.

During the initial survey, the team experiences several challenging issues. Previous lists of digital materials had been created with differing levels of accuracy. The organization of collections with digital materials also varied. Some digital materials that were part of manuscript collections had been removed from their respective collections and properly stored while others remained in the collections. Digital materials were stashed everywhere and it took time to locate all materials. The departments had hired new staff and faculty quite recently (within the last year and a half) – making familiarity with collections a limitation. However, this also provided an opportunity for the new staff and faculty to dig in and learn more about specific items and collections. Time management was also a challenge. While everyone agreed that the project was important, opinions varied on where it fell within the day to day priorities. Nevertheless, the team got going early enough and met on a regular basis and was thus able to keep the project moving.

When we began the project we had certain expectations about what was stored in our collection. However, as the team progressed continued inventorying, these expectations began to get a bit confused. We discovered formats that were unknown to us and we had to resolve issues of whether to include each new format as digital material on a physical media. It seemed from the discussion group that some other institutions may have faced similar challenges as they encountered outdated formats.

The biggest problem that we faced throughout the whole process was communication. Each stakeholder seemed to lose sight of the purpose of the project at some point along the way. The essential, core goals of the project seemed to get lost during the actual process of completing the project. These goals also seemed to be hard to communicate to the stakeholders, which caused frustration. The stakeholders needed to be reassured that this was not just another project that would

be done and never touched or updated again. They had to be reassured that their work and the work of their staff would lead to a useful product or outcome. Furthermore, terminology created a substantial barrier between those who work and think in terms of digital material and those who feel comfortable thinking in terms of analog material. Eventually we were able overcome these barriers and understand the core goals and potential positive outcomes of the Jump-in Initiative

At the close of the Jump-in Initiative we have noticed several benefits. For the first time at this institution, we have a complete and thorough list of digital materials stored in Special Collections and University Archives. It is accessible and to all Library staff and faculty. We have also gathered a number of contextual elements in our expanded inventory. The group of stakeholders was able to explore collections together in the sometimes epic quest to find digital materials and now have a better understanding of underused items in the collection. After undertaking this project, the question on the mind of each stakeholder seems to be: "what do we do next?" We hope that a continued benefit of the Jump In Initiative will be communication with other participants about the potential answers to this very question.