

**Society of American Archivists
Manuscript Repositories Section
Jump In Initiative
Final Report: Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University**

About the Library

The Cushing Memorial Library and Archives is the rare books, special collections, manuscripts, and archival repository for Texas A&M University Libraries. The collections of the Cushing Library reflect the comprehensive nature of the educational and research enterprise at A&M as well as the wide diversity of interests found among current and former students, faculty, staff, and friends. The collections comprise over 12,000 linear feet of manuscript and archival material, approximately 240,000 printed volumes, over 250,000 photographs, hundreds of original works of art ranging from oil paintings to pastels to sculpture, and many individual artifacts, and span the breadth of recorded history, from Sumerian clay tablets dating from 2400 BCE to contemporary science fiction paperbacks.

Collection strengths and interests of the Cushing Library include military history, science fiction, western Americana, 19th-century American prints and illustrators, modern politics, Texana, natural history, Africana, Hispanic studies, ornithology, nautical archaeology, 18th-century French history and culture, Mexican colonial history, the history of books and printing, the history of Texas A&M, and selected literary collections (including Miguel de Cervantes, John Donne, Rudyard Kipling, Somerset Maugham, the Powys family, Christina Rossetti, and Walt Whitman) in addition to other subjects.

Acknowledgements

Participation in the Jump In Initiative Survey was possible through the generous contribution of time from a number of Cushing Library faculty, including:

Jeremy Brett, Processing Archivist
Rebecca Hankins, Curator of Africana Studies
Robin Hutchison, Collections Manager
Kevin O'Sullivan, Head of Records Management
Anton duPlessis, Curator of the Mexican Colonial Collection

Additional oversight was provided by Catherine Coker, Curator of Science Fiction and Fantasy, and Michael Jackson, Library Associate I.

We also wish to thank David Carlson, Dean of Texas A&M University Libraries, and Dr. Larry Mitchell, Director of Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, for their support of this project.

About the Survey

As part of the Jump In Initiative survey, Cushing faculty surveyed materials from seven collections believed to contain born-digital materials, locating a total of 277 born-digital items that totaled approximately 152.21 gb of maximum potential data. The primary formats surveyed included 3.5" and 5.25" floppy discs (71 and 120 items, respectively), CD-Rs (69 items), and DVD-Rs (12 items); other formats surveyed include Zip discs (4 items) and a Mini-DV cassette tape (1 item). Surveyors also made note of any preservation concerns witnessed. While these were few, the primary instances were of improper housing and damaged surfaces of optical discs.

A general call for participation was sent to the faculty and staff of Cushing Library who were interested in born-digital materials and able to contribute. During the initial meetings of participants, the charge of the Jump In Initiative was reviewed, as were background documents that defined the nature of born-digital materials and the process of surveying them¹. Due to time constraints and extant workload, it was apparent that surveying the entire collection would not be a feasible goal. Therefore, ideas for collections likely to contain undiscovered born-digital materials were solicited from the participants. Once a short-list was agreed upon, the task of surveying these collections was divided among those who had volunteered.

Using the deliverables set forth by the Jump In Initiative as guidelines, a survey tool was developed in Microsoft Excel. Therein, participants recorded pertinent information, including: collection name and background information, name of surveyor, date of survey, item location, inventory number (when available), media type, maximum storage capacity, label information, any further metadata available from markings on the item, and any preservation concerns. Each surveyor had his or her own local copy, while a single master file was compiled and maintained by Kevin O'Sullivan, organizer of the effort. In hopes of gathering consistent data from all participants, a survey guide was also drafted. This document provided background on the survey, a reference for common born-digital formats and their respective maximum storage capacities, and guidance on what information was to be collected and how to enter it into the survey tool.

Participants agreed that the Cushing Library's participation in the Jump In Initiative was a success and that the survey of born-digital materials is an effort worth further pursuing. It is our intention to continue this work until all collections have been surveyed and use the data collected to inform the prioritization of future preservation efforts.

¹ Ricky Erway, "Defining Born Digital" (OCLC Research, 2010); and "You've Got to Walk Before You Can Run" (OCLC Research, 2012).