Emerging Best Practices for Managing Online Exhibits

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Background

- Interest in project after experiencing an online exhibit migration from WordPress to Scalar, where issues of sustaining and managing past exhibits were brought to light
- Lack of guidelines in the profession and literature review made the migration more difficult, thus the authors sought to survey other professionals for their current policies and practices to develop a set of guidelines that would help guide online exhibits for the future

Aims

- Survey professionals about current policies and practices for managing and sustaining online exhibits
- Formulate best practice guidelines for managing and sustaining online exhibits

Methods

- Online survey was distributed via listservs using Qualtrics in January 2022
- Focused on listservs of national, regional, and local GLAM outlets to distribute the survey
- A total of 154 surveys were completed
- Survey asked about creation of digital exhibits, current practices and policies, and legacy online exhibit management

Findings

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>StoryMaps</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Springshare/LibGuides</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Google Arts &amp; Culture</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Adobe Creative Cloud Express (formerly Spark)</td>
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Discussion

- Many institutions created online exhibits during the pandemic as a way to connect patrons with materials and provide remote projects for staff
- Many institutions are not preserving digital exhibit files/objects in any type of digital asset management system
- Only twenty-two (16.79%) respondents reported having a formal policy and/or guidelines for managing online exhibits
- Only a third of respondents currently have a take-down policy
- Over half of respondents do not review online exhibits on any set schedule or at all
- The predominant use of a handful of exhibit platforms contrasts with the variety of platforms employed and substantial number of institutions developing their own platforms

Conclusion

- Survey responses suggest that best practices could have a broad impact across varied institutions
- Institutions without documentation, policies, and digital asset management systems will find management of online exhibits more difficult
- As online traffic increases, clear take-down and use policies will become essential
- Best practice guidelines will appear in our forthcoming paper, addressing the entire lifecycle of online exhibits from planning and development to access and preservation

References