

Digital Collection Development Policies: A Research Project in Progress

JESSICA BREIMAN AND RACHEL WITTMAN

Abstract

This presentation will review a research project in progress on digital collection development policies (policies regarding the selection criteria for rare and unique archival photographs, manuscripts, rare books, and born-digital items) to be digitized and published in an open-access digital library). The analysis of digital collection development policies addresses how cultural heritage institutions are justifying digitization activities and responding to the question: “What is worth doing over time?”

Since the explosion of digitization and online dissemination of archival materials in the early 1990s, library and archives staff have been charged with digital collection development responsibilities. The ever-growing amount of archival material necessitates hard decisions. Much has changed in the digitization landscape since the publication of the first foundational model for digital collection development policies was published by the Council on Library and Information Resources in 1998, and since the seminal publication by Ooghe and Moreels (2009) that identified essential digital collection selection criteria.

This research project is an investigation into the current state of digital collection development policies including how many organizations have digital collection development policies, what criteria they use to identify collections, and how the policies are managed and implemented. The initial phase of the research involves coding over 50 publicly available digital collection development policies according to selection criteria. The second phase will entail a broadly distributed survey on digital collection development policies. This presentation will report on the current state of the project, the challenges of coding, and findings from coding a subset of available policies.

About the authors:

Jessica Breiman (she/her) is the Digital Archives Librarian at the University of Utah’s J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections. In this role, she selects archival collections for new digitization and investigates both new and legacy online collections for copyright, privacy, and ethical considerations. She has been with the J. Willard Marriott Library Special Collections division for 12 years and previously served as the Art and Archives Metadata Librarian and as an Audiovisual Archivist. Her current projects and research interests include copyright policies for digital collections and responsible digital publication of LGBTQIA+ archival collections.

Rachel Wittmann (she/her) is the Digital Strategies Librarian at the University of Utah’s J. Willard Marriott Library. In her role, Rachel both creates metadata for digital collections and develops digital exhibits that document historic and current events in Utah. In addition, Rachel enjoys exploring ways to interpret metadata with digital and physical data visualizations.