Social Media Preservation in Times of Change

A Workflow and Policy Analysis Case-Study at Towson University's Archives

Emiel Brown & Jasmine S. Malone | SAA Research Forum 2025

Presenters

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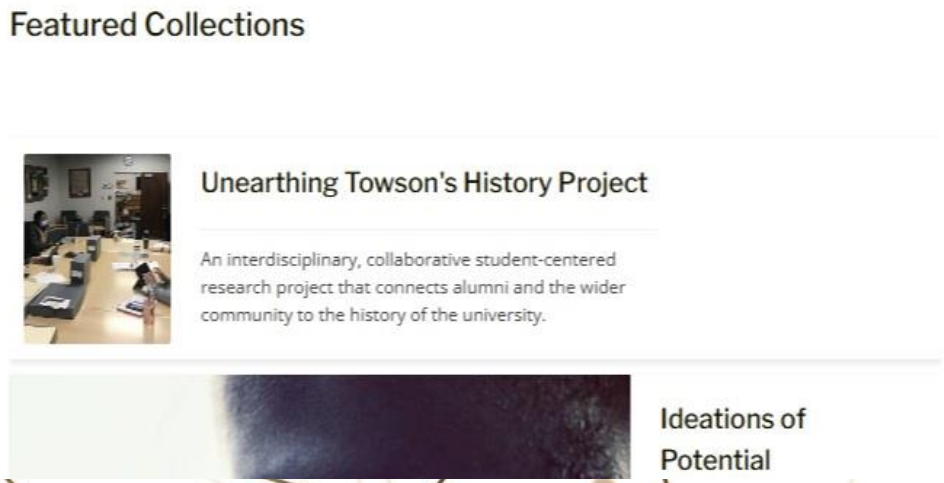
What we'll cover

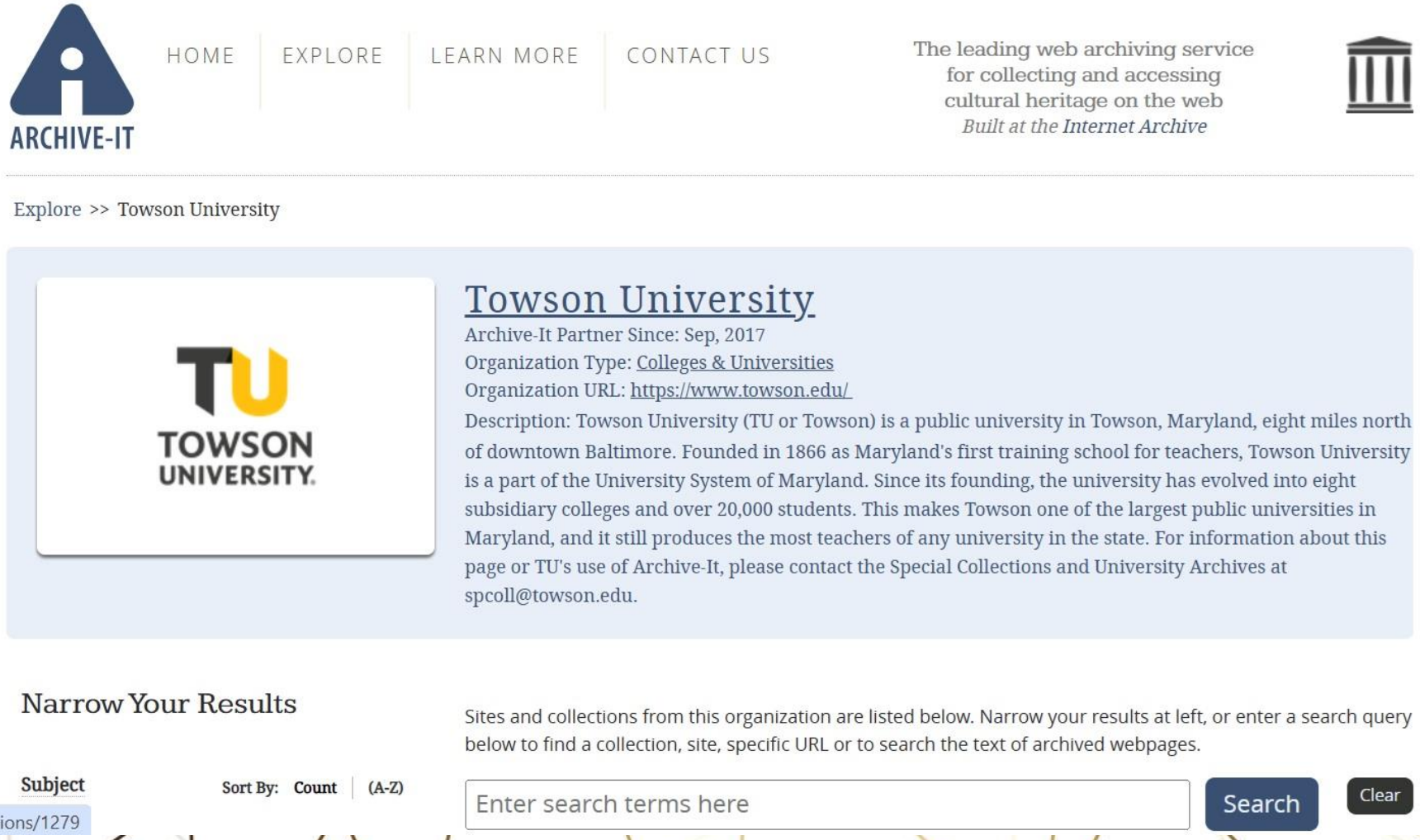
- Introduce the Web Archives at TU
- Provide background on case-study inspiration and context
- Discuss reevaluating our web capture workflow
- Share recommendations and next steps

TU Archives

- **Our role:** To preserve and document the history of the university, including voices not represented by "official" historical sources
- **Our collecting areas:**
  - TU and local history
  - Performing arts
  - Jewish history and culture
  - World War II
  - History of education in Maryland

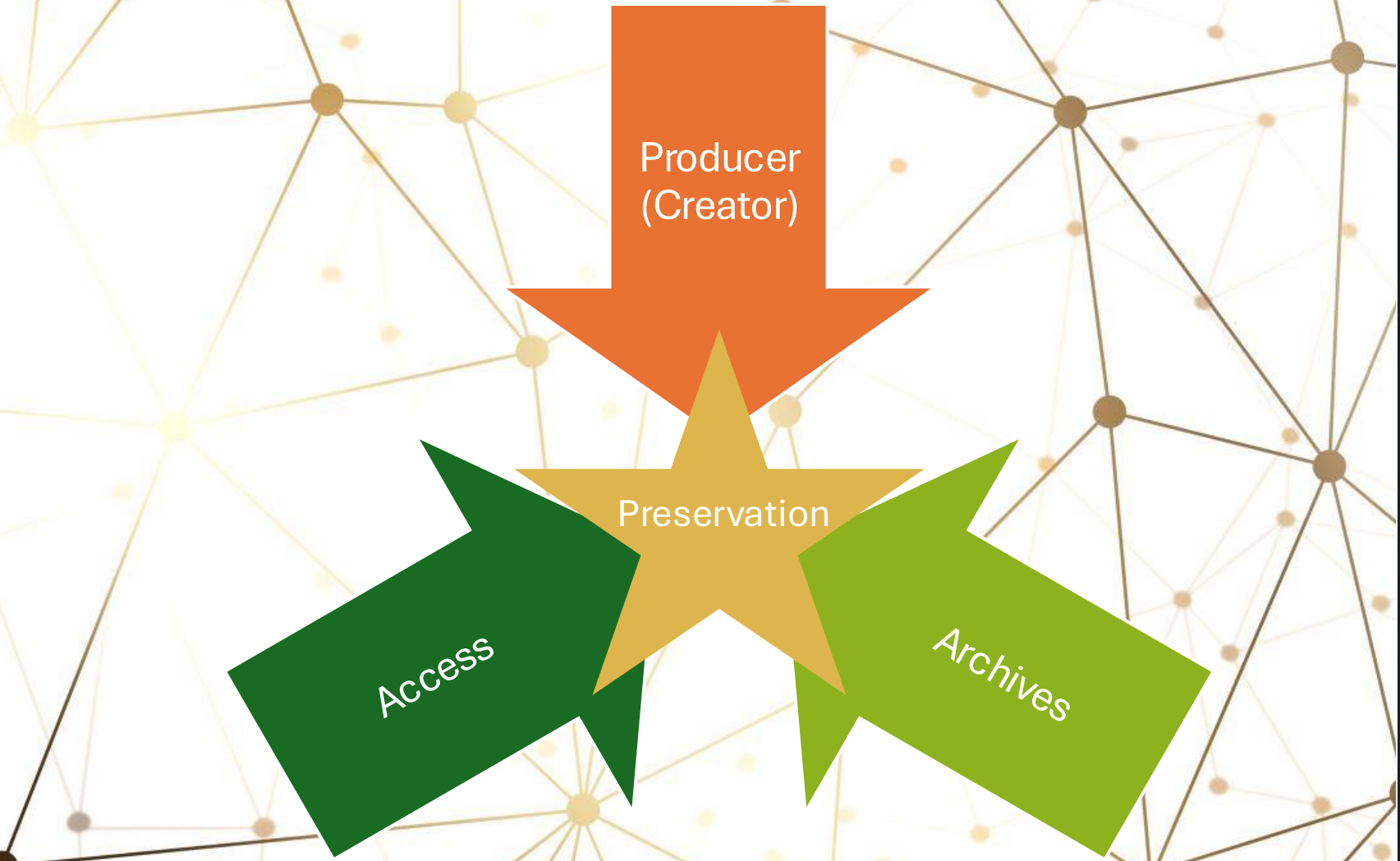


Web and Social Media Archiving @ TU



- Towson web pages
- Student publications
- Alumni and TU-affiliated projects

As social media becomes an increasingly important mode of communication, how does this fit into our web archiving efforts?



Our case study seeks to evaluate how our archives can best gauge its capacity for social media preservation and how we determine "good" sustainable practices amidst platform evolution, retirement, and migration.

Evaluation Criteria

Crawling / capture process – How does it work? What can it do?

Expertise needed – What do we need to know? What support is available?

Type and capacity of storage – Where do our captured files go? How are they stored?

Interaction with login - protected sites – Can it capture things like X and Instagram?

Replay of captured sites – How can researchers use these resources in the future?

Cost – What do we pay for? How much? How often?

ARCHIVE-IT

Pagefreezer

BROWSERTRIX

CIVICPLUS

ARCHIVE WEBPAGE

Exploring new tools

Results

Archiveweb.page was unable to scale to meet our needs in terms of capturing pages that were complex or dynamic, or that needed to be captured regularly.

CivicPlus and **Pagefreezer** were not cost-effective based on the number of accounts we hope to preserve.

Archiveweb.page desktop app is unable to effectively bypass login screens, and **CivicPlus** and **Pagefreezer** required the personal login information of each account in order to access them.

Direct download of data from **X** required greater access to account information than we normally have.

Recommendations

Preserving individual pages

- **Archiveweb.page** allows logged-in, one-time capture of social media pages via free browser extension and local storage of data

Managing institutional social media accounts

- **CivicPlus** or **Pagefreezer** allow near-real-time management of accounts with individual login information

Ongoing dynamic crawls

- **Archive-It** or **Browsertrix** allow individual or scheduled crawls of sites and store data on a subscription basis

Recommendations

Policy

Procedures

Training

Updated accessions, appraisal, and reappraisal policy for web archives

Update workflows to include regular quality assurance checks

Staff training and development on web archives management

Next Steps

Tool Selection: deciding which tool is best for our needs and collections

Integrating workflows: determine how the tool can partner with our other web based platforms

Collection management updates: implementing policies and procedures to develop a plan and maintain our social media collection

Ongoing review: remain flexible and anticipate changes

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