Mix and match: exploring processing efficiencies for born-digital materials

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Research question

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Libraries Special Collections is exploring an efficient processing approach (à la MPLP) for born-digital materials, making an effort to balance the inherent fragility of bits and bytes with the reality that not all born-digital collections merit intensive processing. Irwin and Shein use a chart from "Guidelines for Efficient Processing in the University of California Libraries" (p. 15-16) to help define the levels of processing their department performs on analog materials, but they have found little guidance of that nature for born-digital materials. They've begun contemplating how to adapt this chart for the processing of born-digital materials and are presenting their ideas through a poster that can also be utilized as a dynamic, collaborative space to gather and record ideas from colleagues.

UNLV's poster depicts a framework for describing levels of processing born-digital materials, from minimal to highly intensive. Descriptions of various born-digital processing actions (from ingest to creating access copies) are expressed on cards that can be sorted and moved about the framework to represent different perspectives on how best to define these levels of processing. Through this interactive poster, UNLV invites colleagues to mix and match born-digital processing actions with appropriate/corresponding levels of processing. In the context of responsibly stewarding born-digital materials using moderate resources, the goal of the poster is to move the profession closer to determining what actions should be required for every born-digital collection versus what actions might be reserved for/selectively performed on high-profile or high-risk collections.

Ideas can be emailed to the authors or uploaded and shared here: https://tinyurl.com/born-digital-processing-ideas

Audience participation:

As each archivist categorizes the actions into sections of the framework, Irwin and Shein plan to photograph each perspective and upload it to a publicly accessible online folder. By associating the name of the archivist/repository with their recommendations for efficient processing of born-digital materials, we aim to capture approaches appropriate to repositories of diverse sizes and resources. To ensure inclusivity, we hope the poster remains accessible throughout the conference, enabling wide participation and encouraging people to capture and upload photos of how they would mix and match the actions. We will have laminated printed cards (that can be moved around and affixed to the poster with Velcro). We will have blank cards for new ideas. We plan to assess the results to establish common ground.