How to Build a Workflow: Improving Digital Content Appraisal and Processing at the University of Illinois Library

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Abstract: Improving Digital Content Appraisal and Processing (IDCAP) is a project initiated by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) Library. The project’s goal is to enhance and develop workflows across the Library’s special collections units that support the appraisal and processing of digital content. Given the distributed nature of special collections at the Library, workflows vary considerably; IDCAP was conceptualized as a way to identify common challenges and share knowledge and best practices between units. By bringing these units together with their distinct and shared needs, IDCAP seeks to collectively build workflows that attend to the diversity of digital content acquired by the Library.

Over the past 18 years, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has launched numerous initiatives to provide curatorial and technical support for digital content identified as having archival or long-term value. However, special collections units have not had clear or consistent approaches to developing and supporting workflows needed for a comprehensive and sustainable digital preservation model, due in part to digital preservation’s rapidly changing environment combined with competing priorities of the broader UIUC community.

This paper will describe IDCAP’s work to identify needs, assess/create workflows, and build capacity across special collections units. In particular, the paper will describe two initial tasks: 1) a survey of peer institution’s workflow documentation; and, 2) the creation of use case profiles drawn from examples of digital acquisitions from special collection units. Assessing commonalities and differences that emerge from these activities will be used to inform iterative workflow development.

About the authors:

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