

“A Hard Drive! Box it and Put it on the Shelf, Elizabeth.” First Steps in Digital Forensics in a Very Small Archives

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Abstract: Digital material cannot survive with benign neglect, it needs active management. Digital material is lurking in boxes, being actively collected in information heritage institutions – big and small, but no practical training is offered in-country in how to deal with it. Large, national institutions are working on their own processes, but are they scalable?

In the research forum, Elizabeth will present a study that documents how it is achievable for very small archives to embark on managing digital material found on legacy media through the use of digital forensic practices and to use that knowledge to underpin acquisitions of current born-digital material.

Action research was the method of study for this project, as it is useful in addressing issues that arise from professional practice; it facilitates simultaneous understanding and change. Its approach is problem-focused and produces practical outcomes. It offered a structure that was particularly applicable to the iterative nature of this research, in that it both entails a process of planning, acting and evaluating against the project goals and allows for flexibility in adjusting project parameters.

About the Author:

Elizabeth Charlton is the Province Archivist for the Society of Mary in New Zealand, a congregation of Roman Catholic priests and brothers. As a lone arranger, all archival management functions are incumbent upon her and it is in this position that her interest in digital archives was awakened. The 2014 scholarship from the Ian McLean Wards Memorial Trust has enabled her to undertake this study. Elizabeth serves on the National Council of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) and is on the organising committee for the ARANZ40 Symposium, marking the 40th year of the formation of the association.

Elizabeth holds a Diploma in Records and Information Management from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand in addition to a M.Ed. in Teaching Languages other than English from Monash University, Australia, a Diploma of Teaching from Auckland College of Education and a B.A. in Modern Languages and Linguistics from Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand.