Disk image decision factors: Exploring the role of disk imaging in digital archives workflows

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In the 2000s and 2010s, disk imaging was positioned as a best practice for born-digital materials contained on storage devices. Recently, however, this has been called into question and there's now ongoing discussion about the practice of disk imaging as a default archival processing action. On the one hand, disk imaging is often the most efficient and effective strategy to achieve a complete and accurate capture of a storage device, supports emulation, and may be the only way to acquire data from certain legacy media formats. On the other hand, concerns have been raised including its appropriateness for specific storage media, ethical issues, environmental sustainability concerns, and the level of technical knowledge required to deploy disk images in an access environment. This presentation details recent work from an inter-institutional group of practitioners to assess the factors archivists must consider when deciding whether and how to implement disk imaging in their workflows. This group, known as DANNNG (Digital Archival traNsfer or iNgest or packagiNg Group), created a community-driven resource to fill the gap in guidance of when--and when not--to image storage devices. The document explores the role of capturing content in digital archival workflows and details the considerations associated with decision-making for creating disk images. It also encompasses a technical glossary establishing a shared understanding of terms. In addition to introducing attendees to this resource, DANNNG members will discuss next steps and explain how practitioners can use it in a practical context to determine an appropriate course of action.

About the authors:

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