

Should Archivists Care About Securing Digital Collections?

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Abstract: Literature on the role of the archivist in digital curation acknowledges that others should handle the more technical aspects of security and recommends that archivists develop at least a basic understanding of what it means to secure their digital collections. Little research examines archivists' awareness of security threats and vulnerabilities, and the measures required to protect their digital collections against compromise. This presentation discusses results from an exploratory survey of 15 archivists, librarians, directors, and technicians regarding their perceptions of security as it pertains to their digital collections. Participants defined security in terms of integrity (e.g., keeping data safe from any unauthorized changes/deletion), confidentiality (e.g., preventing information, data, records, personally identifiable information, and classified material from unauthorized access), availability (e.g., ensuring that content is available to the intended user), detecting malicious actors, protection from physical damage, and protection from viruses. Participants varied in their awareness of the security threats and vulnerabilities to which their digital collections are exposed. While some participants reported encountering security threats related to confidentiality (e.g., multiple access attempts from unauthorized users) and availability (e.g., denial of service attacks), others reported that they either had not encountered any security threats or did not know if they had. This presentation concludes by considering what archivists should know about security and whether they should collaborate with IT staff to secure archives' digital collections. Future directions for research are also discussed.

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