

# Should Archivists Care About Securing Digital Collections?

DEVAN RAY DONALDSON and LAURA BELL

**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.

## About the Authors:

**Dr. Devan Ray Donaldson** is an Assistant Professor of Information Science in the Department of Information and Library Science (ILS) in the School of Informatics, Computing, and Engineering (SICE) at Indiana University Bloomington, where he directs a specialization in digital curation. He is also Affiliated Faculty with the Data Science Program and the Data to Insight Center (D2I) at Indiana University. His research interests include: digital repositories, data sharing practices, mass digitization, research data management, trust, security, and users' perceptions of archives and archival content.

Dr. Donaldson holds a Ph.D. in Information from the University of Michigan, a M.S. in Library Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a B.A. in History from the College of William and Mary in Virginia. In 2005, he studied abroad at Oxford University, Hertford College. Dr. Donaldson is the recipient of the 2018 Indiana University Trustees Teaching Award.

**Ms. Laura Bell** is currently an Archivist in the Special Collections Department of the University of Baltimore Langsdale Library. Her research interests include: patron access and use of archival collections, outreach and instruction programs in archives, digitization programs in archives, trust and security of archival collections, community archives, and digital repositories.

Ms. Bell holds an M.L.S. with a Specialization in Archives and Records Management from Indiana University Bloomington and a B.A. in English from St. Mary's College of Maryland.