

Sustaining Digital Forensics Education through Participatory Action Research

JESSICA FARRELL

Over the past decade, digital forensics tools and methods have found their way out of the field of criminal investigation and into the processing areas and quarantined workstations of digital archivists. Due in large part to the efforts of the DigCCurr II program (2008-2013), the BitCurator Consortium, and the widespread use of the BitCurator Environment, practitioners have an active community of practice around digital forensics that shares knowledge, improves tools, and engages in critical discussions around the practice and theory of digital forensics in the archives.

Despite the adoption of digital forensics tools and methods by practitioners, hands-on lessons are often missing from curricula in library and information science, archival studies, and museum studies. Using a mixed-methods participatory action research approach, the BitCuratorEdu Project (2018-2022) first examined the social, institutional, and technological factors that inhibit instructors' inclusion of digital forensics in their courses. Then the Project Team and Advisory Board developed a set of learning modules that responded to gaps in resources for educators. Finally, the Project Team partnered with the BitCurator Consortium to offer events that benefited both educators and their students in a controlled pilot that allowed for close evaluation of the value and effectiveness of each activity.

This presentation will share the project's research highlights, deliverables, and how we built a community through participatory action research. How can we continue to sustain and grow a network of digital forensics educators who build their knowledge through communities of practice?

About the author:

Jessica Farrell is a Community Facilitator at Educopia Institute. She facilitates the [Software Preservation Network](#) and the [BitCurator Consortium](#) and was a co-PI for the [BitCuratorEdu project](#). For 10 years before joining Educopia, she was a practicing archivist. Her past work includes designing acquisition, processing, and access workflows for born-digital special collections at McDonald's Corporation and Harvard Law School Library, as well as performing digitization and manuscript processing work for the Avery Research Center for African American History and Culture (College of Charleston). She co-founded the Digital Library Federation Born-Digital Access Working Group in 2017. Through that community, she has co-authored several publications exploring access to born-digital archival collections, including the [Levels of Born-Digital Access](#) guidelines, "[Collecting User Experiences, Needs, and Desires for Accessing Born-Digital Archival Collections: Survey Analysis](#)" white paper, the Born-Digital [Access Values](#) community statement of purpose, and "[Legal and Ethical Considerations for Born-Digital Access](#)."