Inventory Practices within Archives: Scalability and importance

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Abstract: The use of inventory in archives is a common practice for all different types of settings. Along with the teaching role of archives, technology and digitization of records have truly changed the archival landscape, impacting the scale of metadata required for digital, analog and hybrid materials becoming unruly in the face of the lone-arranger model. The authors surveyed professionals across the United States, reaching out to state, regional and national archival and museum associations, historical societies, as well as organizations dedicated to the preservation of digital media. The objective was to answer questions like how does inventory transpire through the archives' workflow as the volume of donated materials and digital-born assets are piling up? By examining inventory through a theoretical lens of scalability, in particular from an academic model, we hope to inform the conversation of merging theory and practice for both the lone arranger and the larger staffed archival repository. This presentation will report on findings and how inventory practices are taken into consideration for both digital and physical materials that are obtained from donor to the processing of those materials, and how these practices have helped inform policy and procedural decisions with respect to digital curation and preservation.

About the Authors:

Patrice-Andre Prud'homme, PhD is the Director of Digital Curation at the Oklahoma State University Library, where he provides leadership and management in the area of digital preservation, curation, and discovery of digital resources. He manages the processing of digital materials and their associated metadata to be ingested in selected access platforms and Rosetta, and documented in ArchivesSpace. He investigates ways to develop archival models and workflows with respect to creating metadata in an efficient way for digital preservation and access.

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