Art | National Digital Stewardship Residency

ART INSTITVTE CHICAGO

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National Digital Stewardship Residency | NDSR Art

Final Report

July 2019

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Host: The Art Institute of Chicago

Project: Capturing the Museum Experience: Saving Electronic Media in the Galleries

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Project Overview

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As the NDSR Art resident at The Art Institute of Chicago (AIC), my project was focused on building a digital archiving and preservation program through the case study of born-digital materials related to visitor experience at the museum. I was hosted by Ryerson and Burnham Libraries at AIC, which houses the Institutional Archive collection.

Like many art museums with contemporary collections items, AIC had begun to build capacity and time-based media initiatives focused on preserving digital art items. Less widely addressed across museums and other cultural heritage institutions was the preservation of other complex art-information objects. These materials include audio tours, digital art labels, video presentations, and interactive touchscreens that enhance the gallery experience and contain valuable research, art documentation, and contextual information. The current institutional Digial Asset Management System (DAMS) does not ingest content that is not related directly to collection objects, and as a result these digital items were not being systematically collected, indexed, and preserved for long-term access. Therefore, the residency project was also focused on developing procedures for acquisition and ingest into a digital repository.

During the first half of the residency, significant progress was made to understand and document the current institutional capacity for digital preservation and digital archiving. The project activities listed in this report have supported and provided valuable quantitative and qualitative context to this understanding. The most significant result of this initial work was the creation of an updated project scope, objectives, and deliverables submitted to project staff. The updated goals better reflect the present-day digital preservation landscape at AIC. The overall project scope was still focused on in-gallery media, but some things were shifted to create space to facilitate broader conversations with staff around digital preservation needs/awareness and provide documentation that helps map a strategic vision and roadmap for institution-wide needs for the future.

Project Partners

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My AIC mentors were Alvin Dantes, Digital Initiatives and Technology Librarian, and Doug Litts, Director of Ryerson and Burnham Libraries; the latter also served as my

ARLIS/NA mentor. I also received support from additional mentors, including Jaime Schumacher of Digital POWRR and Northern Illinois University Libraries. I was also connected with Jeanne Long, Executive Director of Chicago Collections Consortium, early on in my residency. Throughout the course of the year she served as an invaluable mentor and collaborator on events, trainings, and my professional development.

Project Goals and Analysis

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Goal: Research and conduct environmental scan exploring existing models for managing born-digital institutional archives.

Much of the progress toward this goal was accomplished during the first half of the residency. I conducted a literature review, and discovered that the documentation related to both institutional archives as well as interactive digital media was limited. Much of the literature available focused on scaled institutional archives (such as large universities), while documentation of preservation of mobile applications was even sparser. I found significant benefit in focusing more of my time conducting site visits at various libraries, archives, and museums, as well as utilizing recommendations from other professionals to connect with additional digital archivists for phone conversations. These conversations provided useful insights into how institutions of varying size/resources are tackling digital archiving and preservation challenges. The summary and insights informed my subsequent work and recommendations for future digital preservation strategies at AIC.

Goal: Analyze the existing infrastructure of the digital archival repository in order to develop recommendations for modifications and metadata infrastructure, using recommended standards. Develop workflow protocol for case study media types for transfer from originating department to the digital archival repository.

At the start of my residency, AIC had recently acquired Preservica as its first preservation repository; the institution also utilized an in-house developed Digital Asset Management System (DAMS). Tackling this goal required familiarizing myself with both out-of-the-box and institution-specific data management systems. As I made progress, I found it especially important to balance my professional development goals for learning new systems and the needs of AIC without venturing too far outside the

project scope, which was focused on solutions for visitor experience-related materials. Project sustainability was also important, so I considered current staffing levels and resources when making decisions about how to build institutional knowledge related to new archival systems. Thus, the second part of this goal was an amendment to reflect a more sustainable scope - focused on 3 discrete case studies instead of overall systems and workflows for any type of born-digital content. This would also prove to be a useful model for publicly disseminating information with the broader professional community at the end of the residency. The culmination of this goal was a documentation of metadata standards for interactive media and well as proposed workflows.

Goal: Conduct high-level institutional assessment of current digital asset management practices (staff interviews, systems, and existing internal document review). Draft summary report with short and long term recommendations based on findings and professional best practices.

This was another updated goal that reflected a need identified during the first half of the residency activities. Conversations with staff illuminated a need for broader documentation and understanding of the current workflows, scope, and awareness of digital preservation and file management across different departments. This work was supported by numerous conversations with individuals and groups of staff from a variety of departments. The culmination of this work was a resource for AIC management staff, a report entitled *Institutional Capacity Assessment for Digital Preservation.*

Goal: Draft a white paper addressing the acquisition and preservation issues (including problems and possible solutions) regarding acquisition and preservation of 3 selected case studies identified in initial survey.

Building off other updated goals and the overall goals of the NDSR, one of the main goals was to document case studies for how institutions might handle acquisition, processing, and preservation of complex digital media. Given the lack of available documentation for these specific scenarios (museums, institutional archives, digital interactive applications), making this information accessible to the broadest audience possible is important; planning efforts are in place to make the standalone report - "Saving Media in Museum Galleries: 3 case studies in preserving digital assets" - publicly available via the Art Institute website or another online platform.

Other NDSR Goals: Professional Development

In additional to project deliverables, a secondary goal of the NDSR residency model is to provide and encourage professional development and technical skill-building opportunities for residents.

As part of the overall program activities, residents were expected to organize an enrichment site visit for the entire residency program (including a public event) as well as an NDSR-Art/ARLIS webinar. Note: All NDSR-Art webinars are available on-demand via the ARLIS Learning portal.

- *Strategies for Conserving Time-Based Media: An overview of the Art Institute of Chicago's TBM Initiative* with Kristin MacDonough & Molly Szymanski. (May 8, 2019)
  In this webinar session, attendees learned about some of the activities to date in the Time-Based Media (TBM) Initiative at the Art Institute of Chicago. Details about the development of the TBM Working Group, a survey on TBM artworks and related collection management practices, and updates to procedures and documentation approaches were also shared.

- NDSR Chicago Enrichment Site Visit was responsible for planning an on-site enrichment visit and hosting the 3 other NDSR-Art residents, along with NDSR program staff from the Philadelphia Museum of Art. This visit took place October 31 - November 1, 2019.

  Day 1: Activities included:
    - Conversation with Sarah Guernsey, Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs at The Art Institute of Chicago (AIC)
    - Gallery Talk: Time-based media art on exhibit at AIC. Kristin MacDonough, Time-Based Media Conservation Fellow & Jason Stec, Film/Video Specialist
    - Joan Flasch Artist Book Collection: Overview of collection and discussion on digital preservation and artist's books with April Sheridan, Special Collections Manager
    - Meet & Greet w/ ARLIS Mid-states chapter

  Day 2: *Creating Community Through Digital Futures* (Public Event)
    The intention of the event was to provide a showcase for the Chicago-based cultural heritage community working on digital preservation. It would provide a space to build community within Chicago and also offer exposure and learning opportunities for NDSR-Art

residents traveling from outside the midwest. Additional goals for the event included providing opportunities for practitioners to share success stories and brainstorm solutions to challenges in a collaborative, supportive environment. Planning for this event took place over the course of August, September, and October. I wrote and distributed a call for proposals in September and finalized the list of 11 presenters in early October. I partnered with Chicago Collections Consortium (AIC is a member organization) to help with outreach and distribution of registration information. I also worked with AIC staff to coordinate logistics, catering, and photography.

- The event had 59 pre-registrations, with 53 of those attending the event, and 10 day-of registrants - a total of 63 participants.
- See Appendix B for a complete list of presenters and event details.

Figure 1: Digital Futures Event poster

- Other workshops and site visits attended:
  - *Appraisal of Digital Records*, Society of American Archivists course (March 1, 2019, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)
  - *Preserving Digital Archives*, Society of American Archivists course (April 5, 2019, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee)

In addition to independently organizing/attending professional development events, I was also able to participate in a number of NDSR curated events:

NDSR-Art Instruction Sessions
- Immersion week: July 16 - July 20, 2018
  - *Think like a computer* (Jacob Nadal, Library of Congress)
  - *Mentorship workshop* (Heather Slania, Decker Library at the Maryland Institute College of Art & Shira Loev Eller, George Washington University)
  - *Digital POWRR* (Jaime Schumacher, Northern Illinois University)
  - *Managing digital projects & workflows* (Deborah Boyer, Azavea)
  - *Digital storage and forensics* (Ben Fino-Radin, Small Data Industries)
  - *Stakeholder Engagement* (Vicky Steeves, NYU Libraries & Jaime Mears, Library of Congress & Karl-Rainer Blumenthal, Internet Archive)
  - *Policy writing* (Emily Rafferty, Baltimore Museum of Art)
  - *Writing and representing information* (Seth Anderson, Yale University Library)

- NDSR-Art/ARLIS Webinar Sessions
  - *A/V and Preservation Metadata with Peggy Griesinger* (January 23, 2019)
  - *Wikidata for Digital Preservation with Katherine Thornton* (October 23, 2018)

NDSR-Art Resident Coordinated Sessions
- New York City Enrichment Visit
  - Panza Collection Initiative - presentation at Guggenheim (January 30, 2019)
  - Media Preservation Initiative - presentation at the Whitney Museum (January 31, 2019)
  - *Safeguarding and Activating Digital Video Information in Cultural Institutions* - Panel at METRO (January 31, 2019)

- Baltimore Site Visit

- ○ *The Art of Digital Stewardship: Content, Context, and Structure* - NDSR Capstone (June 28, 2019)

- ● NDSR-Art/ARLIS Webinar Sessions
  - ○ *Archiving Performance in an Institutional Context: Perspectives from the Mark Morris Dance Group with Stephanie Neel & Regina Carra* (moderated by NDSR-Art resident Cristina Fontanez-Rodriguez)
  - ○ *Oral History Strategies and Stewardship with Teague Schneiter & Brenden Coates* (moderated by NDSR-Art resident Jean Moylan)
  - ○ *Getting Started with Disk Imaging with Ben Fino-Radin* (moderated by NDSR-Art resident Rachel Ward)

Project Execution

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This section provides an overview of some of the major activities related to project goals and deliverables. A significant number of residency activities are documented throughout this report as well (i.e. "Other NDSR Goals" section).

July 2018 - December 2018

1. Research of existing museum institutional archives policies, procedures.

Activities
- ● Site visits with external libraries, archives and museums:
  - ○ Northwestern Libraries
  - ○ IIT Libraries
  - ○ Newberry Library
  - ○ MediaBurn Video Archive
  - ○ Chicago Leather Museum and Archives
  - ○ DuSable African American History Museum
  - ○ Columbia College, Center for Black Music Research

- ● Phone interviews with external libraries, archives, and museums:
  - ○ Smithsonian Museum, Institutional Archives
  - ○ Smithsonian Museum, Digital Asset Management Team
  - ○ Yale University Libraries, Software Preservation Program

- ○ Internet Archive, Archive-IT
- ○ Philadelphia Museum of Art, Archives

2. High-level inventory of pre-2016 gallery-related digital AV materials, including file type, size, location of existing born-digital "Visitor Experience" related media.

Activities
- Worked with AV staff to find and relocate collection of over 700+ AV pieces of external media.
- Crosswalked old inventory csv file which included approximately 50% of found items. Arranged, inventoried, and reboxed items in 23 boxes of physical carrier AV materials.
- Identified and created a high-level inventory for 10+ TB of visitor experience related born-digital files, produced between 2009-2016.

3. Selection of 3 interactive media formats for research and write-up as digital preservation case studies

- Case Study 1: Archived exhibition micro-websites
- Case Study 2: Launchpad - Interactive, in-gallery iPad application
- Case Study 3: Audio tour files

4. Gather initial information about current workflows, storage, and digital file management of AIC institutional visitor experience assets.

Activities
- Completed 14 AIC staff interviews across 4 departments – Ryerson and Burnham Libraries, Experience Design, Curatorial, and Imaging.
- Presentation at Curatorial Chairs meeting in December 2018 – 2 completed curatorial department interviews, an additional 5 scheduled for 2019.

Deliverables

- Environmental scan summary report on strategies implemented by peer institutions. Includes comparison chart of current budget, size, digital preservation systems, and examples of policy and planning documents.
- Mid-level inventory of gallery-related digital AV materials, including file type, size, location of existing born-digital visitor experience-related media.

- Condition inventory and summary recommendations for future migration and digitization of AV materials on physical media.
- Summary report on initial findings from staff interviews.

January 2019 - July 2019

1. Completed gathering of information about workflows, storage, file management, and staff workflows.
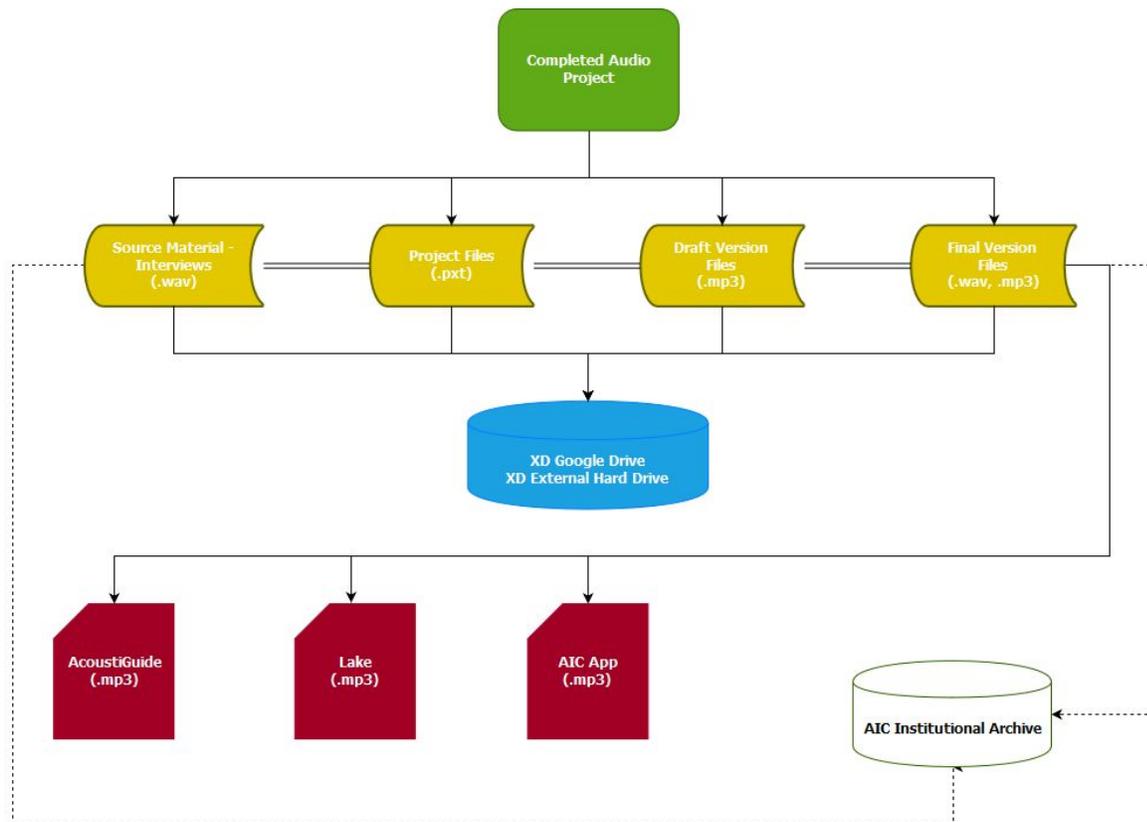
Activities
- Completed an additional 10+ staff interviews with curatorial departments, Learning and Public Engagement, and Collections and Loans.
- Completed survey and assessment of current systems and storage in use at AIC.
- Completed review of existing policies and written documents pertaining to records retention and digital preservation.
- Compiled findings into final institutional report (see deliverables).

2. Investigated preservation solutions for 3 digital media formats and wrote digital preservation case studies

Activities
- Created proposed workflow diagrams (Figure 2) for multiple media types.
- Attended multiple online Preservica trainings to familiarize myself with repository capabilities to apply to case studies.
- Participated in DAMS Working Group to evaluate and provide recommendations to Steering Committee for new DAMS system.
- Collaborated with staff to process and develop metadata, and documentation for digital inventory files for 2 of the case studies: Launchpad interactive and exhibition archive micro-website. Given the complex nature and high file volume of the audio tours, that collection was only partially processed; workflow and other future recommendations were still produced.

Figure 2: Examples of workflow diagram

Deliverables
- NDSR Final Report, summarizing research and work during residency.
- *Institutional Capacity Assessment for Digital Preservation* - AIC staff report summarizing current digital preservation activities and providing recommendations.
- "Saving Media in Museum Galleries: 3 case studies in preserving digital assets" - report with discussion of preservation for museum gallery assets.
- Example workflows for selected digital media types to be transferred to archival repository.
- Inventory documentation and proposed descriptive metadata for 3 case study collections.

Outreach and Dissemination

Through the professional development goals of the residency, I was able to attend a significant number of public events and present/share information about my residency and its related research. The opportunities to connect with professionals in the information science field was one of the most beneficial components of the residency. As mentioned in the goals section, I had the opportunity to plan and coordinate the *Digital Futures* event at The Art Institute of Chicago, where I connected and shared information about NDSR with more than 60+ cultural heritage professionals.

Also, through my work with Chicago Collections Consortium and Digital POWRR, I was also able to plan and conduct a 3-hour training for 20 Chicago professionals on digital preservation and knowledge I gained through my residency activities:

- Digital Preservation 101: Intro to Digital Preservation with Restricted Resources Workshop, Chicago Collections Consortium Member Training
    - April 29, 2019
    - Workshop Structure: A quick crash-course in digital preservation issues facing cultural heritage organizations. After attending, participants will:
        - Be able to make more informed decisions about digital preservation tools and services based on their organization's resources
        - Become familiar with strategies for educating themselves, their stakeholders, and their funders regarding the importance and need for digital preservation
        - Have had the opportunity to troubleshoot current challenges at their organizations in a collaborative, supportive environment.

Public events participated in and/or presented at:

- Preservica User Group Meeting at the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Annual Conference - Washington, D.C. (August 2018)
- iPres – Harvard University - Boston, MA (September 2018)
- Henry Steward DAMS Conference – Chicago, IL (September 2018)
- ARLIS Midstates Chapter Meeting – Indianapolis, IN (October 2018)
- Advancing Art Libraries and Curated Web Archives - SFMOMA - San Francisco, CA (February 2019)
- DPLA Fest - Chicago, IL (March 2019)

- ARLIS/NA Annual Conference - Salt Lake City, UT (March 2019)
- CODE4Lib Chicago - Chicago, IL (May 2019)
- The Art of Digital Stewardship: Content, Context, and Structure - Maryland Institute College of Art - Baltimore, MD (June 2019)

Conclusion & Next Steps

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The overall structure and opportunities provided by the NDSR residency model contributed significantly to my professional development. The residency provided numerous opportunities to connect with professionals and attend trainings and conferences throughout the country. The residency also had enough flexibility built into it to allow me to tailor some of my development and project goals to my specific interests, background, and skill level - which was very useful. The majority of the project's goals were met over the 12-month period, again within a model that provided flexibility and the opportunity to modify project goals to respond to my skills and research interests, as well as institutional needs. The work begun as part of this residency at The Art Institute of CHicago will be built on by a 2-year Digital Archivist position.

Though there are specific benefits to a nationally distributed cohort (projects can benefit a wider range of institutions and localities), future iterations of the NDSR program model may benefit from a geographically proximate cohort model. This would provide more opportunities for residents to meet in-person, collaborate on events and/or attend trainings together facilitated by host institutions that are in the same city (or within a short enough distance for a day trip).

Appendix A

Online documentation

- Link to ARLIS/NA 2019 conference proceedings and presentation slides for panel presentation, "NDSR Art: Developing Cross-Institutional Digital Preservation Strategies for GLAM Assets": https://arlisna.org/news/conferences/887-2019-47th-annual-conference

- Link to MICA's "The Art of Digital Stewardship: Content, Context, and Structure" conference resources, recordings and my presentation slides: https://inside.mica.edu/ndsr/resources-notes

- Link to "Strategies for Conserving Time-Based Media: An Overview of the Art Institute of Chicago's TBM Initiative" with Kristin MacDonough & Molly Szymanski. (May 8, 2019) https://www.pathlms.com/arlisna/events/614/video_presentations/131588

- Link to NDSR-Art Resident's Blog http://ndsr-pma.arlisna.org/201819-residency/blog-2018-19/

Appendix B

Creating Community Through Digital Futures:

A showcase and unconference for digital preservation

Description:

Are you part of the Chicago-area cultural heritage community working on digital preservation? Would you like to connect with other practitioners to share success stories and brainstorm solutions to challenges? Please join us for an event designed to connect the Chicago cultural heritage community and share successes and challenges—all in a collaborative, supportive environment.

Logistics:

The Art Institute of Chicago

Nichols Board of Trustees Suite, Modern Wing

Thursday, November 1, 2018

9:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Event Agenda:

9:30-10:00am: Registration

10:00-11:00am: Project Showcase, Vol. 1

- "Creating the Studs Terkel Radio Archive website" - Allison Schein Holmes (WFMT & Studs Terkel Radio Archive)
- "An Introduction to Curating Community Digital Collections" - Vicki Tobias (WiLS/Recollection Wisconsin) & Stacey Erdman (Beloit College)
- "Permanent Public Access of Illinois State Documents" - Andrew H. Bullen (Illinois State Library)

11:00-11:20am: Networking Break

11:20am-12pm: Lightning Talks

- "Getting to Level 1: Planning a Basic Preservation Program" - Greer Martin (Illinois Institute of Technology)
- "Reaching Back: How Do We Give to a Community That Doesn't Know Us?" - Kyle Henke (Depaul University)
- "Digital Phoenix: Using 3D Modeling to Recreate Lost Historic Houses" - Emily-Paige Taylor (Loyola University)
- "Nancy Buchanan and Barry Dolins at Media Burn Archive" - Dan Erdman (Media Burn)
- "DIY Within Community: You Don't Have to be a Hero to Save the Day!"- Laurie Lee Moses (Columbia College Chicago, Center for Black Music Research)

12:00-1:00pm: Lunch

1:00-2:00pm: Project Showcase, Vol. 2

- "Digital Dancing: An Online Archive from the Ground Up" - Jenai Cutcher and Daina Coffe (Chicago Dance History Project)
- "Acquiring Born-Digital Archives: Strategies for Implementing Scalable Digital Forensics Applications and Practices" - Kelsey O'Connell (Northwestern University)

"CollectiveAccess 101" - Mel Leverich (Leather Archives & Museum), Brian Belak (Chicago Film Archives), Margaret Fraser and Jeremy Bucher (National Hellenic Museum)

2:00-3:00pm: Collaborative Clinic

Topics include:

Education & Training

Web-based Access Systems

AV Preservation

Metadata