

A background image showing a group of people with their hands raised in a gesture of agreement or support. The image is slightly faded and serves as a backdrop for the text.

# Introducing the Digital Stewardship Appraisal Framework

Nathan Tallman, Lauren Work, Martha Anderson, Chelsea Denault, & Virginia Dressler  
DPC Reappraising Appraisal Webinar  
4 September 2024

<https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/SEZPJ>


Appraisal

5. Hoarding is not digital preservation.

13. The affordances of digital media **prompt a need for digital preservation to be entangled with digital collection development.**

14. Accept and **embrace the archival sliver.**

Trevor Owens, *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*

A close-up photograph of two muscular arms shaking hands. The arm on the left is dark-skinned and wearing a white shirt. The arm on the right is light-skinned and wearing a red t-shirt. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green grass and a blue sky.

Digital stewardship  
appraisal framework

Digital  
preservation

Appraisal  
and selection

# Context

- Pandemic disruption
- Privacy considerations
- Artificial intelligence
- Environmental impact
- Representation and Inclusion

# Evolving Appraisal

# Enhancing Privacy Praxis

## Assessing potentially private information

- Each person brings their own definitions and notions into play that can impact our work and the ways we regard potentially private information.

These implicit biases can impact appraisal work, so how can we overcome such obstacles?

- Develop a culture of collaboration
  - Create checks and balances
  - Remember that this work needs to be on-going and regularly reviewed

“Guide to Protecting the Confidentiality of Personally Identifiable Information (PII)”  
(National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2010) <https://doi.org/10.6028/NIST.SP.800-122>

# Making AI Work for Archives

“Partnering with AI experts to develop tailored solutions, and promoting AI’s ethical use in digital record management.”

# Addressing Environmental Impact

- **Balancing Preservation and Environment:** Memory organizations face challenges in reducing digital content under preservation while fulfilling legal obligations to collect and preserve.
- **Sustainability Framework Example:** Keith Pendergrass's ADAPT tool automates tasks and supports sustainability goals, reducing emissions, resource use, and maintenance needs.
- **Adopting 'Good Practices':** Jen Mitcham advocates for 'good practices' over 'best practices' to balance resource constraints and environmental goals, such as reducing the number of required copies.

# Improving Inclusion

- **Collaborative Approaches**
- **Participatory Appraisal**
- **Addressing Gaps**
- **Trust and Humility**

# Establishing and Building Trust

- **Focus on Relationship Building:** Cultivating trust involves prioritizing relationships between the organization, its users, and the subjects within collections.
- **Aligning Values:** Appraisal criteria should align with both organizational and community values. Misalignment or lack of transparency can damage trust.
- **Transparency in Appraisal:** Clear, publicly available appraisal criteria help stakeholders understand and assess the preservation process, enhancing accountability.
- **Proactive Adaptation:** Archivists should stay informed about societal and technological trends to prevent trust erosion and explore new methods like cryptographic signatures and blockchain (proof-of-stake) for increased transparency and integrity.

# Pathways for Small and Under-resourced Organizations

- **Essential Community Resources:** Community archives and local history museums preserve stories and materials otherwise overlooked by larger institutions
- **Facing Intersecting Barriers:** Sufficient staffing levels, consistent institutional knowledge, limited access to technical training or knowledge of good archival practice, financial limitations, and mental burdens.
- **Meet Users Where They Are:** Adapting tools and language to be more useful and accessible to a range of user skills and abilities
- **Building Capacity:** Appraisal helps organizations prioritize limited institutional resources, be better content stewards, and enhance confidence and empowerment

# Digital Stewardship Appraisal Framework



<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Value (Research Emphasis)

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
<p>Does the material align closely with the collection policy or mission of an institution?</p> <p>Does digital content hold high contextual/content research value for current and potential future users?</p>	<p>Materials that fulfill or respond to curricular needs, add to collection strength, fulfill consortial commitments to a whole body of scholarly materials</p>	<p>Material imperative to the volume and depth of content in areas of institutional distinction may aid with reappraisal over time or movement of general collections to special collections</p>

# Uniqueness

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
Informational content and/or informational context related to a unique institutional scope or mission not available elsewhere? Robust technical, administrative, and/or descriptive metadata to demonstrate authority of content and context for unique material? Is the content unique for its colocation or its subject?	New research developments in a field, a new publication methods and formats, local institutional research, and scholarship preservation commitments	Unique digital material in either/both content and context (e.g., author manuscripts on the original laptop), one-of-a-kind systems or processes (e.g., born-digital works of art), the sole repository for digital material by legal agreement

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Cost and Investment

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
<p>What is the cost of local server storage and maintenance, as well as costs for commercial or distributed digital preservation?</p> <p>What is the cost of carbon offsets or using renewable energy sources to reduce environmental impact?</p> <p>What are the costs of maintenance, the expected cost of migration over time, and the costs of developing and deploying services for preservation, discovery, and access?</p> <p>Costs, including invested labor, to replace, reprocess, or to re-digitize analog materials?</p>	<p>What are the costs of replacing purchased or licensed materials (including digitized materials), the costs to the researcher/user for potential delays/interlibrary loan, and the lack of immediate access to journal articles?</p> <p><a href="https://bit.ly/2024dsaf">https://bit.ly/2024dsaf</a></p>	<p>Political or administrative costs are associated with the complete loss of digital content from donors or institutions, costs of subscription services to allow for the technical collection of digital content and costs for born-digital ingest storage and access to unique materials.</p>

# Legal and Fiduciary

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
Is the institution required, by law or consortial agreement, to preserve particular digital materials over time? Are you permitted to preserve compressed derivatives instead of full-fidelity originals?	Government documents, data related to federal grants, and journals.	University archives and/or operational records of an organization.

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Representation and Agency\*

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
<p>Does this content advance the historical record of underrepresented people? What control did the creator or subject(s) have over the content? Does the material provide evidence that could be used for environmental justice? Does the selector making this appraisal decision have the appropriate knowledge and lived experiences to make an informed decision?</p>	<p>Authorized and unauthorized biographies of people from underrepresented communities.</p>	<p>Creator and subject demographics compared to the majority of collections. Historic case files (social welfare, medical, penal). Student organization records.</p>

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Preservability\*

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
<p>How difficult will it be to preserve the content? Does it comprise preservation-ready formats? Is it an unknown new technology? Is the scale of the content manageable, or does it present a significant environmental impact? Do you possess the legal rights to preserve the content? Does the content include sensitive data?</p>	<p>In-house digitized content using open standards vs DRM-protected ebooks, having the content gathered vs having to collect it from disparate places, redaction of Social Security Numbers from old yearbooks, compression algorithms.</p>	<p>Digital humanities projects using developing web technology, proprietary file formats without an open alternative, and data residing in obsolete media formats.</p>

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Provenance and Authenticity\*

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
Is there sufficient information to demonstrate provenance, custodial history, and authenticity? Is there user or system documentation of creation, formats, and current working environments? Donor or licensed metadata available in machine-readable format?	Availability of acquisition documentation and sufficient metadata to describe content for its user community.	Existence of pre-donation checksums, structured rights metadata, deeds of gift, and verifiable cryptographic signatures from the creator.

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Computational Readiness\*

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
Does the collection already include machine-readable data? Can content-based appraisal tools run on the collection to aid in decision-making?	Tabular or structured data purchased from a vendor, pre-processed literature for digital humanities.	Born-digital tabular or structured datasets, textual formats, data from laboratory equipment.

<https://bit.ly/2024dsaf>

# Restrictions (may be used to decide against selection)

<b>Example parameters for all collection types</b>	<b>General Collections examples</b>	<b>Special Collections examples</b>
Are there rights or access restrictions on the digital content that will require periods without access? Are rights unknown or unclear? If rights are known, is it understood how access and preservation actions will reflect them?	Availability of rights information for licensed or previously purchased materials.	Donor or institutional rights transfer, embargoes on access to content, state records laws.

# Bibliography

A bibliography for this presentation and the paper it is based on is available at <https://bit.ly/2024dsafbib>.

And look for our forthcoming paper in late 2024 or early 2025!

# Questions, Comments, Concerns, and Feedback

