Having the talk: Engaging your donors in the digital preservation conversation

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Who should care?

How to talk about digital preservation

Ideas for reaching your donors
DP outreach at the SLNC
Our purpose: To inform about . . .

- **Best practices** for preserving digital publications for long-term access
- Digital object **life cycle** (preservation begins at **creation**)
Audience

- **Ours:** state government employees who create or publish state documents
- **Yours:** patrons, donors, and fellow librarians who create and contribute their digital content to you
- **Others?**
Who should care?

Seriously, do I look like someone who cares?
★ Everyone creating digital content
★ Everyone distributing digital content
★ Everyone using digital content
★ Everyone in archives, libraries, museums responsible for managing digital content now or expecting to in the near future
★ Everyone responsible for administering one of these three institutions
It's our job to educate them
And maybe, set them at ease
Start with the forest, not the trees
Identify

★ How much do you have? (Scope)
★ Develop a high-level inventory of your digital content
Make a list of your digital collections
Select (aka, appraise, acquire)

- What are you, or your organization, responsible for?
- Consider collection development policies, uniqueness, research/monetary value, retention schedules
- Prioritize most significant, extensive, requested, familiar, important, etc.
- Assess technical requirements
Start small and choose low hanging fruit
Store

- Decisions driven by...
  - Immediate costs (quantity, number of copies, media)
  - Available resources (expertise, services, partners)
  - Institutional constraints (legal restrictions, retention policies)
Storage is not just about the technology
Protect

★ Manage your risks!
★ Control **access**, **confidentiality**
★ Ensure “**fixity**”
★ Plan for **emergencies**
★ Be aware of **obsolescence**
★ Follow **standards**
Protect against . . .

- Institutional support
- Human intervention
- File corruption
- Computer failure

Title: 
Author: 
Subject: 
Checksum: 
Resolution:

- Misplaced metadata
- Natural disaster
- File format obsolescence
Manage

- Program planning
- Policy development
- Sustainable funding and staffing
- Administrative, organizational support
- Legal issues
- Training and education
Management requires a holistic approach
Provide content over time:

- **Easily** (use known technologies)
- **Coherently** (document)
- **Completely** (intact and well-formed)
- **Accurately** (represent the original)
- **Reliably** (manage technologies well)
- **Consistently** (use and follow policies)
- **Fairly** (equal access, heed rights & laws)
Long-term access is the goal
Reaching out to potential donors
People may be afraid. It’s

★ too complex (I don’t understand...)

★ too daunting (I don’t have time...)

★ too technical, etc. (computers scare me...)

People may be **unaware**.

- Oh, I didn’t realize...
- What can I do?
- Should I do something?
- Where do I start?
- Doesn’t someone else do that for me?
- Go to them
- Know what you want
- Explain why they should donate it
- Decide now what you won’t accept
Go to them
★ Academic libraries: departmental meetings, faculty retreats, faculty senate, alumni meetings . . .

★ Public libraries: historical societies, DAR, SCV, DCV, NAACP meetings, church clubs, nursing homes . . .
Know what you want
- Digital photographs, family newsletters, personal research, departmental records, email.
- Don’t ask for everything
Explain why they should donate it
● Local history
● Organizational history
● It’s the law
Explain how to donate
- Inventory
  - How many files, when were they created, what do they contain, why are they important?
- Standard file formats
Decide now what you won’t accept
- **Formats:** 10-inch floppies, Zip disks, FORTRAN programs
- **Content:** Family pets, personal data
- **Condition:** Fragile, broken, dirty
- **State of documentation:** None, some, a lot
Now go have that talk