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Digitising for preservation – the past informs the future

*Dr Louise Curham, lecturer
School of Information & Communication Studies*

My name is Louise Curham, I'm joining you from Ngunawal Country in Canberra, Australia. I want to briefly acknowledge First Nations people with us today and pay my respects to elders in our community, past, present and emerging.

The context

Covid 19=digitised cultural heritage

Digital maturity=refined processes

Original drivers:

On the accountability side=business improvement

On the cultural heritage side=access and relevance

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Digitisation has had an uplift from COVID-19.

Reviewing literature to teach students about collections it's striking that one of the consequences of Covid well documented in both digital preservation and collections literature is that cultural institutions have come to be seen as both physical sanctuaries and vital for providing access to digital resources examples of this include the British the British library and the Tate which both prioritised digitisation during lockdowns in the UK.

John will talk us through how his workflow applies current technology has evolved and the workflows have become better understood and us simplified or refined might be a better word.

The potential of digitisation has excited the twin missions of records and archives both the accountability side where the potential to realise assets in digital form has brought about digital transformation efforts over the last 20 years with increasingly excited and exciting titles.

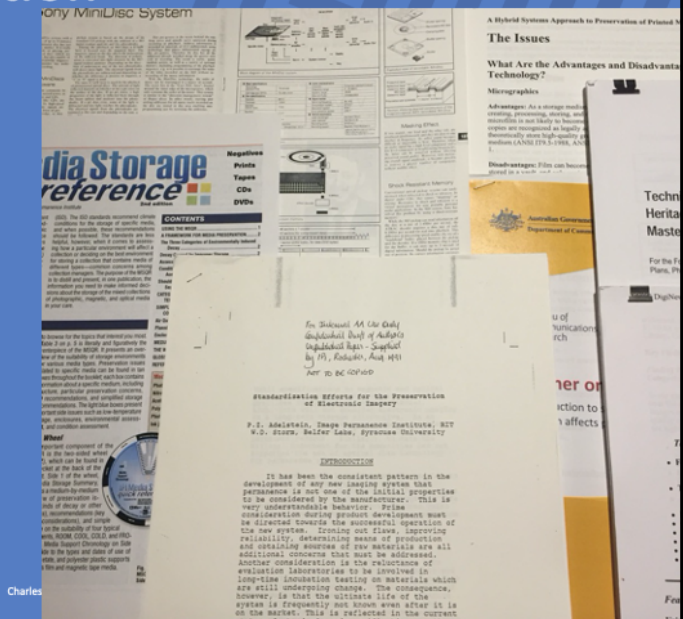
On the other side of the records and archives mission the heritage function cultural institutions have likewise seen their mission and embrace the potential of digitisation initially primarily for access. This also brings up the question of the life expectancy of these digital

objects. Definitions have differed from 'as long as needed', 500 years, forever.

Preservation digitisation infrastructure

Reformatting standards

Storage standards



A feature of digitisation has been its emphasis on standards both for reformatting what the digital object will consist of and how it will be stored. The two go together.

Both standards have evolved with our understanding of digital objects. This is worth digging into in more detail [see Making a digital object].

Making a digital object from an analogue original

Non trivial

Applying standards involves making decisions

Need to make the context as well as the object

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In some instances making the digital object from the analog seems straightforward we can see how we can replicate the full scope file in front of us as digital components linked together through our information management system context in bed in much the same way as the paper file and other words we can transfer our paper minds into the digital domain there are other instances where it becomes far more complex because there are certain understandings we clean from the paper files that can't be cleaned easily from the digital surrogate sometimes we won't have the luxury of returning again to those originals so we then ask ourselves questions like exactly what do we need to transfer all of the available knowledge that this paper file can contain patients to digitize post-it notes attached to pages to ensure marginalia things written in the margins and pencils are legible all of this takes time and the answer is always going to be it depends this is one of the challenges of the records in archives environment is that most of the time there is no one size fits all solution the other thing we need to understand is that these decisions have a subjective component there are lessons we can learn from the world of cultural heritage here about expressing our decisions in a structured way and insuring those decisions are captured so that in the future evaluations can be made about how accurate or complete the digitization maybe John is gonna talk to you through his thoughts on authenticity and he and I share a view of how absolutely important this

is in preservation digitisation

View from the tertiary sector

Research

Education
& skills

Collaboration

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Research :

A1. Using digital objects immersively

Caves digitisation:

The *Pure Land* projects by Sarah Kenderdine are based on the UNESCO World Heritage site, the Mogao Grottoes, Gansu Province, northwestern China, focused on Cave 220, important for early Tang murals; Dunhuang Academy;

Immersive storytelling:

Story Futures and Story Futures Academy in the UK, next generation immersive tech StoryFutures R&D and training for UK screen industries.

Computer games based on records:

The Conversation Feb 2022, a game based on medieval records: Strange Sickness. historians based the game on collaborative [research](#) into Aberdeen's rich historical archive of medieval [burgh records](#).

A2. Technology encodes values

Tandanya declaration: '3.

RECOGNITION AND

IDENTITY: Collaboration in

description of records ...

politics of knowledge

production acknowledged in

description. 4. RESEARCH AND

ACCESS: .. nature and quality of state-generated information concerning Indigenous peoples influences decisions and policy’.

B. Digital preservation challenges

- new tech eg NFTs
- embedding, refining processes
- reaching new practitioners



Research in preservation digitisation

- Using digital objects immersively
- Technology encodes values

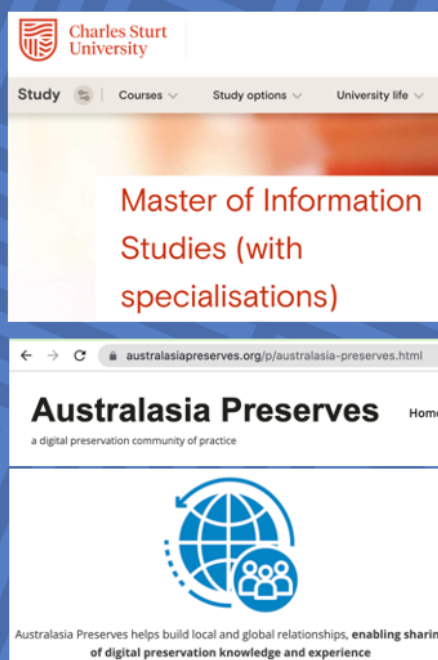
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Education & skills

Digital curation, digitisation, preservation, metadata

Specialisations in information management; records & archives; data management; audiovisual archives



Collaboration

- When everything's digital, do the challenges mean we have more in common?
- Which relationships?
RIMPA, ASA, GLAMR, InfoGovANZ, ACS, AIIA



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Thank you
lcurham@csu.edu.au

My credentials

Collections – photographic collections;
audiovisual collections; small
collections

Government information – records
manager, appraisal project officer,
digital records policy

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It's worth introducing my credentials so that you can better evaluate seriously to take my words consider me a record that must show its authenticity it's accuracy and reliability so what's my provenance?

In collections, I've worked with photographic collections in really early digitisation in 2000. I then joined the National archives and worked in the A/V area as they began their journey working on their A/V collections.

I've also worked with small collections preparing significance assessments under the national library scheme for a couple of small arts organisations.

In government information I've worked as a records manager at the National Maritime Museum, as an appraisal project officer at National archives and in records policy and assistant director roles.

I teach the records, archives and will soon teach digital curation and audiovisual archives.