

# Improving Electronic Records Programs in the SUNY System

## Electronic Records Plan

### **Year One**

#### ***Strategy 1. Stabilize digital content in College/University Archives and Special Collections***

##### **Objective 1. Set-up basic digital processing workstation**

The purpose of this digital processing workstation is to transfer items from unstable legacy media onto standardized storage formats, inventory those files, and establish baseline fixity for the transferred files. A standard desktop computer with a minimum of 4GB RAM and enough storage capacity to manage your collections should be sufficient for this level of initial processing. If your collections contain a wide variety of media and you will be using a number of external disk drives you will want to ensure that your workstation has an adequate number of USB ports.

The specific hardware and software you will use for your transferring files to standardized storage will depend on the legacy storage media identified in your inventory. You may need to obtain:

- 5 ½ Floppy drives
- Floppy disk controller card
- CD/DVD drive
- Memory card reader
- 3 ½ Floppy Drive
- Zip Drive

Your IT department should be able to help you locate and purchase the necessary hardware peripherals.

Your workstation should also have anti-virus software as well as any software you will use to identify file formats, inventory your files as well as establish and check the fixity of your files.

Ideally your workstation is not be connected to your network to ensure that it will not be infected by malware. However, backup requirements, software updates and transfer

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procedures may require a network connection. You will need to weigh the risks and benefits of network connectivity for your workstation.

### **Objective 2. Inventory materials**

As you move files from unstable legacy media onto some form of standardized storage media you should produce an inventory of the files. This inventory can be integrated into your finding aids or stored with the files in your storage system.

### **Objective 3. Create and distribute multiple copies of content**

You should create a minimum of two copies of your digital materials and store them in separate locations. Consider partnering with another repository in a different part of the State to store copies of your collections. Distributing multiple copies helps prevent loss of your materials due to natural or man-made disasters.

### **Objective 4. Establish fixity**

Establish the fixity of your files by creating checksums for each file or verifying checksums if they exist. Fixity information verifies that the files you are storing have not been altered.

## *Strategy 2. Convene electronic records preservation committee*

### **Objective 1. Establish committee membership**

Successful digital preservation programs require the expertise of archivists, records managers, information technology personnel and administrators. A committee containing representatives from these and other campus departments whose work depends on preserving digital materials should guide the development and implementation of your program.

### **Objective 2. Draft committee charge**

The committee's charge documents the committee's authority to make decisions regarding the collection, management and preservation of digital materials. It is likely the College/University archivist has the authority to collect and preserve historical

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documentation regardless of format. Document this authority and any other authorizations to manage digital materials in a written statement. If no specific mandate exists, obtain one from the College/University administration.

### **Objective 3. Advocate for digital preservation and gain administrative support for program**

Advocacy involves educating administrators about the challenges of preserving digital materials, highlighting successful or innovative projects you are working on or requesting additional funds or staff to support your digital preservation efforts. Enlisting the support of your College/University executives and administrators enhances your ability to successfully develop your digital preservation program. The digital preservation problems, recommended solutions and required resources identified in the Needs Assessment provide a concise statement of the issues surrounding digital preservation on your campus and can be used to advocate for advancing your digital preservation program.

### *Strategy 3. Establish Program Foundations*

#### **Objective 1. Draft mission statement for digital preservation program**

A well written mission statement defines your organization's aims for preserving, and providing access to the digital records in your custody. Your digital preservation program is likely part of your archives and special collections department with its own mission statement, and you can integrate digital preservation into it or draft a unique mission statement for your digital preservation program.

#### **Objective 2. Draft succession plan for digital preservation program.**

If at some point your digital preservation program loses funding or is unable to continue caring for the digital materials in your custody you will need a plan for who will assume custody of your digital materials and how the transfer will take place. The written plan requires regular updates to reflect organizational and technological changes.

#### **Objective 3. Adopt Budget**

An established budget for digital preservation is essential to your preservation programs success. You may include digital preservation expenses as an item in you

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archives, library, or records management or information technology budget but specific funds should be set aside for your program.

### **Objective 4. Set Staffing Plan**

Clearly define staff roles and identify gaps that will need to be filled.

### **Objective 5. Establish training plan**

Staff will need to acquire new skills and follow developments in the field of digital preservation. Staff will need to seek out workshops (in person and online), attend conferences, and follow online resources to continue their professional development.

## **Year Two**

### *Strategy 1. Implement Repository*

#### **Objective 1. Select, Install and test repository software and hardware.**

Based on the recommendations in the needs assessment Information Technology staff will install the software necessary to preserve the college or university's archival digital materials. After installation they will work with the archivist to test the software and ensure it is functioning properly.

#### **Objective 2. Develop processing and preservation workflows and procedures**

Once you have your repository software installed and functioning you will need to develop policies and procedures for how you will use it. As you develop these procedures and test them use sample files that reflect the types of materials identified in your inventory instead of permanent records you intend to preserve.

##### **2.1 Integrate with recordkeeping systems**

Determine how your repository will integrate with the recordkeeping systems identified in the recordkeeping systems inventory. Consider how you will export files and any associated metadata from the recordkeeping system and ingest them into your repository. Determine if this process can be automated.

##### **2.2 Define acceptable transfer media**

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You will need to clearly define what physical media records creators can use to transfer electronic records to the archives. Consider what types of media records-creators are comfortable working with, what media you can easily read and the ability of the media to hold an adequate volume of records.

### **2.3 Establish accepted file formats**

Using the recommendations in the Storage Criteria define your preferred preservation file formats. Ideally you will have the opportunity to work with records creators to encourage them to use more stable open formats when creating records. Of course not all records you acquire for preservation will be in these preferred formats but encouraging creators to transfer files in preferred formats will streamline processing.

### **2.4 Draft transfer documentation**

Determine what information is required to appropriately document a transfer of electronic materials and develop forms to collect that information from records creators.

### **2.5 Create ingest procedures**

Having received a transfer of electronic materials you need to outline how those materials will be added to your repository. Will you quarantine materials for a defined period while you run virus checks? What tools will you use to move files from transfer media to your processing workstation? Who will be able to acquire transferred materials and add them to your repository?

### **2.6 Set storage procedures (including back-up routines).**

Implement storage recommendations from Needs Assessment.

### **2.7 Define Minimum Metadata Requirements**

Describe what metadata standards you will employ as part of preserving your digital holdings and how you will implement those standards. Use the recommendations in the Storage Criteria and your Needs Assessment to guide your metadata choices.

### **2.8 Establish Access Procedures**

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Determine who will have access to what records, how they will access them, and what actions they will be able to perform on your digital holdings. Plan for providing access to researchers and other users of your holdings.

### Year Three

#### *Strategy 1. Document Processing and Preservation Workflows and Procedures*

##### **Objective 1. Draft user guides and manual for digital repository.**

Having deployed your repository software and worked out your processing workflows you will need to document your decisions in written procedures. Written procedures will help train new users and ensure that your digital holdings are consistently processed and preserved. Consider drafting user guides documenting transfer procedures for records creators to use when preparing digital materials for transfer.

#### *Strategy 2. Write Digital Preservation Policy*

Your digital preservation policy is the foundation of your digital preservation program. It is a high level policy connecting your digital preservation program to your collecting policy, mission statement, strategic plan and will guide your efforts to collect, preserve and make available born-digital collections.

##### **Objective 1. Define purpose of digital preservation and how it relates to repository's mission.**

Align your digital preservation with your repository's mission.

##### **Objective 2. Establish mandate or define legal authority to collect and preserve digital materials.**

Your digital preservation policy should cite the source of your authority to collect and preserve permanent digital materials. This authority can be a legal or administrative authority.

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### **Objective 3. Define the community served by your digital preservation program.**

The community served by your digital repository may include a mixture of donors, researchers, college or university staff, a geographic, ethnic and social community, students and alumni. Outline how each of these communities influences what services you provide and how your repository functions.

### **Objective 4. Set digital preservation program objectives.**

Define what you hope to accomplish with your preservation program.

### **Objective 5. Define scope of preservation program.**

Define what you intend to preserve in your digital repository. This may include institutional records, manuscript materials, local organizational records, websites, or research data. The scope of your preservation efforts should align with your collecting policy.

### **Objective 6. Finalize staff roles and responsibilities**

Effective digital preservation requires the participation of staff from multiple departments and your digital preservation policy should clearly delineate who will be responsible for what aspects of your preservation program.

### **Objective 7. Establish access conditions**

Outline who will have access to what materials in your digital repository, how they will access those materials, and in what formats.

### **Objective 8. Set time frame for policy review and revision**

Your digital preservation policy will need to be reviewed and revised regularly (approximately every 3-5 years) to reflect changes in technology, staffing, and in your organization. Establish a regular schedule for such reviews, outline a process for reviewing and revising the policies and specify who will be involved in the review process.