Bringing Transparency and Permeability to Organizational Silos

Improving Workflow and Culture

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**Abstract – The Ohio State University Libraries established the Digital Preservation and Access Workgroup (DP&A) [1] in early 2020 to guide the University Libraries' policies, strategies and tactics for managing, preserving and providing access to its digital collections. It brings together key individuals from across the organization to ensure that information sharing and best practices are reflected throughout the organization. The DP&A’s initial charge was to identify our existing workflows that affect born digital acquisitions and processing, digitization, providing access to digital materials and the preservation thereof. This effort is to aid in answering the question, “What are the intersections, gaps, redundancies and areas for improvement?” This poster will demonstrate the progress we have made on this project, spotlighting the process analysis and improvement techniques we have brought to bear, along with our initial recommendations for workflow and organizational improvement.**

**Keywords – Digital Preservation, Digitization, Institutional Prioritization, Process Improvement, Workflow Analysis**

**Conference Topics – Innovation; Resilience.**

# Introduction

At the beginning of 2020, a group of librarians and curators proposed the creation of a workgroup to provide a cross-functional, consistent approach to managing The Ohio State University Libraries’ (University Libraries) born digital acquisitions and digitized materials.

Various University Libraries’ workgroups have come together over the past decade investigating issues pertinent to its digital content with success in developing guidance, while other groups’ efforts have not necessarily seen the light of day. Further, there is confusion at times as where to find definitive University Libraries’ information regarding digitizing materials, accessioning born digital materials, and where it will preserve and provide access to these materials.

One of the goals of this workgroup, Digital Preservation & Access—or DP&A—is to provide a single point of access to find, discover and manage this institutional knowledge. Further, the DP&A, intends to investigate and develop the means by which it can provide transparency in decision-making for determining priorities, guidelines and standards that the Libraries adopts in these areas.

The initial charge from the sponsoring Associate Deans, meant to eventually achieve these loftier goals, is something much more basic, was to identify the University Libraries’ existing workflows that affect born digital acquisitions and processing, digitization, arrangement and description, providing access to digital materials and the preservation thereof. Answering the questions:

“What are the intersections, gaps, redundancies and areas for improvement?”

“How do we approach improving workflow when under-resourced—fiscal and human?

This poster provides a case study of the work completed thus far by the DP&A from data collection to the development of documented, visualized workflows to the initial set of recommendation for process and organizational improvement. It will not only spotlight the innovative use of business process analysis tools that were utilized, but how University Libraries, due to constraints imposed by the pandemic, had to resiliently adapt them to conduct the work in a virtual environment. Further, it will highlight the “A-ha” moments we discovered along the way, and provide an adaptable roadmap for other institutions/organizations large and small to employee in conducting their own analysis.

# Techniques

University Libraries, through the DP&A, has engaged in utilizing five techniques—SIPOC, RACI, Brainwriting, Workflow Visualization and Change Management—to help it analyze, visualize and understand the workflows processes they engage in. These workflows encompass the acquisition of born digital materials, the digitization of existing materials, the arrangement, description and processing of those material, along with preserving and providing access to them. These techniques come from the realm of business process improvement, with roots in Total Quality Management that continue to be used in Lean and Six Sigma programs.

## SIPOC

The SIPOC exercise provides for a very high-level view of our workflows or processes. The steps in a workflow are aggregated up to a level of abstraction—a minimum of four and a maximum of seven process steps—that still allows us to understand suppliers (S) of inputs (I) that are transformed through the processes steps (P) into outputs (O) for customers (C). The intent is to ensure that all processes are represented.

## RACI

Following up on the SIPOC, each group was asked to conduct a RACI to determine for each step within a process who is responsible (R), accountable (A), consulted (C) or needs to be informed (I).

## Brainwriting

Finally, we engaged in brainwriting to further tease out the granularities of the steps identified within the SIPOCs.

## Workflow Visualization

Utilizing the workflow visualization software, we have created graphic workflow representations based upon the detail generated during brainwriting and verified against the SIPOC and RACI.

## Change Management

We have initially employed a change management rubric in addressing one of the five initial recommendations to help us determine how to prioritize the efforts in our workflows. The rubric challenges the group to create a Problem Statement; describe the Current State and envision a Future State; Define the desired Change; what Benefits the change will provide; what the new Process is, how it will be implemented and work; and how we will Measure Progress.

# Results Thus Far

We believe the tools and the approaches we have brought to analyze these issues are implementable in institutions large and small, with a low technological barrier. We utilized typical office productivity software and shareware applications.

We have successfully visualized twenty-five workflows, and had considered an additional thirteen that were either out of scope, not yet developed or currently suspended. We developed an initial set of recommendations based upon five key gaps and implications of those gaps: process, prioritization, process management, resources and documentation. Each of these gaps includes several actionable factors that we have categorized into two buckets: immediate impact and long-term impact.

Our ongoing more granular analysis of the visualized workflows is looking to identify not only gaps, but intersections and commonalities and their alignment within the workflows. Further, we are attempting to apply a lens of Total Cost of Stewardship [2] as we consider capacity and equitable distribution of the workload. Our efforts are not directed at dismantling silos—they do have their functional purposes. However, we want to make those silos more transparent and permeable, exposing the work we do, creating a more inviting environment for teamwork and collaboration.

# REFERENCES

1. Digital Preservation & Access Workgroup’s Wiki, <http://go.osu.edu/libraries-dpa>
2. Total Cost of Stewardship: Responsible Collection Building in Archives and Special Collections, OCLC. <https://www.oclc.org/research/publications/2021/oclcresearch-total-cost-of-stewardship-tools-suite.html>