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SI 675 Digitization for Preservation

Week 1 - Definitions and Issues
Today’s Outline

Outline

- Preservation and Digitization
- Theoretical issues
- Why not just do it?
- Course logistics

“… the ability to define the essential characteristics of originals at a very high level allows us to determine whether the digital copy could truly ‘stand in’ for the original.”  Puglia/Rhodes (2007)
Digitization and Preservation

1 Outline
2 Digitization and preservation
3 Theory
4 Just do it?
5 Logistics

Is digitization a preservation strategy? DISCUSS
- ARL’s policy perspective
- Puglia & Rhodes’ review

Pros and Cons
- Challenges from various perspectives (technical, administrative, conceptual, etc.)
ARL Policy Statement

1 Outline
2 Digitization and preservation
3 Theory
4 Just do it?
5 Logistics

- Is digital reformatting copying?
- Consensus on best practices
- Progress on metadata
- Lots of action at various levels
- ARL will act as catalyst

“The time has come to adopt digitization as a reformatting strategy for preservation.”

ARL, June 2004
Challenges and Issues

What are essential characteristics?
- Relatively low bar
- Fixed approaches
- Device independence
- Relationship to preservation

“It is a little humbling to look back and admit that we are still asking many of the same difficult questions that we were asking over a decade ago.” — Puglia/Rhodes (2007)
Sources -- Technology -- Purpose

Source Characteristics
- Condition
- Visual complexity
- Size
- Format

Technology Capabilities
- Engineering rigor
- Sensory quality
- Software support
- Processing speed

Product Uses
- Protect
- Represent
- Transcend

These relationships define quality, cost, and usefulness.

[Conway 2000]
Perspectives on Products

[Image of a diagram showing institutional and user perspective and original resource perspective, with less assessment, fewer uses, and highest risk to more assessment, most uses, and lowest risk for not achieving preservation goals.]

[Puglia & Rhodes 2007]
Perspectives on Transformation

1. Copying
   ▶ Contrast with photocopying and microfilm

2. Faithful reproduction
   ▶ Quality and integrity

3. Representation
   ▶ New media communication

“The trick ... is to produce a new artifact which preserves those features of the original that are essential to the purposes for which the copy is being made.”

[Levy 1998]
Representation

“...representation is always of something or someone, by something or someone, to someone.”

- Intentionality [camera | scanner]
- Processes [darkroom | Photoshop]
- Materiality [content | artifact]

[Derived and adapted from: W.J.T. Mitchell 1990]
Materiality and Meaning

- Some meanings not translated into digital form [Koltun 1999]
- Formerly joined – materiality and meaning now result in ‘ephemeral ghost’ [Sassoon 2004]
- Photography and digitization share the “illusion of transparency and neutrality” [Schwartz 2000]
- “Original” is fiction: surrogate may be superior [Mitchell 2003]
- User behavior and experience are now key defining principles [Cameron 2007]
Remediation and Re-presentation

“Our culture wants both to multiply its media and erase all traces of mediation...” [Bolter & Grusin 1996]

- Transparency is goal
- Hypermediacy: presence of old in new gives a sense of multiplicity
- Technologies of rendering (making visible) are tools for mediating mediation

“The materiality of the digital acts as a testimony to its own history and origin, and hence authenticity.” [Cameron 2007]
Archival Properties

- Continuum of archival values added
  - Derived from source [significant properties]
  - Embedded through processes [recordness]
  - Validated by use [substitution]

- At what point does the digitized become an archive?
  - Archivisation [Nesmith 2002]
  - Provenance [Cook 2001]
  - Integrity [Duranti 1995]
What is Preservation?

Preservation is the creation of digital products worth maintaining over time.

Values
- Transcendence
- Transparency
- Persistence
- Context

[Visual Telegraph, London to Deal, 1794]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Murray_Shutter_Telegraph_1795.png
Why Not Just Do It?

- Smith, *Why Digitize?*
  - “Much is gained by digitizing, but permanence and authenticity, at this juncture of technological development, are not among those gains.”
- Migration is a change process
- Tampering is too easy and not detectible
Erway/Schaffner

“We must stop our slavish devotion to detail; the perfect has become the enemy of the possible.” (p. 6)

- Access wins
- Selection is done
- Iterative processes
- Programs not projects
- Describe chunks
- Quantity over quality
- Widen discovery
- Creative fund raising
Course Concepts

1. Issues at stake with digitization
2. Imaging guidelines
3. Scanning parameters
4. Text digitization (OCR/Markup)
5. Color management
6. Project management
7. Metadata for images
Course Logistics

1 Outline
2 Digitization and preservation
3 Theory
4 Just do it?
5 Logistics

- First assignment
- Other assignments & grading
- Field trip to DCU at UM
References (1)

References (2)

Thank you!

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