Archival Collections in the Digital Age

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by

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On my honor as a University student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this assignment as defined by the Honor Guidelines for Thesis-Related Assignments.

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Archival Collections in the Digital Age

"As we all know, we are rapidly moving from an analog to a digital age. As a consequence, many of our long-held beliefs and practices are being challenged as we confront new media and new ways of fulfilling our responsibilities" (Trinkaus-Randall, 2013). Libraries, archives, and museums have been the hallmark of knowledge and learning in almost every civilization for centuries. However, the internet has posed a threat to these institutions. Many now flock to the internet for information, despite the higher risk of misinformation. According to the Horrigan (2015), overall library use has been on the decline from 2012 to 2015. With misinformation more widespread than ever, how are library systems encouraging the use of their collections and archival data? Libraries and archival institutions are investing in digital resources and are encouraging the public both online and within their buildings to visit. The institutions themselves, organizations like the American Library Association (ALA) and government bodies like the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) have all been major forces in this phenomenon.

Review of Research

Digitization has been a popular method for archives and libraries. Greene and Meissner (2005) introduces the "More Product, Less Process" method of archival digitization for more efficient digitization. Nelson (2009) found that online archives stay empty or store only miniscule fragments of the archive's whole collection because institutions don't put their data in

"formats that make them easily searchable and retrievable" or they "still don't archive their data."

Archives can face some legal hurdles when digitizing. Astle and Muir (2002) studied the risk of copyright infringement on digitization. An Independent Study Group sponsored by the United States Copyright Office and the Library of Congress convened to review and suggest exceptions of digital archives in the Copyright Act (Rasenberger & Weston, 2008).

For libraries to attract users, they must understand how people value and use them. Malapela and De Jager (2018) discuss two measures of a library's value: economic value and social impact. Kim (2017) found that higher education students use libraries for both learning and socializing.

Cable networks are also competing with the internet. Mahanti (2014) mentions that YouTube has around "1 billion unique users visiting the service each month," and major television networks have noticed. They are offering online video services through a "catch-up" television model, and these services' consumption figures are "rivaling those of traditional television viewership."

Digital Resources

As the saying goes, "if you can't beat them, join them." Libraries and archival institutions are promoting their collections by going digital themselves. Recently they have focused on digitizing archival records and fighting for improved accessibility to ebooks.

Digitizing Archival Records

In an ideal world, every archival material will be digitized quickly. However, funds, the fragility of certain materials, and the desires of donors, investors, and their audience will limit

what can be digitized. Therefore, these institutions must prioritize which collections will best suit their goals. For example, the American Foundation for the Blind (AFB) digitized over 80,000 items in their Helen Keller Collection. They are aware that her "iconic name is known in every corner of the globe," and that by "harnessing the power" of this collection, they can "inspire educators, employers, and the public to see beyond a person's disabilities to a more equitable society" (AFB, 2018). The American Antiquarian Society (AAS) digitized letters written by Abigail Adams as part of a social media campaign to get "the word out about its collections and programs" (AAS, 2019). The Digital Archeological Archive of Comparative Slavery (DAACS) chose to "catalog, digitize, and make accessible to diverse stakeholders collections from four of the earliest and most significant 17th-century archaeological sites" to "allow students, descendant communities and the general public" access to these important sites (Monticello, 2018).

Libraries, archives, and museums receive most of their federal funds from the IMLS under the Library Services and Technology Act (ALA, 2019). From 2011 to 2016, approximately 36 percent of project grants given from IMLS had a were to improve information access (IMLS, 2017). They also receive funds through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). The NEH funds with grants through the Division of Preservation and Access (Wurl, 2014). State grants are also available to libraries and archives. Illinois State Library awards Illinois History-Digital Imaging grants to those who "carry out projects involving the selection, digital capture and storage of important historical and cultural collections" (French, 2018). The California State Library helped fund the Hoji Shinbun Digital Collection through the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program, which is a "state-funded grant project of the California State Library" (California State Library, n.d.). Outside of the United States government, there are grants from organizations and non-profits. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation aims to "strengthen, promote,

and defend the centrality of the humanities and the arts to human flourishing and to the wellbeing of diverse, fair, and democratic societies" through supporting higher education and cultural institutions. They have funded projects like the Council on Library and Information Resources' Digital Library of the Middle East (Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2019).

Digital Books

Publishing companies have recently been limiting access to ebooks. Macmillan Publishers is implementing a new ebook lending model. It gives only one copy of an ebook to each library system upon the ebook's publication. Libraries cannot purchase additional copies until eight weeks after publication. This model is a response to falling revenue from ebook reads, which is "well under two dollars and dropping, a small fraction of the revenue" that Macmillan shares with Macmillan authors, illustrators, and agents on a retail read, as 45% of Macmillan's ebook reads are free from libraries (Sargent, 2019). Other publishing companies are also changing their ebook lending models, but they are not imposing an embargo. Penguin Random House has switched from a perpetual access model, in which libraries "pay a high price but retain access to the e-book forever," to a meter model with "lower prices on e-books that expire after two years" (Albanese, 2018). Hachette Book Group has made the same switch (Albanese, 2019).

Libraries across the country are fighting these new policies. After the announcement of Macmillan Publishers' new policy, ALA (2019) launched the "eBooks for All" campaign, stating that "restricting access to authors' works through libraries hurts discovery, reading choice, literacy, and the simple love of reading." Many libraries have joined this cause. The RILA (2019), on top of agreeing with ALA's points, states that "Libraries not only pay for books; they market them." They also look to their representatives for help. Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal

(2019) says that after she "heard concerns from libraries in my district and across the country" she understands that "libraries play a key role to address inequality," and to do so effectively "libraries must be able to connect the public with a wide range of digital tools and types of digital content" and asked Macmillan Publishers to answer some of her questions. Some of these questions are "What data did Macmillan Publishers rely on when setting its new policy?" and "What steps will Macmillan Publishers take to ensure fair and equal access for libraries to all of Macmillan's digital content?"

Appealing to the Masses

Along with digitizing their materials, libraries and archival institutions are digitizing themselves. They have established an online presence and continue to improve how they engage with their community.

Websites

While websites have been around for decades now, libraries and archival institutions are reworking their own sites to attract an audience. On the relaunch of a new website for DAACS, Monticello states that a major feature will be "a set of new image-laden object galleries highlighting artifacts, documents, and maps from important archaeological sites" (Monticello, 2013). At the time of writing, three out of the five galleries are artifacts from the homes of U.S. Presidents Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Andrew Jackson (DAACS, 2020). These updates were all to allow "not only archaeologists and historians, but anyone with a web browser, to access archaeological data at a level of detail that many archaeologists do not even have in their own labs" (Monticello, 2013). The Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) gave a "fresh new look" to their online Library and Archives catalog, with an "upgraded integrated library system that proves the same information and access to MNHS collections with many new functions" (MNHS, 2019). Georgia Tech Library launched its own expanded, "mobile-first" site that "features a simplified, user-focused design, a single super search of the books, media, articles, journals and the site itself, 24-hours chat functionality and streamlined access to the world-class expertise and resources of the Georgia Tech Library" (Wright, 2019).

Social Media

To promote their materials and connect with their audience, libraries and archival institutions have established a presence on social media. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) states that, "As we continue to digitize more of our holdings, we have more stories to share. We also want to tell our audiences about the work of our diverse staff and the stories they find." NARA actively contributes to 130 social media accounts on 14 different platforms with the goals of telling great stories, deepening engagement, growing their audience, and cultivating a community of practice (Albrittain et al., 2019). In 2016, NARA held the social media campaign #ElectionCollection in honor of the 2016 presidential election (NARA, 2019). Over 100 institutions participated in the campaign, and posts "reached a combined 64 million users on Twitter and Instagram, with an average weekly reach of 4 million" (Albrittain et al., 2019).

On Facebook, The Topeka & Shawnee County Public Library (Topeka Library) frequently posts "What are you reading?," and those posts have an average of 149 comments (Topeka Library, n.d.). The Topeka Library replies to these comments in promoting their material:

"Topeka Library: What are you reading? *Ally Reif Figgs:* Still trying to get through If Only I Could Tell You. Hard to concentrate the last couple of days.

Topeka Library: Maybe you need something lighter right now. Here's a list of romcoms tscpl.bibliocommons.com/.../1270061467/1605500229" (Topeka Library, 2020).

Encouraging the use of their library:

"Topeka Library: What are you reading?

Cathy Minarik: See You in The Cosmos by Jack Cheng from the juvenile section of the library. Was thinking of buying this book for my grandson, but after a third of the way through I think not.

Topeka Library: Try before you buy is the best way to go!" (Topeka Library, 2017).

Or engaging in a conversation with their audience:

"Topeka Library: What are you reading? Would you recommend it to a friend? *Les Lauber:* 'The Three-Body Problem' by Cixin Liu (translated by Ken Liu). It was recommended to me, and I have just started it. I received quite a strong recommendation to it.

- *Topeka Library:* I'd love to hear what you thought! Ken Liu is a fantastic writer in his own right. I highly recommend his short story collection, The Paper Menagerie.
- *Les Lauber:* I've already requested the second book in this series, 'The Dark Forest.' I was pleased with this book, both as a work of science fiction and as a translated work." (Topeka Library, 2018).

Institutions will also take advantage of popular social media trends and holidays to encourage the use of their archives. AFB (2018) promoted their Helen Keller Archive on International Women's Day with tweeting, "This photo of Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan featured in a 1977 Franklin Mint booklet celebrating 'The 100 Greatest Women in American History.' This is one of the many treasures that can be found in AFB's online Helen Keller Archive. #InternationalWomensDay." NARA (2020) also promoted their own library during Women's History Month: "At a time when few women sat in the editor's chair, Meloney was editor in chief of three major American periodicals. She also had a long friendship with Herbert Hoover, and her correspondence with him is part of the @HooberPresLib."

Redefining the Physical Library

Wireless Internet

Libraries are familiar with how critical the internet is in the digital age. To encourage the use of their facilities and resources, libraries are installing or upgrading their internet services. Drummond School & Community Library reports that "patrons frequently visit the library to use the wireless and internet even after library hours. I frequently see patrons using the wi-fi from their vehicles and youngsters sitting on the bench outside of the library with tablets whether the library is open or not" (MSL, 2016). The California State Library initiated the project "Lighting Up Libraries." They intend to "bring high-speed broadband to all California public libraries" to "meet the unique requirements of over 20 million users." 144 of their 185 public library jurisdictions are connected or connecting to this broadband network (California State Library, 2020).

Having internet isn't free. Some state libraries get discounts on these services through the FCC's program E-Rate, which is administered and funded through the Universal Service Administrative Company (USAC). These discounts can range from 20 to 90 percent (FCC, 2019). For example, libraries in Louisiana "successfully applied for and received commitments of over \$4.1 million in E-rate funding" for the fiscal year 2019-2020 (State Library of Louisiana).

Throughout E-Rate's long history, there have been several cases of fraud. In 2004 the computer company NEC was charged with wire fraud by "inflating bids, agreeing to submit false and fraudulent documents to hide the fact that it planned on installing ineligible items, agreeing to donate 'free' items that it planned to bill E-Rate for, and submitting false and fraudulent

documents to defeat inquiry into the legitimacy of the funding request" (DOJ, 2004). To combat future fraud cases, the USAC started to send Payment Quality Assurance (PQA) notices to their service providers (Funds For Learning, 2014). However, they had originally filed their PQA claims under the False Claims Act (FCA). When taken to court by service providers, the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit ruled that "because there are no federal funds involved in the program, and USAC is not itself a government entity, we agree that the Government does not 'provide[] any portion of' the requested money under the FCA" (Rene-Shupe v. Cisco Systems, Incorporated, et al, 2014). Now, USAC files their PQA claims under the Improper Payments Information Act of 2002 and the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act of 2010 (USAC, 2020).

E-Rate is a subprogram in the greater Universal Service Fund program. While E-Rate itself has its own funding cap, USF as a whole has no cap. The FCC (2019) was considering implementing such a cap to "promote meaningful consideration of spending decisions by the Commission, limit the contribution burden borne by ratepayers, provide regulatory and financial certainty, and promote efficiency, fairness, accountability, and sustainability of the USF programs" (FCC, 2019). This was met with resistance from the library community. In a joint statement, more than 60 parties share the sentiments that "placing an overall gap on the USF puts at risk the comprehensive mission of universal service as Congress intended and articulated it" (Windhausen, 2019). Multiple members of Congress also got involved, stating that "imposing an overall cap on the USF would unnecessarily cut funding to USF programs" and "it is detrimental to the goal of universal service to put the various USF programs in direct competition for USF funds" (Pocan, Axne, Bishop et al., 2019). Congress then added an amendment onto the bill H.R. 3351, which states that none of the funds for the FY2020 "may be used to finalize, implement,

administer, or enforce" the caps as the USF is "an important and effective funding mechanism to ensure that all Americans have access to the broadband services necessary to fully participate in modern life" (164 Cong. Rec. H5130, 2019).

Technology & Collaborative Spaces

As the needs of their community changes, libraries and archives must reorganize their physical space to keep their community engaged. As the Connecticut State Library (2014) puts it, "the traditional view of the library as a warehouse of books has long since been replaced with the library as a community resource where a good collection of library materials is just one of many of its resources. In particular, modern library design seeks to provide more open space for a variety of library activities."

The most popular changes are adding more technology and collaborative spaces. Georgia Tech Library noticed how they've "seen a precipitous decline in Library print book checkouts, while visits to the physical facility and use of the electronic collection have risen substantially." In response to this, "nearly all of the million-volume physical collection" was moved to an off-site facility and their library renovations will bring "spaces and technology for data visualization, high performance computing, multimedia services, collaboration, and iterative design" (Wright, 2019). In Minnesota, the North Regional Library's renovation is bringing "a new enclosed room on the main floor" that features "computers for adults" and four new study rooms (Hennepin County Library, 2019). In Oklahoma City, the Metropolitan Library System is renovating many of its branches. A focus on these renovations is "adding more computers for people to come in and use" (Metropolitan Library, 2019).

Conclusion

Libraries and archives have adapted many times over the centuries, and moving into the digital age has caused another evolution of the library. In a way, these evolutions are a reflection of different movements in society. The move to include more collaborative, open spaces instead of rows of shelves, and digitizing materials could be a signal of the youth's changing learning habits. The introduction of ebooks and audiobooks could be on the same vein as how board game companies are going mobile. The effort these institutions are putting in to making an online presence could be a mirror of the many twenty-somethings and younger desiring to become a social media star. Future research could be done on how subscription databases come into play, or how the rise of Google Scholar has impacted the efforts of libraries and archives. Despite all these changes, libraries and archives have still not lost the core of what they are: a place of learning for everyone in their community. Perhaps that is why these institutions have managed to last as long as they have. Individuals and organizations may change over time, but as long as they remain true to the essence of who they are, they will continue to thrive.

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