

Anne Gilliland, Session Introduction

Curation certainly involves preservation and stewardship components, but when left at that, it is likely to be too institutional and object-focused. Curating digital media and collections surely must have some notion of audience and, in the absence of physical information professionals, to some extent play an interpretive or mediating role in online settings. The papers you are going to hear in this session raise a variety of questions that draw institutional and user perspectives and considerations into the practice and processes of digital curatorship:

Can an online repository with no physical counterpart behave like a bricks and mortar institution? Indeed, what is an institution? Can a digital repository anticipate in advance of development, the needs of users and build collections accordingly?

What happens to use as collections go online? Who are the users? Are they different for physical and online use? What is involved in developing for Designated Communities? Do different communities want different things? How are they using or wanting to use digital materials? How would we know? What metrics and methods do we need? How do we best get feedback from users (individuals and communities)?

What role can users play in creating and annotating content? How does this tie in with notions of trust?

How might archival environments differ from those of museums or libraries? Archives are not just concerned with education, information, entertainment, vicarious curiosity, but are also sites of materials that are central to quests for identity, documentation of rights, institutional accountability, and the validation of the presence and contributions/achievements of communities.

How well do traditional and emerging description and access tools and services address those with different educational levels, disciplinary interests and expertise, languages, and terminology?