



What do Digital Curators Do and What do They Need to Know?

ARL Libraries Perspective

Anne R. Kenney

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Digital Curation

Actions needed to add value to and maintain digital assets over time for current and future generations of users. ~Neil Beagrie

It is irresponsible to create and store digital objects and not to curate them digitally
...Digital curation needs to be embedded in institutional strategies. ~Paul Ayriss



Digital Trends

- Move to e-publishing
- Increase in content creators and purveyors
- New content types
- Users shift to e-access
- Research library response



ARLs Move to E-Content

- Licensed not owned
- Digitization on a mass scale
- Institutional repositories



New Responsibilities for Standard Functions

- Collection development has to worry as much about usability as content
- Preservation has to move from institution-specific efforts to collaborative ones
- Public services has to worry as much about external resources and consumers as internal ones
- Technical services has to consider metadata standards, persistent IDs, rights negotiations, interoperability, and life beyond MARC



New Roles/Responsibilities

- Intellectual property
- Scholarly communication
- Production and Consulting Services
- Business modeling
- Outreach
- Technical infrastructure
- Knowledge management
- E-science



Intellectual Property

- Increasing importance—positions at BYU, Columbia, Cornell, Duke, UNC, Purdue, MIT, UCSD, Texas, and Indiana
- Typically lawyers
- Responsibilities: public awareness, teaching, legislative monitoring, compliance monitoring, support to authors, managing clearance, registrations, permissions, licenses, contracts, and protecting fair use



Scholarly Communication

- Administrative structure
 - Separate entity (PSU)
 - With CD (Alberta, ASU, Berkeley, BC, Cornell, Georgetown, Harvard, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, NCSU, Tx, UC campuses)
 - With IP/Academic Technology (Duke, Columbia)
 - With Special Collections (VT)
- Unclear borders: e-resources, digitization, outreach, publishing, IRs



What Do They Need to Know?

- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- IT and management equally important
- Leadership potential and managerial skills most important

Training Gaps Analysis, Librarians and Library Technicians, Cultural Human Resources Council, Canada



Desired Skill Sets in New Hires—common themes

Not technology centric

Subject expertise

Familiarity with scholarly process by discipline

User and service orientation

Lifecycle and ramifications

Context

Collaboration, communication, continuous learning



Senior library administrator

Certification program defining minimum set of expertise

Knowledge of appropriate standards and procedures

Maintaining currency of both technical and subject-related knowledge (requires collaboration)

Writing skills and documentation abilities

Service orientation, understanding user needs, value of information



Collection Development

Selection and appraisal techniques as they apply to digital materials

Technical capability of data preservation

Legal and IP issues

Economic and business issues

Metadata issues

Collaboration, cooperation, outreach



Publishing/scholarly communication

Understanding and managing lifecycle of content

Implications for moving upstream

Curating performance/authoring process not just the product

Codifying methodologies and protocols to apply downstream to personalized libraries

Curation and preservation of relationships between disparate objects



Public Services (1)

Understand research practices of various clientele

Understand complexity of digital information

Appreciate nuanced uses for different purposes

Familiarity with complexity of research university and producers of digital information

Work collaboratively with creators to ensure secondary use

Leverage technology to maximize access to digital resources

Apply usability criteria to curated resources

Assess impact of digital resources on teaching, learning, research



Public Services (2)

Outreach and networking skills

Knowledge of and responsiveness to changing user behavior and skill sets

Communication skills

Technical competency and knowledge currency

Organizational skills

Business knowledge

Team player



Technical Services

Understand how best to exploit access to digital content

Be part of the international dialog

Collaboration is key—demonstrated skill in working with diverse body of professionals within and beyond the institution

Avoid pigeon-hole solutions that serve immediate needs of subset of all users but not scalable over time



IT Administration (1)

Basic grounding in computer science

Flexibility to learn new tools

Interest in subject matter

Analytical bent

Good communication skills, including technical clarity and understandable language

Penchant for organization (not just categorization)

Strong sense of public service



IT Administration(2)

Understanding of users and disciplines

Familiarity with genre/subject

Records management or data archiving

Understanding of policy aspects

Fiscal management and analysis

Digital library standards and technologies

Ability to work with scholars and technologists

Collaboration and communication



Physical Sciences Librarian

Understanding of digital rights landscape,
published material and data sets

Knowledge of research cultures in various
disciplines

Knowledge of technological developments that
affect dissemination, storage, curation, and
use

Focus on data (standards, metadata, quality,
evaluation)



Life Sciences Librarian

Knowledge of resources in a field

Knowledge of scholarly habits

Combination of public services, bibliographer, cataloger, and IT skills by domain

Awareness of computational developments

Continual learning mode

Communication, service and team orientation

Technical skills



Business School Librarian

Ability to create/work with subject taxonomies

Metadata skills

Knowledge of relevant standards and create best practices

Familiarity with information life cycle and its evolution

Appreciation for data diversity by discipline

Collaborative

Copyright

Embrace technology, business models for assessment

Be a library advocate, teacher, team player, skillful negotiator, data analyzer



Special Collections

Understanding of artifact characteristics
and relation to digitization

Appreciate for scholars' use of originals vs
digital surrogates

Conservation considerations

Metadata for copy specific items

Digital preservation vs digital access



Planning and Organizational Research

Understand institution's expectations and translate them into job responsibilities

Assess value of disparate information, bring order and priority to it and translate into actionable strategies

Know how to benchmark, set performance goals

Communicate outcomes and link to institutional priorities

Network and collaborate

Take risks and course correct



How can ARLs accommodate digital curation?

- Build a professional staff of experts from a range of domains who share common set of values
- Create porous structure
- Understand the costs of doing business
- Incorporate job flexibility
- Provide training/interaction opportunities
- Foment and reward collaboration



Conclusions

- Research libraries aren't information technology organizations
- Technology skills are necessary but insufficient
- Digital curation is as much about curation as it is about things digital



Look to travel agents: from booking clerks to consultants

1. Build reliable brand to increase customer loyalty
2. Embrace vertical integration and strategic alliances to increase market share
3. Reduce operating costs to increase productivity
4. Improve quality of service and personnel to provide better and professional consulting service
5. Identify and serve niche markets
6. Pay equal attention to internet and traditional distribution channels

“Our age of anxiety is in great part the result of trying to do today’s job with yesterday’s tools.”
Marshall McLuhan