Digital Materiality: Preserving Access to Computers as Complete Environments

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Literary Personal (Digital) Papers

- Creative content originators constitute a unique sub-group
- Challenges and opportunities of literary personal papers
- Hybrid collections
- Urgency: Recent deaths of David Foster Wallace, John Updike
NEH Project

- Office of Digital Humanities
- Sept.-Dec. 2008
- Three Site Visits
  - MITH at University of Maryland
  - Harry Ransom Center at UT Austin
  - Emory University
- Team composed of Archivists, Digital Humanities specialists, Information science specialists, Scholars with subject expertise
- White Paper
MITH at Maryland

- A working digital humanities center
- Textual Scholarship
- Preserving Virtual Worlds
- Deena Larsen Collection
- Jonathan Larson at Library of Congress
Harry Ransom Center

- Humanities research library and literary collecting archives at the University of Texas at Austin
- 39 digital-analog hybrid collections (and counting)
- Since 2005, all or part of the electronic records in the John Crowley, Michael Joyce, Norman Mailer, Terrence McNally, Leon Uris, and Arnold Wesker collections have been processed
- Next steps: adopt forensic techniques as part of processing methodology, build relationships with other digital archivists and digital curators on campus
Emory Libraries

- Rushdie’s computers, and other hybrid collections
- February 2010 release
- Born-Digital Archives Program
Digital Materiality

- Digital objects are *artifacts*, not records
- Physical *and* virtual materiality
Recommendation: Hardware and Storage Media

- Evidentiary Value
- Numinous Objects
Recommendation: Disk Imaging

- Emerging standard in a nascent field
- Preserving comprehensive systems for future scholarship and research
- Capturing the digital “peripherals”
- Advantages of bit-level capture
- Security and privacy challenges
- Sustainability concerns
Recommendation: Computer Forensics

- Data Recovery
- Hashing and Authentication
- Digital Signatures
- *Computer Forensics and Born-Digital Content in Cultural Heritage Collections* (forthcoming CLIR/Mellon report)
Recommendation: Documenting the Original Environment

- Not only capturing the complete *digital* context
- The machines as artifacts themselves
- Computer nexus of the creative process
Recommendation: Interviews

- Engaging with content creators to reveal details about composition habits and personal computing habits
- Benefits of dialogue between archives and donors, or potential donors
- Opportunity for (mutual) education
- Issues of intervention
Recommendation: Interface Development

- Challenges of marrying donor needs with those of the researcher
- Effectively representing hybrid archives
- Identifying and serving unique needs of researchers accessing born-digital and hybrid archives
- Addressing sustainability and maintenance
Recommendation: Scholarly Communication Needs

- Citation
- Reproduction
- Copyright
- Educate scholars in use of born-digital sources as scholarly evidence
Thank You

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