Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection

NDSR Project Management and preservation of digital assets at Dumbarton Oaks

Goal Summary

To identify an institutional solution for long-term digital asset management

Specific Goals / Objectives

To compile a detailed inventory of existing digital assets to define scope and inform requirements

To draft an institutional policy for the appraisal and selection of digital content for long-term preservation

To identify system requirements for a digital asset management system (DAMS) through information gathering sessions with key staff across the organization

To evaluate software systems and recommend a DAMS solution based on requirements and reference interviews

Timeframe & Deliverables

Overall: 9 months

Months 1-3: Orientation, Information Gathering, and Inventory
Review Digital Assets Information Gathering report. Assemble project team and identify available resources, expertise, and support. Expand upon data presented in report to assemble inventory in which digital content, types, file formats and storage locations are identified by department. Work with departments to identify valuable assets for long-term preservation and formulate retention criteria and schedule.
Deliverables: DO-wide meeting to present digital preservation concepts and the benefits of a DAMS; detailed inventory of digital assets at DO; and draft of institutional selection criteria policy

Months 4-5: System Requirements for DAMS
Identify available financial resources and develop a budget. Conduct requirements gathering sessions across departments to identify use cases, current workflows, and critical requirements. Draft a summary report for institutional review. Review software selection methods and develop assessment instrument.
Deliverables: System budget proposal; requirements report; and DAMS evaluation template

Months 6-9: Software selection process
Perform environmental scan of available systems and assess each candidate according to evaluation template. Engage with vendors and developers to assess required resources and coordinate demonstrations and reference interviews. Assemble findings and propose recommendation at DO-wide meeting.
Deliverables: Evaluations of all available open-source and proprietary solutions; prioritized list of candidates with cost and functionality analysis; and final written report and presentation of findings

In addition, based on their academic expertise in digital curation, the Resident will be asked to provide written recommendations regarding long-term guidelines and best practices for the DAMS, including system implementation, file-naming conventions, metadata standards, identification of trial datasets, and import workflows.

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Resources Required

2 mentors (Fojas White and Viola), 1 resident

Access to Dumbarton Oaks staff from the library, archives, museum, studies programs, publications, gardens, information technology, finance, administration, and other departments

Access to current digital asset storage (networked, non-networked, and portable media)

Background information and data compiled for the Digital Assets Information Gathering report

System selection methodology and documentation from departmental CMS implementation

Departmental resources compiled on digital preservation

Context

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (http://www.doaks.org) is an institute of Harvard University, whose mission is to support research and scholarship in Byzantine, Pre-Columbian, and Garden and Landscape Studies. In addition to sponsoring fellowships and international scholarly meetings in these fields of study, Dumbarton Oaks welcomes researchers at all career stages to study the renowned collections held by its museum, library, and archives. Increasingly, Dumbarton Oaks is making its diverse collections of Byzantine and Pre-Columbian art, Byzantine seals, rare books, photographs, scholarly publications, and oral histories, available online.

The organization has identified the need for a digital asset management system (DAMS) to further its ongoing digital initiatives while addressing the imperatives of long-term digital preservation. The Resident will play a key role in establishing a sustainable infrastructure for digital stewardship at a renowned center of humanistic research with peerless collections of art, books, and archives in three fields.

Last year, Dumbarton Oaks staff conducted an institution-wide information-gathering project to identify the nature and scope of its digital assets. Shalimar Fojas White, Manager of the Image Collections and Fieldwork Archives (ICFA), and Pete Haggerty, Network Systems Administrator, conducted surveys and interviews with department heads and key staff to identify types of digital assets and their storage locations, as well as current workflows for digital asset creation, organization, retrieval, and delivery. In October 2012, Fojas White and Haggerty prepared a report of their findings and summarized the issues identified by Dumbarton Oaks staff. Current data storage is distributed and incompletely networked. Digital preservation consists of manual backups with no off-site redundant storage. Many of the report's recommendations – namely, centralizing the storage of digital assets and establishing institutional policies and procedures to manage them – point to the implementation of a DAMS as an enterprise solution.

With this background work completed, the Resident is well-positioned to play an immediate, concrete, and significant role in the long-term planning for digital preservation at Dumbarton Oaks. In the process, the Resident will acquire practical skills and experiences that will be readily transferrable to their future professional endeavors in digital stewardship. During the nine-month residency, the Resident be embedded within a departmental setting and be guided by mentors in ICFA with software selection experience (Fojas White and Anne-Marie Viola, Metadata and Cataloging Specialist). Also, since the proposed project is, by its nature, inter-departmental, the Resident will be integrated into the larger fabric and organizational culture of Dumbarton Oaks. The Resident will collaborate with colleagues with expertise in a variety of fields and disciplines, including cultural heritage professionals in libraries, archives, and

museums and scholars focusing on Byzantine, Pre-Columbian, and Garden and Landscape Studies.

Through this work, the Resident will be exposed to the professional practices of scholars, curators, librarians, archivists, and publishers, as well as the differing requirements, expectations, and uses for digital content across their disciplines. Throughout the residency, the Resident will also have the opportunity to leverage their academic knowledge by educating colleagues on best practices and recent advancements in the field of digital preservation. As a result, the Resident will play a leading role in a community-wide effort to develop shared solutions to the challenge of managing and preserving digital assets at Dumbarton Oaks.

Required Knowledge and Skills for Residents

The Resident will have a graduate degree in Library and Information Science, Computer Science, Information Science, Information Technology, Applied History, Arts Administration or equivalent from an accredited institution of higher education. Additionally, the ideal candidate will have the following:

General knowledge or experience:
Experience within a visual resources, archives, library, or museum setting
Experience with cross-departmental or institution-level initiatives
Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing
Strong organizational, analytical, and problem-solving skills and attention to detail

Specialized or technical knowledge or experience:
Digital preservation strategies, storage options, and disaster planning, including the OAIS reference model, LOCKSS, and emulation and migration techniques
Digitization guidelines and parameters (color space, file formats, resolution)
Server and database environments

Preferred Knowledge or Experience

The following skills or experience are preferred but not required:
Experience with digital asset management or DAMS
Experience with software selection methodology and requirements gathering and documentation
Experience with implementation and management of enterprise software, proprietary and open-source
Experience with usability and task-based assessment
Knowledge of embedded metadata for digital images
Knowledge of Digital Rights Management (DRM) and copyright issues