



## NDSR Project Accessing Born-Digital Literary Materials

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<i>Goal Summary</i>	To prototype access points to born-digital materials (including their physical carriers) to better enable researchers to discover and work with the Libraries' born-digital collections.
<i>Specific Goals / Objectives</i>	<p>To create and share a State of the Art Research Report for access models and collection interfaces for born-digital literary materials.</p> <p>To gather requirements from researchers and library staff for a born-digital collections interface.</p> <p>To submit recommendations for access policies, reference, and on-site researcher support for born-digital collections.</p>
<i>Timeframe &amp; Deliverables</i>	<p>Overall – 9 months</p> <p>Months 1 through 4 – survey reference services and collection interfaces provided by libraries with born-digital collections; interview cultural heritage professionals working in research libraries with born-digital collections; work with the Human Computer Interaction Lab (HCIL) to learn the basics of user-centered design and rapid prototyping. Deliverable: Report on State of the Art in Born-Digital Access and Interfaces</p> <p>Months 5 through 7 – conduct workshops with Special Collections and Archives staff as well as electronic literature researchers and digital humanists; shadow Special Collections staff in the reading room to collect field observations. Deliverable: Recommendations for access policies, reference services, and on-site researcher support for born-digital collections.</p> <p>Months 8 through 9 – design lo-fi paper mock-ups of potential interfaces; design wireframes and interaction behaviors (page flows, transition, navigation); produce working prototype (time permitting). Deliverable: Finalized design brief and final report collating all previous research.</p>
<i>Resources Required</i>	<p>Library Mentor (Joanne Archer), MITH Mentor (Matthew Kirschenbaum), Resident</p> <p>Access to staff from within the Library (including the Information Technology Division), HCIL, and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities.</p> <p>Contacts with cultural heritage professionals and researchers working with born-digital collections. Examples include: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, University of Virginia, Emory University, Duke University, and The University of Texas at Austin.</p>
<i>Context</i>	The survival of important collections—particularly born-digital collections—depends on their discoverability, accessibility, and usability by diverse constituencies. At a moment when libraries and archives must decide how to allocate scarce resources in order to best fulfill their mission as stewards of the cultural past, including the recent past, we must recognize that unused collections, whatever their other qualities, have few stakeholders and supporters. The interfaces and the service models that welcome interested researchers are important points of human connection



between collections and communities.

The Born-Digital Working Group (BDWG), collaboration between the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities (MITH) and the University of Maryland Libraries, provides a unique host environment for a National Digital Stewardship Residency. The BDWG, which meets regularly to exchange knowledge, coordinate efforts, create policy, and discuss institutional strategy for born-digital collections, combines the strengths of an established digital humanities center and the resources and institutional infrastructure of a large, public research library.

MITH is a leading digital humanities center that pursues disciplinary innovation and institutional transformation through applied research, public programming, and educational opportunities. Over the past five years, MITH has led or collaborated on a range of projects related to born-digital cultural heritage, digital forensics, digital curation, and the preservation of computer games, interactive literature, and virtual worlds. Locally, MITH collaborates with the Digital Stewardship and Special Collections units of the University Libraries as part of the BDWG. Digital Stewardship coordinates development of standards and best practices for managing digital assets and associated technologies across the University Libraries. Digital Stewardship staff work closely with colleagues across the University Libraries to recommend, develop, and implement tools that will enable the management of a variety of tasks related to stewardship and research including a digital preservation program. Digital Stewardship and Special Collections actively collaborate on the creation of digital collections related to the Libraries' holdings. Special Collections documents the history of the University of Maryland and the State of Maryland, with particular collection strengths in the areas of literature, mass media and culture, labor history, women's history, and historic preservation. The ongoing collaboration of these three groups from across the College of Arts and Humanities and University Libraries demonstrates a commitment to acquire, process, and provide access to the increasing quantity of born-digital materials for research.

The NDSR Fellow will collaborate with the BDWG to research, design, and prototype access points, both digital and physical, to better enable interested researchers to discover, and work with born-digital collections. As a focus for this work, the Fellow will explore archival collections comprising materials from two leading figures in the early electronic literature movement, Deena Larsen and Bill Bly. These collections include floppy disks, CD-ROMs, and hard-drives containing word processing documents, images, hypertext interactive fiction, as well as analog manuscript materials and documentation of vintage computing systems. Participating in this residency will expose the Fellow to a diverse community including librarians, archivists, electronic literature researchers, digital humanists, and information scientists. The Fellow will gain experience in policy development, working with legacy media, rapid prototyping, and requirements development and will be well positioned to provide leadership on issues that every library and archive will confront in the coming years.

This Residency will provide the opportunity to work in MITH's state-of-the-art 4200-square-foot space in Hornbake Library with access to a dedicated digital curation workstation that includes specialized hardware (write-blockers, controller cards) and software for disk imaging, forensic analysis, and emulation. MITH boasts a large in-house collection of vintage computers, ranging from working instances of early home consumer models such as the Kaypro, Osborne, and Apple II, through various generations of Macintoshes and PCs, affording hands-on access to the experience of working with these obsolescent platforms. Hosting the NDSR Fellow as part of the BDWG at



MITH will provide convenient access to all of the project mentors and collaborators including University Libraries' Special Collections, the College of Information Studies, and the Human-Computer Interaction Lab. MITH functions as a hub for digital research with a weekly Digital Dialogues speaker series, symposia, and special events. As a host site for an NDSR Fellow, the collaborative environment among digital humanists, librarians, and archivists at the University of Maryland is unique and well positioned to provide an active, multi-faceted, trans-disciplinary learning opportunity related to digital curation.

*Required  
Knowledge and  
Skills for Residents*

The successful resident will have a graduate degree in Library and Information Science, Archival Studies, or equivalent from an accredited institution of higher education.

Additionally, the successful candidate will have the following:

General Knowledge

- Managing primary source materials.
- Demonstrated ability to plan, implement and successfully complete projects.

Specialized Knowledge or Experience

- Digital preservation principles and practices.
- Use of digital repository software such as ContentDM, Fedora, etc.
- Experience with metadata standards for digital collections such as METS/MODS, EAD, and Dublin Core.

*Preferred  
Knowledge or  
Experience*

The following skills are preferred but not required:

- Experience working with born-digital materials/electronic records.
  - Use of XML and HTML/PHP.
  - Familiarity with both in-person reference services and online finding aids.
  - Familiarity with user-centered design principles.
  - Iterative prototype design.
  - Experience conducting use assessments.
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