Beyond the Scanned Image: Scholarly Uses of Digital Collections

It’s easy to see that digital collections are proliferating on the web. Just look at the growing corpora from HathiTrust, Digital Public Library of America, ArtStor and Europeana, among many others. Providing online access to scholarship and cultural artifacts in a variety of formats is increasingly driving the missions of many cultural heritage institutions. Yet, what is less apparent is to what degree these digital collections are meeting the needs of current scholars.

A recent study of humanities faculty at twelve research institutions aimed to find out more about uses of digital collections among humanities scholars. A primary goal of the study was to help inform the areas of digital collection work in which libraries have expertise, such as metadata, information retrieval and other access issues.

Ten Tips to Preserve Holiday Digital Memories

During the holiday season, you might take photos and video of friends and loved ones. You might make audio recordings of voices, conversations and music. Whatever you photograph or record, we hope you will take time to backup and preserve your digital stuff.

Tip #1 – As soon as you can, transfer the digital files off the camera, cell phone or other device and onto backup storage. That storage could be your computer, a thumb drive, a CD, a hard drive or an online cloud service. You should also backup a second copy somewhere else, preferably on a different type of storage device than the first.

See the other nine tips in the full blog post.
Anatomy of a Web Archive

We might blame the semantic flexibility of the word “archive” for the fact that someone with no previous exposure to web archives might suppose that they are: the result of saving web pages from the browser; institutions acting as repositories for web resources; a navigational feature of some websites allowing for browsing of past content; online storage platforms imagined to be more durable than the web itself; or, simply, “the Wayback Machine.” Many policies and practices guide cultural heritage institutions’ approaches to web archiving. However, the “web archives” that they create and preserve are remarkably consistent. What are web archives, exactly? Read the full post for an answer.

Updates on FADGI: Still Image and Audio Visual

The Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative holds regular meetings for both of its working groups: Still Image and Audio-Visual. There will be regular updates on The Signal for both of these groups. The recent post on the still image group meeting includes the list of participating institutions as well as information on some current research being conducted by the group, such as the effects of compression on digital image resolution, and targets for assessing image performance.

The update on the audio-visual group features an overview of work that members have presented at recent conferences, including the Audio Engineering Society’s International Convention and the Association of Moving Image Archivists. Also included is information about ongoing research projects, as well as FADGI contribution to several formal standards projects.

Guitar, Bass, Drums, Metadata

Those in the “cultural heritage” sector get used to being at the end of the line sometimes. Very often, the unique items that end up in these collections get there after all their primary value has been extracted.

It’s a benefit for cultural heritage organizations that creators have strong incentives to steward and preserve their digital materials. This is especially true in the music industry, where artists and record labels are still struggling to turn their digital art into gold. The key may be in the rich metadata.