

NIU Case Study

February 2014

I. Institution Bio & Back Story

Metrics – Institutional Level

Number of students and faculty. [NIU Fact Sheet](#) (Last updated 11/1/2012)

Students: 21,869

Faculty & Staff: 4,648

Undergraduate: 16,552

Instructional faculty: 1,185

Graduate: 4,984

Administrative and

Law: 333

professional staff: 1,000

Operating staff: 2,463

Endowment and budget.

Endowment: \$57.1 Million? (Wikipedia)

Budget:

Carnegie classification. ([Website here](#).)

- Undergraduate Instructional Program: Bal/HGC
- Graduate Instructional Program: CompDoc/NMedVet
- Enrollment Profile: HU
- Undergraduate Profile: FT4/S/HTI
- Size and Setting: L4/R
- Basic: RU/H

7 degree-granting colleges. Business, Education, Engineering and Engineering

Technology, Health and Human Sciences, Law, Liberal Arts and Sciences, and Visual and

Performing Arts

Degrees offered. Au.D., B.A., B.F.A., B.G.S., B.M., B.S., B.S.Ed., D.P.T., Ed.D., Ed.S., J.D., M.A., M.A.S., M.B.A., M.F.A., M.M., M.P.A., M.P.H., M.S., M.S.Ed., M.A.T. (Master of Arts in Teaching), M.S.T. (Master of Science in Taxation), M.S.T. (Master of Science in Teaching), Ph.D.

Metrics – Library Level

Size of library.

- Number of Faculty and Staff 32 professional librarians; 65 operating staff & admin (whole library)
- Operating Budget ~ \$9 million per annum (varies)

- Number of Volumes (?) Over 2 million. ()
- Size of Digital Collections ~7-10 TB (not sure)

Staff.

- Number of staff currently devoted to digital preservation in some manner: ~6 FTE (includes students; no single individual is specifically dedicated to digital preservation) within the unit; .5 FTE outside administrative support
- Organizational role: The organizational roles of people whose duties include digital preservation include administrators, curators, cataloger/metadata librarians, graduate assistants, and student workers.
- Responsibilities beyond digital preservation: all staffers involved in digital preservation have responsibilities beyond digital preservation. Collection development, digitization, cataloging/metadata of non DP-related materials, programming & application development, curation, preservation of physical objects, committee work, faculty requirements, etc. Most staffers are devoting 20% or less of their time to digital preservation work at this point.

Budget.

Library's budget for digital preservation activities \$195,000 per annum (this # is *likely* derived from the human resource/ personnel costs in the Digital Initiatives Unit). We do not have a dedicated budget for digital preservation products, services, or staff at this time. The need for dedicated resources for digital preservation has been broached to library administration, to a relatively warm reception. It is our hope that resources will be allocated in the near future.

Digital preservation technologies currently in use.

- ARCHON (EAD finding aids)
- DSpace
- Fedora/Islandora
- Backups are available via campus ITS for librarywide staff servers and in-house backups for the Digital Initiatives Unit servers.
- Informal tools used departmentally include Gmail accounts and external hard drives. None of these have coordinated metadata.

Defining Moment

The realization that digital preservation was an urgent, unwieldy, and unaddressed problem came in 2008. The library submitted an NEH grant application for the digitization of dime novels, a major holding in NIU's special collections department. The application was rejected on the basis of not having a long-term plan for preservation of the data generated through the grant.

II. Self Assessment Results

While we have some policies that address electronic materials in the library (including a disaster plan and some unit-level collection development policies), there has not been thorough coordination or standardization of same between individual units, nor have we globally addressed rights management issues. An active digital initiatives unit has been in place since circa 1996. It was originally run on a cost recovery/grant funding model, but there has not been a culture of documentation about unit practices.

The Digital Initiatives Unit was incorporated into the library's permanent organizational infrastructure slowly over the past five years. However, there are still 7-10 TB of legacy digital projects that need sorting in various stages of completion, in addition to other initiatives from other units such as Rare Books and Special Collections and the Regional History Center/University Archives that involve both digitization and born-digital materials. Numerous formats and file types are included in our digital collections, from text to audiovisual. Access is provided via the library's website where required.

We have two content management systems: DSpace for our institutional repository, and Fedora for all other materials. Not all digital collections have yet been ingested into either repository. We have a significant backlog of scanned materials (mostly due to the need for metadata and a lack of robust bandwidth and server speeds).

In general, the library has been responsible for its own IT needs, but our new University President just hired a new Chief Information Officer, and we understand that some centralization of IT services will likely be on the horizon. Our budgets over the past 5 years have either remained flat or decreased in all areas.

III. Policy Gap Analysis

Where We Are

Scattered. We have numerous collections and practices and levels of documentation across numerous departments, as a result of legacy funding structures and a lack of coordination across units. The Digital Initiatives Unit began as a grant-funded, self-sustaining digitization unit, responsible only for their own staffing and infrastructure. Over a decade, the unit has been integrated into the library's infrastructure, but many legacy projects and systems are still in the process of being converted or migrated to the library's servers and systems. We also have Huskie Commons, an institutional repository pilot project, which has content and a management system (DSpace) but no long-term back-end storage and preservation solution.

In the meantime, both the Regional History Center/University Archives and Rare Books and Special Collections have been slowly accepting electronic manuscripts as part of their collection development activities, relying on local backup and informal cloud storage (i.e. a Gmail account) at best to keep files safe. Both RBSC and RHC have jointly implemented Archon, so we now have the possibility of managing and adding metadata to our files, but do not have a long-term solution for preservation-level storage and migration. Nor do we have a comprehensive web presence for our digital collections that are designed to be public. Campus wide, there is no plan for records management in terms of long-term storage of records relevant to University history to the best of our knowledge; any records management is handled only in terms of legal requirements.

Our challenge is to write unified policies and select tools that serve each constituent unit, but provide cohesion for the library as a whole.

Where We Want To Be

Ideally, NIU would develop/select one set of guidelines, workflows, and storage for all of our digital objects designated for long term retention (digitization unit born digital materials, RBSC e-manuscripts, RHC/UA records). We need a digital collection development policy that sets priorities for what gets digitized, who manages the materials, etc. We also need to further develop campus relationships that allow us to leverage what we know about the library's needs to help meet the needs of the entire campus. Since the start of this project, the Open Access to Research Articles Act (OARAA) was signed into law, requiring state-funded institutions to examine open access and come up with policies for possible implementation by January 1, 2015. The bill includes digital preservation as part of its remit, and POWRR team members at NIU have been strong advocates for making sure that open access policies also take long-term access into account.

The Gap

Staffing has been a problem. We have people with skills and knowledge, but there has been a lack of impetus to leverage those skills and knowledge in a speedy manner. There has also been a process of education for administrators and staff, getting from “we need to do this, really” to “resources go here.” This has partially been taken care of via the IMLS grant, and the impetus on our campus to solve the problem is growing with the passage of the Open Access to Research Articles Act (OARAA) in Illinois, which mandates investigating institutional repositories, open access, and long-term preservation of research produced on state-funded campuses. Nonetheless, we still have a ways to go to get from theoretical administrative buy-in to boots-on-the-ground implementation. We need to do a strategic reallocation of personnel resources as well as straight-up funding. Not all staff is willing to be reallocated or retrained, but job security means we have to wait for them to move on of their own accord.

Money has also been a problem. Purchasing turnkey software systems may be out of reach financially as an individual campus, and we have not had the staff to implement open access systems to the level that we want them. We are currently investigating possible consortial or collaborative solutions, but those negotiations take time, often years, while bit rot continues to happen. Library IT is separate from campus IT in our institution, and campus IT runs on a cost-recovery model. Building infrastructure and relationships between the two IT relationships is fraught because there is consistent push-and-pull over very limited resources. Our new University President just hired a new Chief Information Officer, and we understand that some centralization of IT services may be on the horizon in the near future. Our budgets over the past 5 years have either remained flat or decreased in all areas.

Digital Preservation Policy/Program Proposal

Mission/Scope

Northern Illinois University Libraries enhance the overall missions of the university by promoting excellence and engagement in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, creativity and artistry, and outreach and service. Our digital preservation program seeks to enhance innovation and the exploration of new ideas by implementing sustainable technologies that facilitate greater long-term access to digital scholarship and collections, whether digitized or born-digital. We document the life of the university and its production of historic, current, and future knowledge. We ensure the longevity and availability of these digital materials

produced by our faculty, staff, and students, as well as those collected for our libraries, as is appropriate to achieve this goal.

Digital Preservation Workflow

Selection. Selection will be performed by the appropriate subject specialists and/or unit and department heads in accordance with established collection development policies for those collections and units (this includes Huskie Commons).

Acquisition. Initial acquisition of relevant born-digital files will be performed by the appropriate subject specialists and/or unit and department heads in accordance with established collection development policies for those collections and units. Additionally, scanning to create digital objects is performed by Dig Lab staff in accordance with their policies. Individual units and content creators are responsible for furnishing relevant files in appropriate formats for preservation to Digital Initiatives for long-term preservation.

Curation. (Managing files and metadata): File management will be completed in the selected system, governed by collections-based policies for availability, access, and metadata creation. Metadata will adhere to professional standards (i.e. MARC, MODS, EAD etc.) with a goal of single entry of metadata promulgated across multiple systems if necessary to promote metadata promiscuity. Processing of digital materials before submission for AIP conversion is the responsibility of the collection managers (e.g. SIP creation/Archon record creation/finding aids/MARC records where applicable). Preservation metadata will be system-generated (i.e. Archivematica/Curator's workbench), based on policies set in coordination with collection managers and Digital Initiatives Staff.

Archiving. Digital Initiatives staff will be responsible for creating and managing Archival Information Packets in preparation for storage, in consultation with individual collection managers to ensure appropriate metadata assignment and access levels, providing packet-level metadata, and uploading packets to the selected storage solution.

Storage. Storage needs to be locally redundant and geographically redundant; accessible to relevant staff only; live networked storage (rather than static CDs/DVDS/Hard drives/external drives); scalable; affordable. We are still

negotiating how library storage and campus storage will intersect; we expect cooperation between campus IT and the library to meet our needs.

Retrieval. Creation of DIP: will be dictated by collection managers in terms of formats, etc. Actual creation of DIP will be handled by Digital Initiatives Staff on the fly, by the repository system or by patron request. Creation of DIPs may vary based on whether the DIP is designed to be publicly available or furnished for research purposes only (i.e. not public). Theoretically, patrons would be able to request specific folders of records/documents after viewing an ARCHON finding aid, although the records/documents themselves would not be publicly attached to the finding aid in collections where materials are not in the public domain. A separate site created for serving access copies of public domain materials would allow patrons to download them directly, without having to make use of the DIP system.

Strategy

Communication & education.

- i. Administrators: OARAA encourages resource allocation towards open access and long term storage. Need to educate to work from nodding to actual funding.
- ii. Colleagues who are stakeholders: Office of Sponsored Projects. Faculty (need more outreach). Library subject specialists (more outreach). Graduate School (ETDs).
- iii. Content providers: Regional History Center/University Archives. Rare Books and Special Collections. Huskie Commons. Digital Initiatives Unit. Southeast Asia Collection. Other campus content providers as appropriate (i.e. Honors, Research Rookies, etc.)
- iv. General marketing/PR: Website. Person-to-person contact. Symposia? Packet re: authors rights/open access/long-term preservation.

Allocation of resources.

- i. People: Not-yet existing but necessary positions in bold: **Scholarly Communications and Outreach Librarian** (not yet hired). Curator of Digital Collections. Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections. **Repository Developer(s)**—we need another one. **Dedicated (not shared) Server/System**

administrator(s). Curator of Manuscripts, University Archives. Metadata

Librarian.

- ii. Budget : We will need budget for: On-campus redundant servers. Dedicated hard-funded allocation for digital preservation activities. Regular budget for local servers/storage space and redundant campus backup. Budget for subscription fees for geographically disparate offsite digital storage, and possibly for a robust digital preservation management system.
- iii. What Else?

IV. Lessons Learned

It's hard to write a DP policy without knowing which tools will be used to implement it, what financial resources and staff will be available when, and what kind of consortial work will be done, and by whom. We have a push-pull between: "tell us what you will need at a minimal level" and "we won't know what we will need until we know how we are doing it, which is dictated by what resources we have." At some point, we need to choose our systems and begin figuring out how to implement and fund them.

Seizing relevant opportunities to relate this project to initiatives administrators understand (like OARAA in IL, and FASTR and Data Management Plan requirements nationally) has been a great help. People understand responsible stewardship and management needs to happen, but they aren't clear on how they can and should make choices that lend themselves to that responsible stewardship, i.e. self-curation of objects they create (e.g. we can't save everything, no, really. YOU NEED TO CHOOSE. Before talking to us about storage needs.).

Based on our campus interviews, faculty are largely uninformed about this issue: they are so busy trying to survive day-to-day, but most of them come away from talking to us with a better understanding of what they need to do to ensure responsible stewardship of their digital legacies. We need to do a lot more talking to a lot more people.