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Digital Asset Management at Michigan Tech

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Introduction

In 2005 the Michigan Technological University Archives and Copper Country Historical Collections (Archives) received a grant from the Michigan Humanities Council to develop a web-based searchable database of digitized images, what is now known as the Keweenaw Digital Archives (DigArch). Since launch over 13,000 images have been made available online and it has become an invaluable resource to a wide variety of researchers. Unfortunately, it was built using an unsustainable code base that by 2014 was dangerously out of date.

Evaluation & Selection of New Platform

In 2014 the library assembled a task force to identify a platform to replace DigArch and satisfy the university's needs for managing digital objects. The task force discovered the Digital POWRR Tool Grid, which evaluated preservation platforms against criteria based on the OAIS reference model, and used it as a basis for creating a local rubric to systematically evaluate 20 platforms. An initial evaluation brought forward 5 finalists: Cumulus (Canto), CONTENTdm, DSPACE, SharedShelf, and Preservica. Only Preservica offered an out-of-the-box public access interface and long-term storage, and it also satisfied all preservation criteria of the original POWRR tool grid. The platform was also relatively low-cost in comparison with competitors.

Metadata

Images were originally cataloged using a template that stored a MARC metadata record in the library's catalog, Voyager. Metadata migration consisted of:

- Choosing a new cataloging standard - Dublin Core
- Developing a crosswalk to map the conversion.
- Using an XSLT transform provided by Preservica customer support (successfully translated roughly 80% of records to Dublin Core)
- Standardizing language to fix translation errors using a data sanitizing process

Images

Photoshop was used to apply LZW compression to about 10,500 TIFF images, resulting in a 37% decrease in storage consumption. The library was then able to purchase a lower tier of Amazon S3 storage with Preservica Cloud Edition. Ingest of the majority of images and their Dublin Core metadata records using Preservica's SIP Creator took approximately 4 days. The image watermark was also discussed during this phase, including language, font, and tone. Using a simple form, a watermark was also added to presentation copies of images so that it is generated on the fly whenever one is viewed by a user. A layer of hidden metadata with copyright restrictions was also added to all preservation copies of images.

Thumbnail	Subject(s)	Description	Add to Shoebox
	Persons, Manners and Customs	[Strikers parade. One of the marchers carries a sign "Calumet & Hecla Headquarters Boston"]	Add
	Persons, Accidents, Burials	[May be a funeral procession for the Italian Hall victims. Crowds of people line both sides of a snow covered road. Numerous horse drawn carriages pass by.]	Add

Subject browse in Preservica Universal Access

Challenges

- Reinventing processes and standardizing procedures
- Manual Entry of images that did not conform to local standard
- User comments
- Vendor time difference (Office in the US has since opened)
- Sustaining ongoing cross-department communication



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Current and Future Directions

DigArch is serving as the pilot project for implementing Preservica at Michigan Tech. Its use is intended to be much broader.

Potential future directions could include:

- Web archiving
- Digitization of manuscript collections
- Digital asset management for other university departments
- Digital Exhibits

Digital Preservation Strategy

The threat of obsolescence and the process of selecting and migrating to a new platform helped staff realize the importance of preserving and maintain access to digital content. A new task force was formed in August 2016 to begin addressing this topic by developing a digital preservation strategy. The strategy is intended to:

- Serve as the foundation for the development of future recommendations, plans, policy, and procedures for the preservation and access of digital resources that the library manages via digital repositories and services.
- Help the library evaluate any new tools and platforms, and develop new digital collections in the future.

Conclusions

There are several successful aspects of this selection and implementation process that will be valuable to incorporate into future projects:

- Involving key stakeholders from across the library ensured that valuable expertise was utilized throughout the process.
- Development of a systematic process for research and evaluation of platforms strengthened the case for the task force's final recommendation.
- Establishment of a timeline to ensure steady, incremental progress.