

COLLECTING THE DIGITAL DELUGE

As inhabitants of the 21st Century, we are faced with digital information almost every minute of every day. From the moment we wake in the morning (by the alarm on our smart phone, tablet, or

What, in this great sea of digital information, should we be collecting, and what shouldn't we be collecting? ...And why do we want to collect it at all?

digital clock radio) we are bombarded with information in digital form – emails, news and weather updates, music, videos, television, movies, text messages, Facebook updates, tweets – the list goes on. We can't even eat a meal without feeling the need to photograph it, and share it with as many people as possible. We have become simultaneous consumers and creators of digital content on a monumental scale.

As library professionals, it is our job to come up with a plan for managing this explosion of digital material. Many have spoken about the problems of digital collecting using doomsday terms such as 'digital deluge' and 'digital black hole'.

While it may feel like we have the weight of the digital world on our shoulders, the truth is that we currently have a small window of opportunity to be able to stop, take a deep breath, and come up with a plan of attack. While digital material (including photographs, video, music, oral histories, personal papers, ebooks, eserials, websites, social media, newspapers, and more) is currently being acquired by libraries all around the country at an increasing rate, it is not yet at deluge stage.

So it is through this small window that National and State Libraries Australasia (NSLA) has stepped, to take stock of the who, what, where, when, and why of digital collecting. Who are the best people to do the collecting? What, in this great sea of digital information, should we be collecting, and what shouldn't we be collecting? Where do we find the material, and where do we put it once we have it? When should we collect it

(before it's too late)? And why do we want to collect it at all?

The NSLA Digital Collecting Project group, made up of representatives of each of the state and territory libraries, as well as the National Libraries of Australia and New Zealand, has attempted to answer these questions. It has developed the Digital Collecting Framework to help guide and inform our decisions about collecting born digital material.

The framework includes an overview of legislation (which guides our decisions about born digital

legal deposit), a set of definitions (such as what is 'born digital' and what is 'turned digital'?), a summary of a survey carried out by the project team in 2012, assessing our current digital collecting activities, and the overarching principles of digital collecting.

In addition to the framework, the project team also created a Personal Digital Archiving Toolkit to help home archivists take care of their digital collections, in the hope that when they are acquired by our libraries in the future, they will be in pristine condition.

The toolkit provides information on how to select, store and backup your digital files and includes a short nine minute how-to video entitled *Preserving Your Digital Treasures* (vimeo.com/62131787).

Each library needs to do its research, and make its own decisions about how it will manage its digital collections, but it is hoped that this framework will help make those decisions a little easier, such as how many dinner Instagrams does one library really need to collect?

The *Digital Collecting Framework*, *Principles of Digital Collecting*, and the *Personal Digital Archiving Toolkit* are all available on the publications page of the NSLA website at www.nsla.org.au/publications. More information will be made available on the NSLA website, and on individual national, state, and territory library websites as the project progresses.

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