Digital Archivists in Practice: A Preliminary Survey

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Digital Archivists in Demand

- *The New York Times*
  - February 7, 2009
- FRESH STARTS
  - a monthly column about emerging jobs and job trends
- “Digital Archivists, Now in Demand”
  - by CONRAD DE AENLLE
Digital Archivists in Demand

- Literature, film, scientific journals, newspapers, court records, corporate documents and other material, accumulated over centuries, needed to be adapted for computer databases.

- Once there, it had to be arranged - along with newer, born-digital material - in a way that would let people find what they needed and keep finding it well into the future.
Digital Archivists in Demand

• The people entrusted to find a place for this wealth of information are known as
  • digital asset managers, or sometimes as
  • digital archivists and
  • digital preservation officers.

• Whatever they are called, demand for them is expanding.
Digital Archivists in Practice

• Where are they?

• Who are they?

• What do they do?
Research Method

- Publicly available data containing information about practicing digital archivists in the U.S.
- Data collection
  - September 2011 – April 2012 (RA)
  - December 2012 – cutoff date
- Data sets start to take shape
  - Job descriptions
  - Professional profiles
- Preliminary findings generated from data analysis
Data Sources: Job Postings

- SAA Archival Outlook (newsletter) [http://www2.archivists.org/archival-outlook](http://www2.archivists.org/archival-outlook)
- DIGITAL-PRESERVATION@JISCMAIL.AC.UK [https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=digital-preservation](https://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/cgi-bin/webadmin?A0=digital-preservation)
- RECMGMT-L@LISTS.UFL.EDU [http://lists.ufl.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=RECMGMT-L](http://lists.ufl.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A0=RECMGMT-L)
- College & Research Libraries News (C&RL News) [http://crln.acrl.org/site/misc/about.xhtml](http://crln.acrl.org/site/misc/about.xhtml)
- Simply Hired Alerts [http://www.simplyhired.com](http://www.simplyhired.com)
- Digital Curation Exchange Resources Jobs [http://digitalcurationexchange.org/jobs](http://digitalcurationexchange.org/jobs)
- CODE4LIB JOBS [http://jobs.code4lib.org](http://jobs.code4lib.org)
Data Sources: Professional Profiles

• LinkedIn
  http://www.linkedin.com/

• LOC Digital Preservation Blog: The Signal
  http://blogs.loc.gov/digitalpreservation/

• Professional listserves such as
  • ACRL Digital Curation Interest Group Mailing List: acr-igdc-l@ala.org
  • ALA Digital Preservation Interest Group Mailing List: digipres@ala.org
What are We Looking for?

- Organizations posting positions for “digital archivists”
- Individuals holding positions for “digital archivists”
- Organizations / individuals posting / holding positions with similar responsibilities as “digital archivists”

- 94 job postings / 103 persons/positions
Digital Archivists in Practice: Where are They?

- Geographic locations
- Organization types
Which Organizations are Hiring Digital Archivists?

- 28 states and DC

- 94 positions (>4)
  - NY (13)
  - CA, DC (8)
  - MA (7)
  - FL, IL, MO, NC (5)

- Organization types
  - **Education – 50%**
  - Government
  - Business and consulting
  - Other cultural heritage organizations
    - Museums
    - Historical Societies
    - Public libraries
    - Arts/music/non-profit
  - International
And When?

- 2012 (latest) to 2000 (earliest)
  - 2012 (46)
    - 49%
  - 2011 (30)
    - 32%
  - 2010 – 2000 (12)
    - 13%
- Dates unknown (6)
Which Organizations have Digital Archivist Positions?

- 29 States and DC
- 103 persons/positions (>4)
  - DC (17)
  - CA (12)
  - NY (8)
  - MI, NC (6)
  - IL, MA (5)

- Organization types
  - **Education - 47%**
  - Government
  - Business and consulting
  - Other cultural heritage organizations
    - Museums
    - Historical Societies
    - Public libraries
    - Arts/music/non-profit
  - International
And Since When?

• 2012 (latest) to 2001 (earliest)
  • 2012 (10)
  • 2011 (16)
  • 2010 (12)
  • 2009 (7)
  • 2008 (10)
  • 2007 (5)
  • 2004-2006 (7)
  • 2001-2003 (6)
  • Dates unknown (31)
Digital Archivists in Practice: Who are They?

- Job titles and variations
- Professional background
Job Titles & Variations

- Data source: job postings
- Digital archivists (40%)
- Archives / records + digital / electronic (22%)
- Electronic + records (17%)
- Library + digital (14%)
Digital Archivists = 38

- Education
  - 17 postings
- Corporate
  - 11 postings
- Museum
  - 4 postings
- Public library
  - 2 postings
- Historical society
  - 2 postings
- Government
  - 2 postings
Archives / Records + Digital / Electronic = 21

- 19 variations
- Digital programs archivist, digital records archivist, archivist for digital initiatives and outreach, digital archives project manager, digital projects archivist, digital preservation archivist, digital asset archivist, archivist for digital collections, digital preservation and electronic records archivist, digital services archivist, processing and electronic records archivist, digital collections archivist, assistant archivist for digital initiatives and records management, archives/records IT specialist, electronic media project archivist, digital archival project consultant, digital archives technician, digital archives research assistant, digital archival processing intern
Electronic + Records = 16

- 9 variations
- Electronic records archivist, electronic records specialist, electronic records analyst, electronic records project archivist, electronic program manager, electronic records policy and program coordinator, state data and records manager, state records officer, electronic records assistant
Library + Digital = 13

- 12 variations
- Coordinator for the digital preservation system, digital services and access librarian for special collections, digital program and data management librarian, digital library projects coordinator, digital publishing and preservation librarian, digital projects librarian, preservation librarian, digital repository coordinator, digital special collections and oral histories librarian, digital curator, curator of digital collections, digital preservation librarian
Professional Background

• Data Source: Professional Profiles

• Previous job titles
  • Processing related
  • Records and archives related
  • Media related
  • Technology related
  • Library related
  • Other
Professional Background

- **Processing related**: descriptive archivist, archival processor, processing archivist, graduate student processor, processing assistant, cataloging & metadata librarian, metadata technician, catalog librarian, encoder, cataloger, technical services librarian, museum lab technician, museum data technician, metadata/taxonomy consultant

- **Records and archives related**: archivist, project archivist, access and outreach archivist, archival consultant, archives intern, archive assistant, records services archivist, records management analyst, records manager
Professional Background

- **Media related**: photographer, photo archivist, video cataloger, audiovisual content producer, public media producer, visual resources collections and services, photo archivist, media assistant

- **Technology related**: software test engineer, system engineer, computer operator, intranet product manager, text and markup coordinator, content management system manager, web design and production, database application developer, web mistress, technical architecture consultant
Professional Background

- **Library related**: librarian technician, acquisition librarian, collection manager, digital initiative librarian, digital collections librarian, instruction and special collection librarian, public services librarian, rights and reproductions assistant

- **Other categories**:
  - Teacher, teaching assistant, lecturer, instructor, literacy mentor
  - Writer, producer, editor, proofreader, copy writer,
  - Project manager, general manager, academic advisor, community lead, copy center operator, bookkeeper, press and public relations intern
Digital Archivists in Practice: What do They Do?

- Job responsibilities
- Job title distributions
Job Responsibilities

- Data source: job postings
- Born-digital/digitized archival materials
  - 56%
- Digital asset/objects/content management (current / historical)
  - 21%
- Electronic records management
  - 10%
- Digital preservation
- Archival processing/technical services
Born-digital/digitized archival materials: Title Distributions

- Digital archivists
  - Education (15/17)
  - Corporate (2/11)
  - Museum (3/4)
  - Public library (2/2)
  - Historical society (2/2)
  - Government (2/2)
- Archives/records + digital/electronic
  - 17/21
- Electronic + records (8/16)
- Library + digital (2/13)
Born-digital/digitized archival materials: Responsibilities

- Program development / management / promotion
- Tool exploration / evaluation / recommendation
- Electronic recordkeeping
- Collection construction / transfer
- Collection / repository management
- Processing
- Preservation
- Access
- Use
Other Distributions

• Digital asset/objects/content management
  • Library + digital
  • Digital archivists (corporate)

• Electronic Records Management
  • Electronic + records
    • State archives
  • Digital archivists
    • Corporate

• Digital Preservation
  • Library + digital
Further Research

• Digital archivists research forum
  • Digital archivists in practice
    • Born-digital/digitized archival materials
  • Next-generation archivists
    • Recent graduates and current students

• The curatorial role of a digital archivist and its impact on archival theory and practice