CLSC 878: Digital Collections in Libraries, Archives and Museums

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Class Description:

"Digital Collections in Libraries, Archives and Museums" introduces the practices, standards, and challenges evident across the spectrum of cultural heritage institutions trying to leverage collections online. The class considers the entire life-cycle of digital collections from creation to dissemination to preservation, as well as looking at institutional conditions - past, present and future - that influence collection access online. The current era challenges libraries, archives and museums (LAMs) to connect with their audiences, as well as with their peers, in ways that redefine traditional notions of authority and autonomy. Taking an institutional as well as a network-level perspective, the class tracks this (r)evolution-in-progress and looks at emerging strategies to make digital heritage collections matter in an environment dominated by for-profit networking and information spaces. Concepts introduced in class lectures and discussions will be deepened through focused site-visits with experts at local institutions.

Pre-and/or Co-requisites: None.

Course Learning Objectives
The students will gain an understanding of:
- challenges and solutions in creating digital collections
- library, archive and museum practices and perspectives
- standards for scalable projects, integration among different institutions, and long-term data retention
- standards relevant to digitization, collection description, data exchange, and digital preservation
- the broader information context within which cultural institutions are situated

Course Content

Major topics
- Library, Archive, Museum (LAM) Convergence
- Creating Digital Collections
- Managing Collections
- Aggregating Digital Collections

Assignments and Grading

The principal method of presentation is by lecture, along with discussion, in-class presentations, and readings. Approximately 20 pages of mandatory reading will be covered each day and students should be prepared to discuss the reading material in class. Grading will be based on overall participation (includes completion of daily assigned readings, discussion participation, classroom participation, and attendance) and
homework assignments and a final group presentation demonstrating knowledge gained from material covered in the readings and lectures.

Overall Participation = 60 %
Homework/Final Presentation = 40 %

Course content and communications will be managed using the Course Management System. It is expected that each student will have access to the system prior to Day 1 of the course and that they will have regular access to the Internet in order to obtain the readings as well as for participating in the class.

**Required Readings (TBD)**

All required readings will be available online (no textbooks are required). See separate course bibliography for readings. Students will be assigned approximately 20 pages of readings per day. Assigned daily readings must be completed before the beginning of each class meeting (e.g. Day 1 readings are to be completed before Day 1 of class). Students should be prepared to discuss the reading material in class.

**Course Calendar:**
The class will meet in person from Tuesday July 6 (Day 1) through Saturday July 10 (Day 5).

**PREPARATION FOR FIRST CLASS:**
*Before the first class meeting,* each student should complete the reading for Day 1. The Day 1 readings will be discussed in the first class meeting and students will be expected to have read them.

**Day 1: Libraries, Archives, Museums**

- Introductions
- Intro to the Day / Discussion of Readings
- Context: Libraries, Archives and Museums (LAMs)
- Backdrop: More, Better, Faster, Cheaper
  - Time of (r)evolutionary change: questioning past practices, standards, behaviors
  - The digital conundrum: LAMs in the networked environment
- LAM Convergence
  - Motivations and emerging practices for managing / presenting LAMs as a coherent whole
- Guest speaker: LAM convergence in Action (Nancy E. Gwinn, Director, Smithsonian Institution Libraries)
- Wrap-up

**Day 2: Creating Digital Collections**

- Intro to the Day / Discussion of Readings
- Introducing the Digital Collection Life-Cycle
• Creating, Disseminating, Socializing, Preserving
  • Zooming In: Who is involved in a digitization project?
    o Departments, roles, workflows
    o Overview of systems
    o Systems @ Bancroft
  • Creating 1: Digitizing the Collection
    o Getting digitization done, outsourcing & partnerships
    o Shifting gears: From hand-crafted to massive scale
  • Wrap-up
  • Homework assignment (1 page paper)
    o Excursion: In-house Digitization, Asset Management (National Gallery of Art)

Day 3: Managing digital collections

• Intro to the Day / Discussion of Readings
• Creating 2: Describing the Collection
  o Data Standards: Data Structure, Data Value & Content, Data Format
  o LAM descriptive strategies (MARC/MODS, EAD, CDWA Lite/LIDO)
• Leveraging Terminologies/Automated Metadata Generation
• Disseminating: Disclosing the Collections into Different Environments
• Socializing: Encouraging Community Around Collections
  o User contributed content
  o Using social media
• Preserving: Digital Asset Management / Digital Preservation
  o Foundational issues of digital preservation
  o Concepts & systems on the block: DAM, IR, TDR
• Digital Preservation in Action
  o Examples
  o Data Curation
• Discussion about Digital Asset Management/Digital Preservation/Data Curation
• Wrap-up
  o Homework assignment (presentation)

Day 4: Aggregating Digital Collections

• Intro to the Day / Discussion of Readings
• Concentric Circles of Integration
  o Local, group, global
  o Aggregating the aggregators
• Case Study: Museum Data Exchange
  o Mechanisms for sharing digital collections: OAI-PMH
  o Analyzing an aggregate collections
• Student Presentations: Compare and Contrast
• Guest Speaker: Cultural and technical challenges of collection integration (tbd)
• Wrap-up
Day 5: Remaining Challenges / Warp-up

- Intro to the Day / Discussion of Readings
- Remaining challenges for making digital collections relevant in the networked world, part 1
- Remaining challenges for making digital collections relevant in the networked world, part 2
- Guest speaker: Challenges/Opportunities of Open Content (tdb)
- Break out in groups to prepare class summary
- Presentations: Summarize the day
  - Report out
  - Class responds
- Wrap up