Developing a Community-Based Strategic Agenda to Transform Archival Discovery and Delivery

Mark A. Matienzo, Audra Eagle Yun, Hillel Arnold, and Tom Cramer
CNI Fall Membership Meeting, December 9, 2019
Finding common ground

Mediated access and community archives
Audra Eagle Yun, University of California Irvine
Text / David Carroll Letter to Helene Cixous, undated

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Mediated access: UC use cases

- Long distance researcher access
- Culturally sensitive materials
- Copyright, PII, PHI, and donor-imposed restrictions
- Large-scale projects
- Community partnership projects
“That is how I learned that if I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.”

Audre Lorde, “Learning from the 60s,” 1982
Principles of community-centered archives partnerships

- **Attentive** to historical inequities reflected in archives
- **Responsive** to the community’s needs
- **Collaborative** through shared authority
- **Cognizant** of the divergent priorities of communities
Community contributor form

Who can contribute?

The Community Archives Digital Portal provides institutions and organizations with a free and simple tool to contribute digital content to Calisphere, the California Digital Library’s (CDL) gateway to California’s cultural heritage.

Calisphere provides free access to unique and historically important artifacts for research, teaching, and curious exploration. The Community Archives Digital Portal, provides a way for you to contribute digital content to Calisphere with technical support from University of California, Irvine Libraries (UCI Libraries) Special Collections and Archives.
Great expectations

- Mediated, ethical access at scale
- Listening sessions and field trips
- Community agreements/MOUs
- A national conversation
Project Electron

Communicating with and for user communities
Hillel Arnold, Rockefeller Archive Center
Regulate transfers of digital records over a network into a stable environment, at scale, with sensible human intervention, in alignment with existing archival activities.
User Communities

Records creators and donors
Researchers
Information professionals
RAC staff
Listening & Reflecting Back
Listening

Surveys
Targeted conversations
Sociological interviews
Literature review
Reflecting Back

Values, user personas and user stories
Specifications and software demonstrations
Blog posts, bibliographies, conference presentations and conversations
Lighting the way forward
Key takeaways/needs

Articulating drivers of technical choices, not just solutions. Abstract (and “non-technical”) thinking facilitates effective action.

How can we make values/patterns/choices explicit and shareable?

Where does our work converge? Where does it diverge? How does that matter?
From product to agenda

Enabling practitioners to develop shared strategy
Mark A. Matienzo, Stanford University Libraries
ArcLight

Shared open source development
Transparency in roadmapping, development, contributions
Practitioner desire to connect to strategy
A wicked problem

Why is archival discovery and delivery complex?

Documentation and discussion tends to be scattered

10,000-foot view is hard to reach

Technical/implementation details often elide strategic connection

Complex variables: all of which are dynamic, contextually bound, and interdependent
Useful references

Finding Aid Aggregation at a Crossroads (CDL NAFAN project)

Research and Learning Agenda for Archives, Special, and Distinctive Collections in Research Libraries (OCLC Research)

Revised DACS principles

Digital Library Federation Born-Digital Access Working Group
  Levels of Born-Digital Access and Access Values

IIIF Archives Community Group

ArchivesSpace community integrations work
Lighting the Way

A National Forum on Archival Discovery and Delivery

Practitioner-centric effort to develop a shared agenda on improving archival discovery and delivery

Focus on cross-sector conversations between archives and library workers, technology workers, and people with interest or expertise in legal and ethical issues in archives

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (LG-35-19-0012-19).
Everyone has something to contribute.
Focus on shared and holistic concerns and recommendations.
Enable adaptability of the project’s recommendations across contexts, communities, levels of resourcing.
Develop recommendations consciously as an inclusive expression of ethics and values.
Project meetings

Forum: February 10-12, 2020
~50 participants selected via application process (closes 12/15)
Mix of facilitated discussion and some plenary presentations

Working meeting: May/June (dates tbd), 2020
~25 participants; invitational meeting
Focuses on establishing principles and project contributions
Questions

How do we situate values-based work in technology-focused contexts?
Can we identify potentially shareable patterns without erasing the differences in our user communities?
How do these efforts express trust as a defining aspect of archives?
Where do we connect user communities to the creation of our strategic agendas?
How does this inform or enable more organizational & cultural change?
Links & resources

- Orange County & Southeast Asian Archive Center: Defining Community Archives
- UC use cases and contribution requirements for mediated access to digital archival materials
- Project Electron
- ArcLight
- Lighting the Way
Thank you!

Mark A. Matienzo  
matienzo@stanford.edu  
@anarchivist

Audra Eagle Yun  
audra.yun@uci.edu  
@accessionthis

Hillel Arnold  
harnold@rockarch.org  
@helrond

Tom Cramer  
tcramer@stanford.edu  
@tcramer