

From Data to Discovery: Digital Content Creation and Curation in Libraries & Archives

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Abstract:

Libraries and archives have reached a crossroads with respect to digital content. As physical space dwindles and data storage costs continue to decline, curated digital projects are making way for large-scale digitization efforts, many of which seek to meet dual needs of increased access and long-term preservation. Despite the fact that there is now a greater ability than ever before to provide remote, on-demand access to vast special collections holdings, significant obstacles still remain in the realms of discoverability, contextualization, and rights issues, among others. Greene & Meissner's call for "More Product Less Process" in archival processing may have helped make previously hidden archives discoverable at the collection level, but their precise contents often remain a mystery. Internal and proprietary databases are accessible only to those who know where to look and are granted access. Other barriers to accessibility include incomplete or non-existent metadata. Within this context, does Data Construct Reality? How is research shaped through the selection and real-world accessibility of digital materials? Conventional wisdom tells us that content digitized in a meaningful, contextualized way is what the majority of researchers will see and consider, particularly if they are unable to visit archives in person. What role should the library have in curating digital collections and shaping research? Should libraries drive digitization priorities, or should users? This panel seeks to provide an overview of the wide variety of access points through which users can connect with digital and digitized resources of the Getty Research Library.