

Digital Curation

By Ashley Wilson

We live in an increasingly digital world where new technologies, software, and applications are surfacing daily. As information professionals, we act as data creators, data users, and digital curators. Data must be actively managed to ensure its usability and reuse in the future with new software and technology and to ensure its accessibility over time requires a new set of professional practices, strategies, and tools (Harvey, 2010). Data contains characteristics (authenticity, integrity, and reliability) that should be retained to ensure the data is usable in the future, also known as **digital preservation**. What comes before and after preservation must also be considered. Several examples of what must be considered include how the data are created and used before entering the archive, by whom the data will be utilized in the future, and how they will be used. **Digital curation** is a developing set of techniques and practices that emphasize the maintaining and adding value to data for current and future use. Specifically, the active management and appraisal of data over the entire lifecycle (University of Michigan, n.d.).

There are various models of the lifecycle of data available. The Digital Curation Centre (DCC) *Curation Lifecycle Model* (shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**) encompasses data from conception through use and re-use. The conceptualization stage of the DCC Curation Lifecycle Model is critical. This step involves the planning for the creation and collection of data (including capture methods and storage options), as well as any legal constraints that will affect the use of the data created/collected (Digital Curation Centre, 2016). This stage is a proactive approach to data management and reduces the risk of inappropriate disclosure of sensitive data, which is one of the benefits of digital curation.

Digital curation also plays a vital role in the preservation of data, creates data efficiency, and provides transparency for research. Lots of data is unique and can only be captured once. To ensure the preservation of digital materials, Stanford University started The Lots of Copies Keeps Stuff Safe (LOCKSS) Program, which provides libraries and publishers with open source digital preservation tools to preserve and provide access to digital content (Stanford University, 2013). LOCKSS gives libraries piece of mind that the digital content they purchase today will still be accessible in the future even if the subscription is cancelled. Digital curation also creates data efficiency. Data collection can be funded one time and used many times a variety of purposes. Data is being repurposed in new ways every day speeding up the research process. Similar to the efficiency of research data is the transparency of data. The data that underpins the research can now be made open to anyone thus allowing them to replicate the study. This also allows other researchers to determine the authenticity of the study, based on the data.

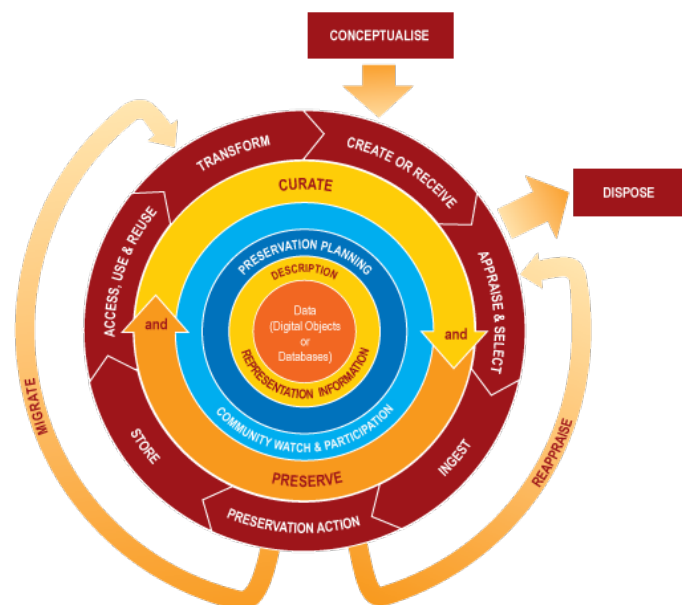


Figure 1. The DCC Curation Lifecycle Model (Digital Curation Centre, 2016).

References

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