Memory Institutions and Deep Digital Disruption: Beyond the Technical Challenges of Born-Digital Preservation

Clifford Lynch and Carol Mandel
CNI Fall Meeting 2019
A Generation of Accomplishment in Digital Preservation

• Tools, technologies, methods
• Well managed repositories
• Portico and CLOCKSS – e.g., new constructs for licensed content
• Cadre of expert, energetic, active professionals—ever growing and ever developing
• Continuing R & D, information sharing, global engagement
• Significant collections, including IA, national libraries, and special initiatives
Memory Hole
Collecting and Stewardship are *essential prerequisites* for Preservation.
“The problem of preserving digital information for the future is not only, or even primarily, a problem of fine tuning a set of technical variables... Rather it is a grander problem of organizing ourselves over time and as a society to maneuver effectively in a digital landscape.”

The Mosaic of Memory

- Libraries
- Museums
- Archives
- Historical societies
- Specialized Repositories
- Special Collections
- Personal “papers”
- Private Collectors
Realities of 21st century Memory Institutions

• Library emphasis has moved from collecting to service
• Libraries’ parent institutions (from municipalities to universities) value service over collections
• Incomplete copyright deposit for e-content: holes in the safety net
• Lack of infrastructure to support born-digital collecting, especially for local or specialized collections
• New forms of born-digital content, such as social media, don’t seem a match to mission--so assume collecting responsibility lies somewhere else

(Exception: responsibility is clear for organizational archives)
Daunting Elements of DIGITAL DISRUPTION

• Vast scale of documentary content, e.g., YouTube, email, Flickr
• Unwieldy nature of networked forms, e.g., streaming, interactive, computed
• Dispersed creation and self-publishing, i.e., lacking intermediaries for deposit or listing
• Diffuse nature of personal “records,” from old drives to social media
• IP barriers, including proprietary platforms and licensed content
• Privacy concerns, e.g., social media, user data
• Ephemerality: no ex post rescue or discovery
We need to understand and treat the problem of preserving memory and knowledge in the digital world as the *wicked societal* problem that it is.
We need to understand and treat the problem of preserving memory and knowledge in the digital world as the *wicked societal* problem that it is.

We need new strategies, new roles, new partnerships, new initiatives, and new collaborations.
We need to understand and treat the problem of preserving memory and knowledge in the born-digital world as the **wicked societal** problem that it is.

We need new strategies, new roles, new partnerships, new initiatives.

We need diverse, creative problem-solving, with memory institutions in the lead.
Potential Priorities for High-Level (Wicked) Problem Solving

• Streaming news
• Better coverage of electronic copyright deposit
• Cultural heritage repositories
• Social media, e.g., YouTube
• Streaming music
• Personal archives
• Expanded web archiving
"And here are those family photos you thought you lost in the cloud."
Let’s start the discussion about:

• What are we **most concerned about losing**? What are the highest priorities to address?

• Who might be **new partners and players**? How can we engage and assist them?

• How can we **help memory institutions** that want to do more?

• What do we **need to know** to help us do more?

• What **strategies** might we pursue to **address policy issues**?

• What **strategies** might we employ for **engaging commercial content owners**?

• Other perspectives?