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Digital Archives 101 Workshop

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Digital Archives 101 Workshop

by *Erin Passehl and Amy Vecchione*



Boise State University librarians Erin Passehl and Amy Vecchione were invited by the 2010 Idaho Library Association Conference Planning Committee to present on the topic of “creating digital archives.” Idaho is a state that currently lacks a centralized digital repository or consortium and, as a result, there are libraries and historical societies around the state without the training or skills to create digital collections. Yet these organizations have rich collections pertinent to the history of Idaho, ranging from original manuscripts to historic photos.

Passehl and Vecchione geared their presentation towards how to get started with digital collections and how even small institutions can start the digitization planning process. The workshop was not an in-depth explanation about standards or scanning processes; instead they presented the different issues to consider when planning for digital projects. By creating a **Digital Collection Resources toolkit** to accompany the presentation, Passehl and Vecchione hoped to help smaller libraries understand the process and resources needed to start creating their digital collections.

The digital archives toolkit includes a handout, subject guide to digital collections, and a digitization workflow to help library staff and volunteers plan for a digital project. The handout was designed to provide workshop participants with digital collections resources and to begin working through the digitization planning process. The handout provided participants with basic questions to consider before starting a digital collection, including what formats to digitize, the audience and reason behind digitizing materials, identifying staff or volunteers available to work on the digital collection, and the predicted challenges facing institutions when creating and managing digital projects. Participants broke into small groups and discussed these questions together and with the presenters.

The purpose of the Digital Collections Resources Toolkit was to provide resources for those wanting to start creating digital collections; to showcase Idaho's digital collections; to provide a way to search across Idaho's digital collections; to store presentation materials for conference participants; and to maintain a selected bibliography of books and articles pertinent to digital collections. Additionally, libraries around the state may use the search tools and subject lists to identify potential partners in future digital collections.

The third part of the presentation included a digitization workflow to help library staff visualize the digitization process. Because workflows are not typically linear, especially when working with digital collections, Passehl created the digitization workflow using **Prezi**, a free, web-based presentation application that uses a blank canvas instead of presentation slides, where users can zoom in and out of a visual map. The goal of the workflow was to show that digital projects are not just about scanning and metadata, but include everything from determining the audience and goals of the project to promoting and marketing digital collections. The presentation emphasized the importance of project management and thorough planning of digital projects, including the purpose behind digitizing materials (preservation, popularity, etc.), how the final product will look and function, and if the project will be sustainable. Passehl and Vecchione also emphasized quality control checks at multiple points throughout the digitization process, including scanning, metadata, and online presence.

Both librarians were asked to present on this topic because of their experience with digital collections. Vecchione's experience began as a student on an early digitization project in California, and more recently included digitizing a mining collection at the Idaho State Historical Society. She has also worked at the Idaho Commission for Libraries on [Stacks], Idaho's digital repository of state documents, and with historical collections using Flickr. Passehl is an archivist in Special Collections where she oversees Albertsons Library Digital Collections. Passehl's previous experience was in Wisconsin, where she created the first digital repository for student theses at Cardinal Stritch University and volunteered at Marquette University on the "Women in Blue and Gold" athletic digital collection.

Erin Passehl is an Archivist and Amy Vecchione is a Librarian, both at Boise State University's Albertsons Library.