



GAINING KNOWHOW WITH BITCURATOR

SAA Members in Texas

Archivists continue to explore the application of digital forensics to archives practice. The responsibility for acquiring and preserving born-digital records is quickly becoming the norm for most of us. Reviewing and understanding the tools available and in development to assist in digital forensics also is necessary. Archivists from repositories in Texas recently participated in community outreach sessions to learn more about one of these tools: BitCurator.

The BitCurator project is a joint effort led by the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities. Its goal is to develop a system for collecting professionals that integrates the functionality of existing digital forensics tools into the workflow of libraries and archives.

A “Texas Tour”

BitCurator is now in its second phase of development. Phase I focused on developing the digital forensics software suite for an archival audience. Phase II focuses on outreach and creating a community of users. As part of this process, the team has been conducting onsite visits and trainings. During spring 2014, Texas archivists asked the team to go on a “Texas Tour” by visiting repositories in San Antonio, Houston, and Austin to introduce this technology.

Each site had two days with BitCurator Community Lead Porter Olsen. The visits included an overview of digital forensics, its application in an archival context, and demonstrations of the features and functionality of BitCurator. The groups

also discussed how evaluation tools like BitCurator provide opportunities for expanding born-digital conversations between archivists and systems administrators. On day two of the visits, groups were allowed and encouraged to “play.” From floppy disks to jump drives and old CD-ROMs, participants spent an entire morning testing hardware and software.

Archivists from both large and small repositories on the Texas Tour discovered how BitCurator can help address their specific needs and issues. The following are reflections from several archivists who participated in the tour.

Repository Reflections

San Antonio

- The BitCurator workshop was extremely helpful for me as I prepared to become the archivist at Trinity University. Not only did it provide hands-on training for a tool that will be very useful to a small shop like ours, it also provided a forum to brainstorm ideas for how to implement better preservation of born-digital materials on a tight budget and with very limited staff. Like most archives, we have information in our repository that is stored on obsolete media, such as 3.5-inch floppy disks. BitCurator provides a straightforward way to create disk images, generate checksums, and search for sensitive information, making it possible to save and care for this digital information that is threatened by decaying media. As I begin my work as the special collections librarian and university archivist at Trinity University, I plan to take the information I learned in the workshop and eventually create

a standardized digital preservation workflow that involves BitCurator.

—Megan Toups, Trinity University Library

- The BitCurator training couldn’t have come at a better time. Having just completed a born-digital removable media inventory for SAA’s *Jump In Too/Two* initiative, the need to get the bits off the media was on the forefront of our minds. . . . My favorite features of BitCurator are that it searches files for PII (personally identifying information), recovers and generates a report of deleted files from a disk, searches for duplicate files, generates and verifies checksums, automatically creates PREMIS metadata, and allows users to view files on a disk within the BitCurator interface.

—Amy Rushing, University of Texas at San Antonio Libraries

Houston

- Olsen encouraged hands-on interaction with BitCurator. We provided several examples of the legacy media and current electronic storage formats we encounter at Rice University’s Woodson Research Center. With each example, we worked in the BitCurator environment and with each tool to capture the information we hope to preserve. Olsen also discussed the pros and cons of using BitCurator in three different instances (virtual machine, direct installation, or live CD). He also went over the system components and costs for a basic digital curation workstation. This discussion will be helpful as we express our needs with our internal IT and create a digital forensics workstation. Overall, the

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The theme of “Crossing Borders” also takes into account globalization. Although many countries have a unique archival tradition and theory, sharing those traditions can allow us as activists to look more closely at how we practice our profession. This year, the conference remained focused on the Pacific Northwest, a relatively small geographical area. Hopefully, over time it will continue to grow and expand to incorporate more regions and promote greater cross-border cooperation and discussion.

The First Annual Canadian-American Archives Conference did what we hoped for and more. It gave our programs outreach opportunities and started discussions about cooperation and cross-border thinking.

Outreach for Academic Programs

Beyond promoting the theme of cooperation, I’m proud of my fellow students who helped make this conference a reality. On a small budget and with a lot of determination, we pulled together and created an event centered on themes pertinent to us and our profession. This conference also provided an opportunity for outreach for our academic programs, as it attracted undergraduate students in the Canadian-American Studies Program who knew little about archives, as well as students studying archives who perhaps hadn’t considered cross-border issues.

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The First Annual Canadian-American Archives Conference did what we hoped for and more. It gave our programs outreach opportunities and started discussions about cooperation and cross-border thinking. Our speakers covered a range of issues and topics that fit together in remarkable and interesting ways. I can only hope that in future years the program will continue to expand and improve beyond our wishful thinking. ■

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presentation and live demos helped us move from born-digital accessioning and processing as a theoretical concept to a tangible process that we could all do with ease.

—Rebecca Russell, Woodson
Research Center, Rice University

Austin

- I attended the BitCurator workshop with the goal of returning to the Wittliff Collections with procedures for accessioning born-digital materials. Olsen’s hands-on method of instruction gave me the tools I needed. He walked me through the steps of setting up BitCurator on a virtual machine and creating a shared folder that I could access through both the BitCurator interface and through the computer I was working on. BitCurator created a forensic disk image of a 3.5-inch floppy disk that will now serve as the preservation copy of the data contained on the original obsolete media. Success!

—Lauren Goodley, Wittliff Collections
at Texas State University

- At the Austin History Center we do not (yet) have a digital archivist on staff and have limited resources for implementing a digital archives program. However, as the city’s official archive, we need to be able to receive and process electronic records despite our staffing and budgetary shortcomings. The hands-on approach of

this workshop was really valuable to me as it made the processes involved with born-digital ingest very clear and easy to grasp. I walked away from this workshop with a lot of new knowledge that I can share with my coworkers and with confidence about how to implement the beginnings of digital archives program.

—Nicole Davis, Austin History Center

- At the Harry Ransom Center, we have worked closely with the Bitcurator team since the project’s inception. This summer Nicole Marquis, supervised by born-digital archivist Lisa Snider, will be focusing her Capstone project on how we can incorporate Bitcurator into our new preservation workflow. The workshop allowed Marquis to explore the program in great depth and see how it worked with 3.5-inch and 5.25-inch floppy machines. Snider was able to focus on email redaction, and got a chance to play with the SuperCard Pro, a device similar to the FC5025 and Kryoflux. This workshop was hands on, theoretical, and a lot of fun.

—Lisa Snider, Harry Ransom Center

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Overall, BitCurator’s Texas Tour was a success. We gained valuable information to help us effectively take on the ever-challenging task of acquiring and preserving born-digital materials. ■

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information from records formats and allow the public to easily contribute to the records.

Over the next two years, we will work to increase the number of National Archives records available on Wikimedia Commons, continue our work to engage local communities of volunteer Wikipedians with onsite events, and collaborate on the development of the GLAM (Galleries,

Libraries, Archives, and Museums)-Wiki U.S. Consortium. In 2013 alone, 4,000 digital copies of our records that were included in Wikipedia articles garnered more than 1.3 billion views. That is unprecedented access to our records.

We have a great deal of work ahead. But as you can see, digitizing the historical records of the federal government—scanning the past—is foundational to making twenty-first-century access happen. ■