

Provost's Task Force on Digital Creation, Preservation, and Access

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Task Force Chair, Director of the Archives of Appalachia



Task Force Members

- Dr. Jeremy Smith (Director of the Archives of Appalachia): Task Force Chair
- David Atkins (Dean, Sherrod Library)
- Dr. David Currie (Director of Research Computing Services)
- Dr. Courtney Hall (Professor, Department of Rehabilitative Sciences)
- Dr. Julie Fox-Horton (Assistant Professor, Department of Cross-Disciplinary Studies)
- Dr. Andrew Joyner (Associate Professor, Department of Geosciences, Director of the Geoinformatics and Disaster Science Lab)
- Anthony Kiech (Director of Academic and Technology Services)
- Renee Lyons (Associate Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction)
- Greg Marlow (Assistant Professor, Digital Media Department)
- Dr. Jeff Roach (Associate Professor, Department of Computing)
- Dr. Chris Widga (Head Curator, Center of Excellence in Paleontology)
- Nakia Woodward (Assistant Director for Administration & Collections, Medical Library)
- Dara Young (Media Coordinator, College of Public Health)



Task Force Charge

- quantify the needs, across ETSU, for digital content stewardship
- identify current digital stewardship practices at peer institutions
- provide recommendations for university-wide action



The Need: Globally

- Over 93% of the world's annual intellectual output is produced in digital form.
- There are now 40 times more distinct bytes than there are known stars in the observable universe.

from Jeff Desjardins, “How much data is generated each day?,” *World Economic Forum* (April 17, 2019), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/04/how-much-data-is-generated-each-day-cf4bddf29f/>



The Need: at ETSU

1.3 petabytes at ETSU as of April 2021

- 1,300 terabytes
- 1,300,000 gigabytes
- That's the equivalent of:
 - 111,800,000,000 pages of MS Word documents
 - 325,000,000 songs



The Digital Dark Age

“We may [one day] know less about the early 21st century than we do about the early 20th century.”

- Rick West (data manager at Google) -



Summary of Task Force Work

1. Peer Institution Benchmarking

- a. Appalachian State University
- b. East Carolina University
- c. Old Dominion University
- d. Marshall University

2. Campus Survey

- a. Sent to 54 Department Chairs and 7 service center directors



Campus Survey Highlights

- 80% (17/21) indicated that they have enough digital storage to meet their departmental needs
 - 80% (17/21) also indicated that they or their faculty use some combination of non-ETSU cloud storage, PC not issued by ETSU, or removable storage for work-related files
- 30% (6/21) indicated that their department does not actively use OneDrive for file storage

This may indicate the need for increased education and outreach about the benefits of ETSU's data management services and/or the implementation of systems that are more convenient for users.



Campus Survey Highlights

- 90% (19/21) do not have departmental policies guiding the retention or storage of digital content
- 80% (17/21) do not know what digital content they should be saving as a part of ETSU's official institutional records
- 45% (9/21) indicated the greatest digital stewardship need at ETSU is for enhanced policies or education about existing policies



Recommendations

1. Create a standing Digital Stewardship Committee

- While our Task Force completed a great deal of foundational work during its two-month tenure, we recommend a longer focus to devise robust responses to these institution-wide challenges and to provide regular updates and recommendations in response to the swiftly evolving digital landscape. **East Carolina University** has implemented a similarly-focused committee.



Recommendations

2. Provide targeted training on the benefits of current ETSU resources
 - 80% of our campus survey respondents indicated that they or their faculty use some combination of non-ETSU storage for work-related files. 30% indicated that their department does not actively use OneDrive for file storage. 45% requested enhanced policies or education about existing policies as they relate to digital stewardship.



Recommendations

3. Provide funding for a University Archivist
 - ETSU currently does not have a University Archivist
 - 80% of survey respondents do not know what digital content they should be saving as a part of ETSU's official institutional records
 - **Appalachian State, East Carolina, Old Dominion, and Marshall** all have between 1-2 full-time positions devoted to this work



Recommendations

4. Provide a centrally-funded infrastructure for unlimited storage of department-specific data
 - 20% of respondents do not have enough digital storage to meet their departmental needs, and 70% have content that would benefit from enhanced digital preservation processes.
 - While the total amount of digital data is not equally distributed among departments, it is equally essential to each dept's effective research, teaching, and administrative functions. An expanded, centrally-funded infrastructure would help maximize ETSU's academic excellence in the digital age. **Old Dominion University** has adopted a similar approach.



Recommendations

1. Create a standing Digital Stewardship Committee
2. Provide targeted training on the benefits of current ETSU resources
3. Provide funding for a University Archivist
4. Provide a centrally-funded infrastructure for unlimited storage of department-specific data



The Cost of Inaction

- Need will only increase
- Research and teaching will be hindered
- Financial loss
- Information loss



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