Checklist of Recommendations for Repositories

Initial Collection Review

Assess born-digital materials prior to acquisition.

Weigh the cultural and research value of the collection, or components of it, with the cost of capture and ongoing preservation and access.

Share relevant information and documentation with donors and dealers about the collection review and acquisition processes.

Clarify expectations regarding digital preservation and access.

Conduct a survey of born-digital materials:
- o Determine the method by which to do this through consultation with the donor or dealer.
- o Conduct in-person/on-site surveys when possible.
- o Have policies in place regarding the capture, storage, and disposal of files copied for the purpose of preliminary assessment.
- o Capture the donor's files or directory structures when closer analysis or more time is needed than is possible on a site visit, or when an on-site survey is not possible.

Privacy and Intellectual Property

Make clear by whom, and the process by which, screening of email for sensitive messages will be done.

Carefully review email files to identify and quarantine entire sensitive threads of sent and received messages and their attachments. Ensure that preservation and access to these messages are handled in accordance with long-term research value, all applicable laws, and provisions in your acquisition agreement.

When staff, time, or technology constraints do not allow for review of sensitive email or other files, discuss restrictions on researcher access for a defined period of time with the donor or dealer.

Before acquisition, ask about the presence of legally protected private files, such as confidential government files, medical records, and legal case files, and especially sensitive types of information, such as Social Security and credit card numbers.

Anticipate the presence of other people's intellectual property in a donor's files and establish relevant policies.

Privacy and Intellectual Property (continued)

Balance the desire to capture information about the donor's working environment and organizational strategies (via authentication and retention of original file structure and/or other means) with respect for the donor's wishes regarding privacy and restrictions.

Consider potential future use and access mechanisms when contemplating the value of disk images, deleted files, and automatically saved files.

Make sure donors and dealers are aware of the different kinds of deleted information that may be present in their digital materials.

Be realistic about restrictions, redaction, and the potential for sensitive material to be missed in an initial review, considering:
- o Legal restrictions
- o Donor requests for restrictions
- o Third-party restrictions (e.g., oral histories without permission forms)
- o Technical constraints (e.g., obsolete formats, corrupted files, access problems)
- o Use restrictions (e.g., need to ensure authenticity and appropriate use by patrons)

Key Stages in Acquiring Digital Materials

Clarify whether the repository will be the exclusive, long-term owner of a unique or master set of digital files that will not be made available to other repositories or purchasers.

Clearly identify which born-digital materials are to be included in the acquisition.

Consider limiting the scope of the files to be acquired to ensure that the materials transferred are of research value to the repository, but don't overlook the potential benefits of a comprehensive acquisition including entire disks.

Consider what will be done with files that are transferred but do not fit the scope of the acquisition agreement.

Document the details of the acquisition with a written agreement or contract.

Determine how digital materials will be transferred to the repository.

If possible, establish direct communication between the donor or estate and repository staff.

Establish protocols for how digital materials should be handled and documented from their arrival at the repository until they reach the digital archivist (or other appropriate person).

Be prepared to research, develop, and test new capture methods for novel acquisition scenarios.

Post-Acquisition Review by the Repository

Assess whether digital media have been damaged in transit.

Assess whether files may have been affected by transit or transfer process.

Use hash values or checksums (unique digital fingerprints) and preview tools to check the digital condition and authenticity of materials.

Consider the physical condition of digital media before trying to access them.

Determine whether inaccessible media still retain value as physical artifacts.

Develop policies regarding the retention and disposal of certain types of files and digital media. Make sure decisions are supported by policy.