Bryn Mawr College Digital Preservation Policy

I.   Introduction and Rationale

The Bryn Mawr College *Digital Preservation Policy* establishes a framework to support sustainable digital preservation practices and access to digital collections. This policy is intended to provide a broad set of guidelines, principles, and strategies for digital preservation at the College from which more detailed goals, plans, and procedures can be developed. The College is committed to the long-term preservation of digital assets of enduring value[1], as defined by the *Collections Management Policy* and *Records Management Policy* and in keeping with digital preservation standards and best practices.

Digital preservation is defined as the combination of "policies, strategies, and actions to ensure access to reformatted and born-digital content over time, regardless of the challenges of media failure and technological change."[2] A commitment to digital preservation is not necessarily a commitment to permanence; it may simply be a commitment to access for a designated period of time. The preservation of digital content requires constant care and management; for this reason, it is important to recognize that "nothing *has been* preserved; there are only things *being* preserved."[3] Digital preservation requires an ongoing commitment of organizational, technological, and financial resources. Because these resources are inherently limited, every organization must individually define what is important and possible for their context and be willing to continuously revisit these definitions over time.

II.   Contextual Policies

The *Digital Preservation Policy* should be approached in the context of other existing College and LITS-specific policies, including the *Collection Management Policy*, the *Records Management Policy*, the *Digitized Collections Development Policy*, the *Data Handling Policy*, and other related policies that may be developed in the future.

III.   Objectives

LITS seeks to provide sustainable long-term preservation and access to digital assets of enduring value through an institutionalized digital preservation program. The objectives of this program are to:

- Enable the identification of digital assets of enduring value to be preserved
- Comply with the College's legal, fiscal, and consortial mandates to preserve and provide access to certain categories of digital assets

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[1] The Society of American Archivists defines "enduring value" as "the continuing usefulness or significance of records, based on the administrative, legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical information they contain, justifying their ongoing preservation." In Bryn Mawr's context, collections of "enduring value" are typically limited to those acquired and stewarded by the College's Special Collections department through regular collections acquisition and records management transfer procedures. (See: Enduring value. (n.d.). In Society of American Archivists *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, https://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/e/enduring-value)

[2] Association for Library Collections & Technical Services. (2007). *Definitions of Digital Preservation*, http://www.ala.org/alcts/resources/preserv/defdigpres0408

[3] Owens, Trevor. (2017). *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, p. 7, https://osf.io/preprints/lissa/5cpjt

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- Serve the needs of the College community and outside researchers by enabling persistent access to digital content over time
- Provide a framework for the development of procedures and practices for the curation of digital assets across their lifecycle
- Employ robust, interoperable metadata management strategies
- Comply with national and community standards for digital preservation and access
- Adapt preservation strategies to incorporate the capabilities afforded by new and emerging technologies in cost-effective and responsible ways
- Foster staff expertise in digital curation practices, procedures, and technologies
- Commit to sustainable stewardship of digital assets by regularly reviewing collecting priorities as well as organizational, technological, and financial resources

IV. Principles

The following principles will guide digital preservation actions at Bryn Mawr College.

Access: Digital preservation activities are performed with the understanding that long-term access is the primary goal.

Authenticity: Digital objects are managed over time to ensure that they are unaltered and uncorrupted. Chain of custody and provenance are trackable.

Collaboration: Digital preservation activities require participation and collaboration across several LITS departments and across the TriCollege to be successful. Consortial and collaborative digital preservation solutions are sought when they are a good use of College and TriCollege resources.

Documentation: Policies, procedures, and practices related to digital preservation actions are clearly documented, transparent, and reviewed on a regular basis.

High-Quality Metadata: Digital objects are stored with supporting descriptive, technical, and preservation metadata.

Interoperability: The successful migration of data and systems is ensured through the use of open-source technologies and national and community-based standards whenever possible.

Legal compliance: Digital preservation and access activities comply with all applicable legal and ethical mandates, including U.S. copyright law, FERPA, HIPAA, and GDPR.

Scalability: The technological infrastructure is scalable to meet storage requirements for the College's digital assets into the future.

Standards and Best Practices: National and community-based standards for digital preservation are followed whenever possible.

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Sustainability: Digital preservation activities are planned and implemented in ways that best manage current and near-future institutional, technological, and financial resources. Funding for the digital preservation program is clearly outlined in the College budget.

Training: Because of rapid change in the field of digital preservation and technology, the College commits to ongoing training and professional development of staff.

Technology: A digital "repository is not a piece of software. A repository is the sum of financial resources, hardware, staff time, and ongoing implementation of policies and planning to ensure long-term access to content."[4] With this in mind, the College commits to maintaining and developing an interoperable, reliable, and scalable "digital archive." LITS maintains hardware, software, and storage media containing digital content in keeping with prevailing best practices for secure and geographically diverse backup and disaster recovery safeguards.

V. Scope

This policy governs the preservation of digital content, both analog-to-digital and born-digital, for which Bryn Mawr College Special Collections is the primary custodian, as well as specific categories of student, faculty, and staff scholarship. Collections in the custody of Special Collections are, by definition, of enduring value. Selection and acquisition decisions reflect the priorities and criteria established in the *Collection Management Policy*, the *Records Management Policy*, and the *Digitized Collections Development Policy*. The scope of the digital collections are categorized broadly as follows:

College departmental and administrative electronic records

The College has legal and fiscal mandates to preserve and provide access to certain categories of departmental and administrative records. These records and their associated records retention schedules are described in the *Records Management Policy*.

Digital collections stewarded by Special Collections

The *Collection Management Policy* describes the overarching criteria for collection acquisition and stewardship of both analog and digital collections by the College's Special Collections department. Special Collections may acquire born-digital and digitized collections as part of donations as well as generate new digital content by selectively digitizing or reformatting analog collections and creating born-digital content, like oral histories. The *Digitized Collections Development Policy* governs the selection of analog collections for digitization and reformatting and subsequent preservation.

Digital assets are subject to periodic reappraisal and may be considered for deaccession at any time. Deaccessioning will be carried out in a transparent and well-documented fashion, taking care to avoid any procedures that contradict LITS' reputation for responsible stewardship.

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[4] Owens, Trevor. (2017). *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation*, p. 7, https://osf.io/preprints/lissa/5cpjt

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VI.   Not in Scope

The following categories of digital collections will **not** be systematically preserved by LITS. Copies of published scholarship will, in general, not be preserved. However, they may by virtue of their location and system of access be included in preservation workflows.

1. **Commercially available digital resources:** LITS cannot guarantee preservation of resources it does not own or manage. This includes electronic publications, journals, and databases to which the College subscribes.
2. **Duplicative content:** Content that is duplicative and already available online via other repositories are not a priority for preservation.
3. **Scan-on-demand content**: Materials requested for short-term use, such as for research or E-reserve and document delivery.
4. **Faculty and student papers:** Personal or working papers generated by faculty and students. In rare cases, faculty or alumnae/i papers may be collected in accordance with the *Collection Management Policy*.

VII.   Challenges

There are many challenges and risks inherent in any digital preservation program. Challenges for Bryn Mawr College include:

- **Rapid growth:** Like all academic and cultural heritage institutions, Bryn Mawr College is experiencing a rapid growth in digital assets. As record keeping shifts from paper to digital, the College has begun to acquire more electronic records through its records management program. Similarly, collections acquired by Special Collections include more born-digital content than ever before, and there are an increasing number of digital assets created through digitization, reformatting, and oral history projects.
- **Rapid technological change:** The management of digital records is not analogous to the management of paper records. Rapid changes in technology mean that file formats, hardware, and software can quickly become obsolete. These things must be monitored and migrated accordingly.
- **Sustainability:** Sustainability in digital preservation requires ongoing maintenance of technology, financial resources, and staffing. Digital preservation should be sufficiently funded and staffed to meet its objectives.
- **Financial implications:** The development of technological infrastructures that can support digital preservation is a complex and expensive undertaking. The fact that Bryn Mawr maintains the infrastructure for the TriCollege Libraries increases this complexity.
- **Selection:** The College cannot realistically preserve all digital assets. This requires the development of sensible selection criteria based on available resources.
- **Rights:** Intellectual property and privacy rights are complex, and there is risk in providing access to restricted content.
- **Communication:** As the maintainer and supporter of several shared TriCollege systems and shared storage devices, Bryn Mawr College commits to transparent,

honest, and timely communication with stakeholders on all matters that affect digital preservation.
- **Expertise:** The rapidly evolving landscape of digital preservation and technology requires staff with specific expertise and a commitment to continually updating skills.

VIII.   Preservation and Access Strategies

The specific preservation and access strategies employed depend largely on the source and type of content, as well as available resources of staffing, technology, and funding. Typically, born-digital content without a physical counterpart should be preserved at a more rigorous level than digital content that serves as a surrogate of an analog item held in the College's collections. The College aims to provide online access to digital collections whenever possible, contingent on the aforementioned resources as well as on rights and privacy restrictions. The ability to provide online access is also dependent on whether there is a system available that can adequately support and display the content type.

IX.   Lifecycle Management

The following digital lifecycle management[5] practices will be applied to digital assets determined to be of enduring value.

- **Conceptualize:** When new digital objects are created by digitizing or reformatting analog collections or through digital projects, appropriate technical specifications are used, long-term storage locations are identified, and decisions about access are made in advance.
- **Create:** When digital objects are created or acquired, administrative, descriptive, structural, and technical metadata is created or generated and stored with the objects.
- **Appraise and select:** Selection for digital preservation is based on the existing *Collection Management Policy* and *Records Management Policy*. Digital content will be assumed permanent unless explicitly categorized as temporary via a policy document or written agreement.
- **Ingest:** Ingest of digital objects into the digital repository system(s) will follow documented procedures, policies, and legal requirements. This documentation will include procedures for delivery/transfer; file verification, validation, and normalization; required metadata; and transfer of data and metadata into the approved long-term storage system.
- **Preservation actions**: A series of actions will be taken prior to and during long-term storage of digital assets to ensure their integrity and authenticity. These actions will be done at varying levels depending on the content type. Detailed procedures and workflows will be maintained. Potential actions include fixity and virus checks, file format review, and migration.

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[5] Digital Curation Centre. (2019). "What is digital curation?" http://www.dcc.ac.uk/digital-curation/what-digital-curation

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- **Store:** Digital assets will be stored and backed up in accordance with standards and best practices. Onsite servers will be replicated and backed up to equipment stored in separate campus buildings. In addition, assets will be backed up to cloud storage.
- **Access, use, and reuse:** Digital objects are made accessible to designated users. Some digital objects are made publicly available through a designated system. Some digital objects are made available through a designated system but are temporarily restricted or embargoed. Some categories of sensitive content may be permanently restricted and never made available through a public-facing system. Robust read/write/access controls and authentication procedures will be used when applicable.
- **Transform:** Digital assets will require periodic transformation, such as migration to new software, hardware, or file formats; and metadata enhancement.
- **Reappraise and Dispose:** Digital assets will be periodically reviewed and may be securely disposed of in accordance with documented policies and legal requirements.

X. Roles & Responsibilities

Digital preservation requires a community of collaborative partners who work together on an ongoing basis to make decisions and take action. At Bryn Mawr College this community includes the following departmental units or roles:

- **Digital Collections and Metadata Librarians:** Responsible for the curation and description of digital assets across their lifecycle and the management of digitization and reformatting projects.
- **Special Collections Curators and Archivists:** Responsible for the selection and acquisition of digital assets through the process of collection development and records management.
- **Enterprise Data, Systems, and Interfaces:** Maintains and provides support for the technological infrastructure.
- **TriCollege Digital Library Developers:** Maintains, develops, and provides support for applications, systems, and workflows.

XI. Evaluation and Updating

This policy is a living document that will be reviewed and updated at least every two years by the appropriate/designated members of the LITS staff. Significant changes to the policy will be approved by the Chief Information Officer and Director of Libraries and the College President. The policy will be made accessible to the College community and the general public via the College website.

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XII. Resources

- Dartmouth College Library. (2015). *Digital Preservation Policy,* https://www.dartmouth.edu/~library/preservation/docs/dartmouth_digital_preservation_policy.pdf
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